



SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION ONE (Section 3)

That the DSEWPC clarifies its concept and management of heritage as being limited to immovable built and natural heritage and the intangible heritage relationships that accompany these. This revision will help to clarify the current Federal policy vacuum surrounding the preservation of movable cultural heritage across public and private collections.

RECOMMENDATION TWO (Section 3)

Alternatively, the AHS may seek to include moveable cultural heritage as part of its mandate in an effort to provide a platform by which moveable cultural material will be independently recognised as a form of heritage to be celebrated and managed accordingly.

RECOMMENDATION THREE (Section 3.1)

That the AHS recognises the leadership role that professional cultural heritage bodies currently play in setting standards for heritage activities and preservation in Australia.

RECOMMENDATION FOUR (Section 4)

That the DSEWPC seek to align its activities with allied government agencies (including Australia Council, Office of the Arts and Department of Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education) to address issues relevant to moveable heritage.

RECOMMENDATION FIVE (Section 5)

That the AHS ensure the development of a collaborative industry environment. A move towards skill and knowledge sharing and collaborative engagement is essential in a resource-constrained environment.

1. Introduction

The [Australian Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Materials](#) (AICCM) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Australian Heritage Strategy (AHS) Public Consultation Paper. Since 1976, the AICCM has represented the conservation profession in Australia. AICCM has worked to promote the preservation of Australia's cultural heritage in recognition of the role that material culture plays in establishing and enhancing our national identity and the identity of groups and individuals throughout our nation.

Our organisation believes that:

- The development of an Australian Heritage Strategy is an opportunity to re-affirm the importance of heritage conservation and preservation, and of the heritage sector as a whole.
- Conservation enriches people's experience of material culture and provides opportunities to develop greater knowledge of the technologies and cultural practices that have produced the objects we keep
- Conservation preserves the significance of cultural materials and thus the stories associated with them

We agree with a number of the observations and recommendations presented in the supporting essays as reflected in the following document. However, we do not wish to limit our response to the AHS Public Consultation Paper questions but take this opportunity to provide a framework for a broader discussion that we hope will help to inform the development of a more comprehensive national heritage strategy.

2. About the organisation

The Australian Institute for Conservation of Cultural Materials (AICCM) is the peak body for cultural material conservation in Australia. It is a non-profit organisation concerned with the conservation, preservation and provision of access to Australia's tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Our membership includes over 550 professional conservators working in galleries, libraries, archives, museums and private practices across the country and internationally as well as allied professionals such as archivists, architects, curators, librarians and volunteers.

3. Australia's cultural heritage system

The AHS Public Consultation paper refers to heritage as defined by built and natural heritage sites, or place and aspects of intangible heritage culture e.g. stories, languages and experiences inherited from the past. This definition of heritage, as limited to place or immovable heritage is reflected through many of the essays; however several authors make reference also to

moveable cultural heritage such as historical artefacts and works of art (e.g. Clark p.25). Similarly, the front cover of the NHS Consultation Paper depicts primarily heritage and cultural sites but includes an image of Ned Kelly’s armour, held in the State Library of Victoria collection and treated by conservators.

This highlights the ambiguous concept of heritage as mediated between tangible and intangible, moveable and immovable heritage forms (Figure 1). AICCM understands that the DSEWPC is focused with those aspects of heritage associated with tangible-immovable and intangible moveable and immovable forms and commends the development of an AHS to address these, however it must address its exclusion of tangible-moveable heritage. As MacDonald notes “the lack of clear understanding about what heritage is, is one key area where the government can play a role to improve heritage discussions”. And in doing so, it will help to highlight the absence of federal government policy, funding and support in the area of moveable cultural heritage.

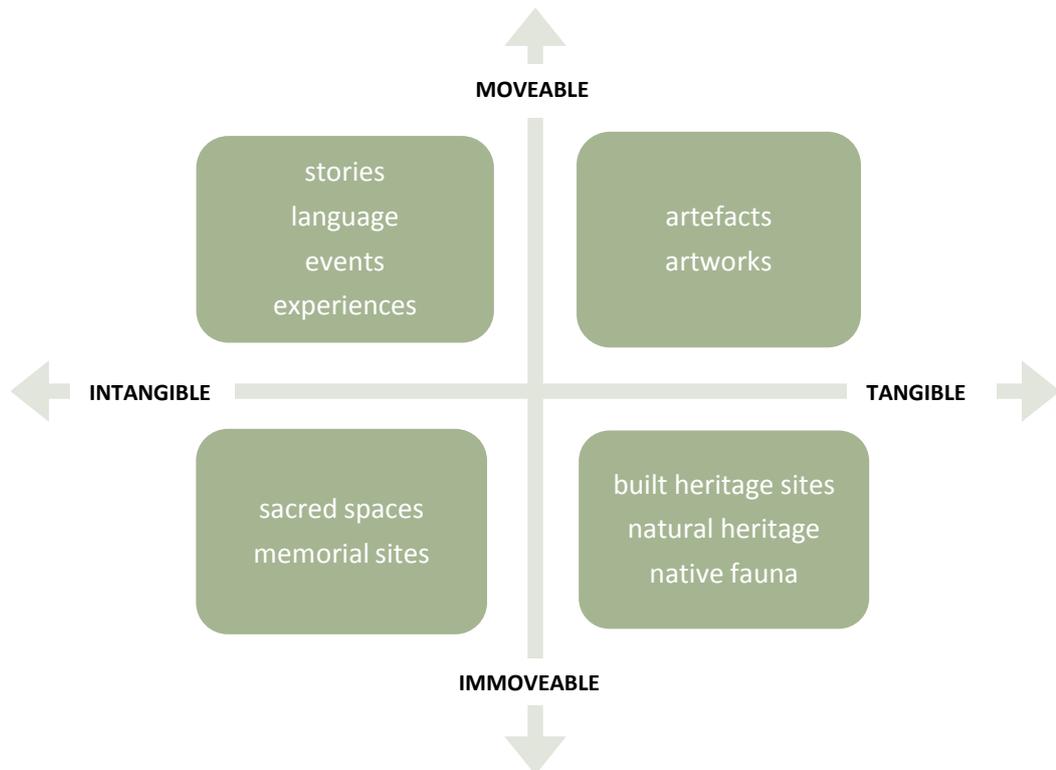


Figure 1. The various aspects of heritage

3.1. Leadership in heritage preservation

AICCM is committed to preserving our tangible and intangible heritage to enable our nation's stories to be told. We aim to preserve significant objects from the past and present, which is an investment for the future. It is through these objects that we can share our knowledge, experience and assist others to care for their heritage. This is demonstrated by the work we have done in the past. For example, as part of the [Heritage Collections Committee](#) (HCC) Conservation and Collection Management Working Party, AICCM members were instrumental in developing a range of policies and publications that ensured long-term preservation of Australia's Cultural Heritage. These documents include:

- Heritage Collections Committee and Cultural Ministers Council, *National Conservation and Preservation Policy for Movable Cultural Heritage*, Canberra, 1995.
- Cultural Ministers Council and Heritage Collections Council, *National Conservation and Preservation Policy and Strategy: Australia's heritage collections*, Commonwealth Department of Communication and the Arts, Canberra, 1998.
- A number of publications focused on collections management and care as part of the Heritage Collections Council. They are: *Significance* (2001), *Significance 2.0* (2009), *re-Collections* (1998) *Be Prepared* (2000) and *Guidelines for Environmental Control in Cultural Institutions* (2002).

Many of our members are represented on national and international conservation bodies including AusHeritage and ICOM-CC.

4. The management of moveable cultural heritage

The preservation of moveable cultural heritage sits within a policy and funding wilderness. The work undertaken to preserve our moveable heritage collections and provide the research and education to institutions and the public on best care practices sits at the periphery of several existing federal portfolios. For example, over the last 6 months the AICCM National Council has responded to three federal discussion papers including this in an effort to find greater recognition of its activities. These were:

1. National Cultural Policy (DRALGAS) - to highlight the role of preservation in a policy focused on arts creation through new technologies and celebration of Indigenous culture
2. National Research Priorities (DIISRTE) - to advocate for the inclusion of HASS as a means for supporting cultural heritage preservation
3. Australian Heritage Strategy (DSEWPC) - to advocate for the inclusion of heritage artefacts

Current departmental divisions do not reflect an activity that is truly interdisciplinary with activities that include scientific analysis of and research into preserving material culture, undertaking preventive and remedial treatment to ensure collections access, and the celebration of memory and heritage through collections care and community education. The inadequacy of the federal government to address such complex, inter-disciplinary issues and the call for greater inter-organisational engagement has been highlighted in a number of APS publications¹.

It is imperative that the federal government work towards resolving this piecemeal policy approach to cultural materials preservation through the development of an overarching arts and heritage body to develop and support effective programs, activities and policy-making. With responsibility for supporting the range of activities that form the arts, heritage and culture ecosystem, that is, arts creation through to interpretation and celebration, underpinned by preservation and conservation, the federal agency may more effectively manage cultural heritage in all its forms more effectively.

4.1. Moveable cultural heritage: social, financial and cultural benefits

The benefits associated with heritage tourism to heritage places are also applicable to heritage tourism to public and private collections as reflected in cultural tourism research. Attendance to museums, galleries and aboriginal art and cultural displays, or heritage of a movable nature was attended by 57% and 20% of overseas cultural heritage visitors (ABS, 2011). Within the domestic heritage tourism market, tourism to collecting institutions made up over a third of day visitors and 43% of overnight heritage tourists (ABS, 2011).

4.2. Cultural heritage in public collections

The governance of the many of the larger museums and galleries is shared amongst the Minister for the Arts, the Trust and the Director, with the Act providing a framework for carrying out their respective roles.

The two primary imperatives commonly cited in the statutes or similar instruments for establishing and defining museums and galleries are:

- to preserve and care for collections in perpetuity
- display them and use them to educate, enlighten and entertain

Some institutions undertake their own research into preventive and remedial care for their collections however few resources exist to support and share this knowledge more broadly. Codes of Ethics and Practice have been developed at both the national and international level

¹ These include: Australian Public Service Commission 2007, *Tackling Wicked Problems: A Public Policy Perspective*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, and Management Advisory Committee 2004, *Connecting Government: Whole of Government Responses to Australia's Priority Challenges*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra

by such non-government agencies (NGO) such as ICCROM and ICOMOS and professional bodies including the Australian Institute of the Conservation of Cultural Materials (AICCM), Museums Australia (MA) and the Australian Society of Archivists (ASA). These communities form the consensus on what are accepted values and best practice for collections management.

4.3. Cultural heritage in private collections

The vast majority of moveable heritage collections are held in private hands however little has been done to develop public education in this area. The AICCM is developing a number of outreach programs to help educate the public in this area. This includes the development of the Heritage Emergency Action Response Team (HEART) to assist with the preservation of cultural heritage following natural disasters. This project aims to develop an Australian wide network of conservators trained in disaster recovery of cultural collections and ready to travel to affected areas to assist museums and communities in their recovery process. Its long-term goal is to develop community resilience to loss of history and heritage following major disasters – which often leads to loss of community.

Professional private conservators provide a critical point of expertise for privately held heritage. Over the last 25 years, this sector has developed to the point where most capital cities are well-provided with private conservators. However, many private collectors and owners of personal and national heritage are unaware of the need for conservation and preservation approaches to the care of collections, and the fact that there are private conservators able to assist them. AICCM is establishing a regular 'Preservation Day' in order to raise awareness of the need for, and support with, collections care. This will be accompanied by ongoing development of small publications to distribute to the public covering conservation issues – particularly regarding damage from fires and floods.

5. Collaborative platforms for heritage management

The closure of the Collections Australia Network (2011), Collections Council of Australia (2010) and the Culture Portal (June 2010) has removed key frameworks for information and resource sharing across the heritage industry. In particular, the loss of federal funding for the Collections Australia Network has meant the loss of a vibrant discussion forum for the heritage community. When this forum was active (initially under AMOL – Australian Museums On Line), many diverse topics were discussed with contributions from all ranges of heritage professionals. There is no substitute for this, as many professionals are unable to attend conferences outside their own areas of expertise given time and funding constraints. This loss means that the opportunity for collaboration leading to initiatives and efficiencies is severely diminished.

5.1. The case for a National Heritage Conservation Centre

The development of a National Heritage Conservation Centre in Australia is long overdue. After the impressive gains of the 80's and 90's towards the recognition of heritage through such documents as the National Conservation and Preservation Policy for Movable Cultural Heritage (1995), The Burra Charter (1999) and Significance (2001), the absence of an over-arching body to facilitate cross-disciplinary discussion or share intellectual and financial resources has led to a weakening of capacity.

The National Heritage Conservation Centre model has been adopted by such countries as:

- USA - The Getty Conservation Institute: preservation of immovable and moveable cultural heritage
- Japan - National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, Tokyo: includes music, dance theatre, immovable sites such as caves and architecture as well a moveable heritage
- Japan - Nara National Research Institute for Cultural Properties: includes archaeology, conservation, cultural landscapes etc.
- Netherlands - Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage: deals specifically with moveable cultural heritage
- Canada - Canadian Conservation Institute: ongoing research into all conservation issues and needs
- South Korea - National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage: Research, and conservation, of national heritage – moveable, immovable, tangible and intangible.

Its main purpose would be to provide a national perspective and direction of the research requirements for conservation of Australia's heritage, along with policy and program advice for federal initiatives.



6. References

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011) *4172.0 - Arts and Culture in Australia: A Statistical Overview*.

<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Products/70B12CB259912DF6CA257968000CB5C8?opendocument> [Accessed 31 May, 2012]