

# AUSTRALIA

### 1.1 Introduction

**Year of ratification** 1974

#### Organisation submitting the report

- Environment Australia  
GPO Box 787  
Canberra, ACT 2601  
Australia

### 1.2 Identification of cultural and natural heritage properties

#### The status of national inventories

- The Register of the National Estate was established by the Australian Heritage Commission Act (1975) and is administered by the Australian Heritage Commission.
- In 2002, “more than 12,000 places of natural, historic and indigenous significance” have been listed, ranging from local to national importance.
- Following 4 years of extensive consultation, new heritage legislation has been developed which will amend Australia’s Environment Protection & Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC) to establish a list of places of outstanding national heritage value and a list of Commonwealth places with heritage values. The Register of the National Estate will be maintained as a publicly accessible database of Australia’s natural and cultural heritage places.
- Emergency listing provisions have been included in the new system.
- A continent-wide assessment for sites of high-level significance for the evolution of eucalypts is underway.
- The Heritage Management Branch of Environment Australia maintains the list of Australia’s 14 WH properties.
- Each State and Territory of Australia has legislation which provides for the listing of natural and cultural heritage sites, as well as indigenous places.
- “Many Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander organizations also keep lists of important sites or significant sites to help ensure their protection. Given the sensitivity of cultural information, most of these lists are not publicly available.”

#### The preparation of a Tentative List

- “Australia’s Tentative List is determined by the Minister for the Environment and Heritage in accordance with formal heritage policy commitments of the government. The Commonwealth Government announces publicly its intention to nominate particular areas or sites.”

#### Nominations and the nomination process

- All 14 properties nominated by Australia to the WH Committee have been inscribed on the WH List.
- 1981 3 nominations (inscribed)
  - (a) Great Barrier Reef
  - (b) Kakadu National Park (1987, 1992)
  - (c) Willandra Lakes Region
- 1982 2 nominations (inscribed)
  - (a) Tasmanian Wilderness (extended 1989)
  - (b) Lord Howe Island Group
- 1986 Central Eastern Rainforest Reserves (inscribed, extended 1994)
- 1987 Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park (inscribed, cultural values 1994)
- 1988 Wet Tropics of Queensland (inscribed)
- 1991 Shark Bay, Western Australia (inscribed)
- 1992 Fraser Island (inscribed)
- 1994 Australian Fossil Mammals – Riversleigh / Naracoote (inscribed)
- 1997 2 nominations (inscribed)
  - (a) Heard & McDonald Islands
  - (b) Macquarie Island
- 2000 Greater Blue Mountains (inscribed)
- Nominations in process include Purnululu National Park (for Committee consideration in 2003) and the Royal Exhibition Building and Carlton Gardens, Melbourne (to be considered in 2004). An assessment and nomination of a serial listing of Aboriginal rock art may proceed subject to consultations with Traditional Owners and other stakeholders.
- Challenges to a Rock Art nomination include: (i) “insufficient comparative analysis currently available at a global level... especially indigenous heritage”; (ii) the need to negotiate agreements between main stakeholders; and (iii) need to ensure adequate representation of Australia’s natural and cultural heritage.

### 1.3 Protection, conservation and presentation of the cultural and natural heritage

#### Integration of heritage and planning

- The Environment Protection & Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC) came into force in 2000 and guarantees “up-front protection and improved management” for WH properties. The Act replaces the World Heritage Properties Conservation Act 1983 (WHPC).

- An action that will or is likely to have a significant impact on the WH values of a declared WH property is subject to a rigorous environmental assessment and approval regime under the EPBC Act. Significant penalties apply under this Act.
- The WHPC Act was the “first specific national legislation for the protection of World Heritage enacted by a State Party to the WH Convention”.
- The WHPC Act enabled Australia to make regulations to protect its WH Properties from threatening actions. “The legislation, in effect, operated as a last resort mechanism for stopping specified actions.”
- The EPBC Act amalgamated the following Commonwealth statutes: (i) Environment Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act (1974); (ii) Endangered Species Protection Act (1992); (iii) National Parks & Wildlife Conservation Act (1975); (iv) WH Properties Conservation Act (1983); and (v) the Whale Protection Act (1980).
- The Minister of the Environment has the authority to accredit management plans for WH properties. It is noted that “separate approval under the EPBC Act is not required if a proposed action is to be taken in accordance with an accredited management plan.”
- “WH issues are taken into account by the Australian Government in national planning processes. They are also incorporated within regional planning processes such as the Commonwealth-State Comprehensive Regional Assessment-Regional Forest Agreement processes applied to native forests; and State regional planning exercises, such as FNQ2000 in Queensland.”
- Property-specific legislation includes: (i) the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act (1975); and (ii) the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area Conservation Act (1994).

### Participation of local communities

- The EPBC Act (1999) “preserves the joint management arrangements that exist with Traditional Owners at Kakadu and Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Parks. The Traditional Owners continue to constitute a majority of the Boards of Management.”
- Nearly all WH properties have “property-specific committees” for community and NGO input, private sector & scientific advice for building links with stakeholders and specialist expertise. It is noted that it is “necessary to ensure appropriate consultative mechanisms are in place to respect the views of Indigenous people in relation to knowledge of sacred sites, ceremonies, and other cultural aspects remaining exclusively within their domain rather than being published in a nomination document.”

### Tourism Development

- “Managing agencies for the individual WH properties produce published material such as brochures, maps and other interpretive material specific to the property for which they are responsible.”

### Financial measures and budget allowance

- Between 1995-2002, the Australian government “invested almost AUD\$ 500,000,000 (US\$ 305 million) in meeting its international obligations for World Heritage areas within Australia”.
- Federal government funding for WH is provided through the Natural Heritage Trust. “The period of the Trust has recently been extended and an additional AUD\$ 1 billion (US\$ 610 million) has been provided to fund the delivery of its objectives.”
- State governments also contribute significantly with responsibility for the day-to-day management of 11 of Australia’s 14 WH properties.
- \* International Assistance from WHF as follows:
 

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| 2001 | \$30,000 Technical Co-operation for Revised Operational Guidelines drafting group Meeting                           |
| 2003 | \$20,000 Training, participation of site managers to International Ranger Federation 4 <sup>th</sup> World Congress |

### Professional

- The Heritage Division of Environment Australia (with a ‘Heritage Assessment’ and ‘Heritage Management’ Branch) is responsible for the overall national overview & coordination of Australia’s obligations under the WH Convention.
- About 98 personnel staff work in the Heritage Division, which also includes staff supporting the Australian Heritage Commission.
- The Heritage Management Branch of EA has held 2-day workshops for WH property managers roughly every 1-2 years since 1993 (8 workshops listed).
- Commonwealth and State government agencies with responsibility for managing WH properties employ in total several thousand staff.

### New and improved services

- Between 1995-96, a Commonwealth parliamentary committee, the ‘House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment, Recreation and the Arts’ conducted a public inquiry into the management arrangements for inscribed WH Areas in Australia.

### Issues to be addressed

- Key national priorities for development through the next six-year periodic reporting cycle include: (i) the ongoing development of management plans that are consistent with the Convention and with Australia’s World Heritage Management Principles; (ii) enhanced participation of Indigenous peoples in the management of World Heritage properties; (iii) the continued development of secure and well directed funding arrangements that develop partnerships

between communities, landholders, industry and Governments; (iv) the further development of monitoring and reporting processes in the light of the outcomes of the Asia Pacific Region Periodic Reporting process; (v) encouragement of partnerships toward economically and ecologically sustainable enterprises and employment, particularly in tourism; (vi) the continued development of the Asia Pacific Focal Point, in co-operation with the region, to enhance its contribution to the implementation of the World Heritage Convention.

### 1.4 International co-operation and fund raising

#### National and International Fund Raising

- The Asia-Pacific Focal Point for WH (APFP) is a regional network for WH Managers, established to share experience, knowledge & resources between countries in the region. The APFP helps Asia-Pacific countries adopt and meet their obligations under the World Heritage Convention and ensure best practice management of their WH sites.
- An MoU on cooperation regarding World Heritage in the Asia-Pacific region was signed by Australia and UNESCO in May 2002. The MoU facilitates mutual arrangements between APFP and UNESCO's WH Centre and regional field offices for effective co-operation and prioritisation of Australia's contribution to regional coordination in WH matters.
- A list of 18 activities recently carried out by the APFP was presented including: (i) support for WH awareness raising and capacity building activities in the Pacific, including assistance to the Levuka Heritage Awareness Programme in Fiji and a Heritage Conservation, Cultural Tourism and Local Community Development project in Vanuatu, and secondment of expert staff to support World Heritage Activities in Western Samoa, (ii) implementation of \$250,000 project with Lorentz National Park, Indonesia, (iii) the creation of a website & a newsletter; (iv) support for workshops in Indonesia, Laos & New Zealand; (v) support for indigenous representation from Australia & Pacific Island states in WH meetings; (vi) support for publications; and (vii) funding to bilateral aid projects in the Pacific.

### 1.5 Education, information and awareness-building

#### Information and awareness measures

- The Commonwealth government has worked with State & Territory education networks in promoting World Heritage education in schools, including a 'WH Youth Forum' in conjunction with the WH Committee meeting in Cairns, 2000.
- Numerous tertiary courses in law, archaeology, geography & environmental studies include a "World Heritage element".

- "NGOs have made substantial contributions towards the identification and management of Australia's WH properties".

### 1.6 Conclusions and recommended actions

#### Conclusions and proposed actions

- Under the EPBC Act (1999) the Australian Minister for the Environment had made decisions relating to 82 proposed actions concerning WH protection as at June 2002, while "there were only six uses of the regulatory provisions of the WHPC Act in the course of the sixteen years of its operation."
- Under the MoU signed with UNESCO in May 2002, Australia has agreed to assist State Parties in the Asia-Pacific region to: (i) implement the WH Convention; (ii) promote best practice in management of WH properties; (iii) facilitate requests for international assistance for submission to bilateral & multilateral cooperation agencies; (iv) identify and secure funding for WH activities; and (v) share information & exchange views on management issues, including through the use of the internet.
- To achieve continuous improvement in WH management, Australia "will engage with property managers, expert bodies, technical committees and community consultative committees along with Australian chapters of the advisory bodies to identify practical, achievable and realistic recommendations for future action on a national basis."