



The World Archaeological Congress

Please reply to:

Dr Claire Smith
Department of Archaeology
Flinders University
GPO Box 2100
Adelaide, SA, 5001
AUSTRALIA
Claire.smith@flinders.edu.au

28th April, 2008

Greg Terrill
Assistant Secretary
WH Commissioner (Australia)
Heritage Division
Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts

Dear Mr Terrill,

Thank you for the opportunity for the World Archaeological Congress to submit a discussion paper on implementing priorities for Australia's World Heritage Committee membership. I enclose our responses to the questions posed by the committee. Given the short timeframe, some of these answers have had to be brief.

The World Archaeological Congress would welcome the opportunity for fuller discussion of these issues at a later point.

I'd like to wish the committee all the best in their endeavours.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Claire Smith
Claire.smith@flinders.edu.au

1a. What do you see as the key challenges/threats facing World Heritage? What would you suggest the Committee do to address these challenges?

One key challenge concerns the current emphasis on environmental heritage, which has failed to fully recognise the importance of cultural heritage, and the close relationship between the cultural and environmental heritage. Cultural heritage is one of the three components of Environmental and Social Impact Assessment, and nominally of Strategic Environmental Assessment, together with biophysical and social, but cultural heritage, including archaeology. However, cultural heritage has received inappropriate attention in many instances, and this needs to be redressed through targeted education and training programs, especially in those countries which are under-represented in World Heritage listings. Strong heritage management and conservation programs will facilitate World Heritage nominations and better protection of World Heritage properties.

1b. What do you see as Australia's strengths and weaknesses in relation to the World Heritage Convention?

Australia's strengths lie with the training of Indigenous site managers, the implementation of community-based cultural heritage management programs, the articulation of heritage and successful tourism enterprises, the ethics of working with Indigenous populations, and with the theoretical developments that shape the field. One important strength developing in Australia is the shaping of heritage concepts by Indigenous worldviews. The heritage landscape approach that is emerging in Australia is informed by classical Indigenous ways of structuring the world, as well as the traditions of European Australians. Australia has extensive experience in partnering with government and non-government organizations, and it should use this to support heritage managers in the Pacific.

Australia still has a weakness in applying some notions, of which are already well aware. For example, as far as we are aware, Australia does not have a single site listed as intangible cultural heritage. Australian systems of heritage management continue to perpetrate a western divide between culture and nature, and its associated constructions of authenticity, monuments, pristineness and extreme antiquity as key factors in cultural significance.

The cultural landscape approach in Australia is still more easily conceptualised for Indigenous landscapes rather than historical/European ones, the exception to this being the 2003 listing of the Castlemaine Diggings National Heritage Park, which was a first for Australia. The listing of the Castlemaine Diggings created a new category of heritage place, similar to a national park, but recognised for its cultural rather than its natural values, although natural values can still be recognised and protected under its aegis. This is congruent with contemporary developments in Europe that focus on historic environments, rather than individual monuments or sites or seek alliances with "green" environmental interests both of which can be interpreted as post-modern dimensions to heritage management.

Australia has many particular attitudes to cultural heritage management, particularly in recognising intangible heritage, and conflicting values and in predicating management on Indigenous peoples' ownership of their own heritage. Emerging from core differences in

the conceptualisation of time and space, a disjunction between Indigenous and European approaches to heritage has challenged the management of Australian heritage. Though there have been a number of areas of controversy, the overall outcome has been fruitful. While Australian cultural heritage management regimes still owe a number of their implicit assumptions to early modes of thinking about nature and Aboriginal people, there are many ways in which being forced to deal with conflicts over heritage has enriched the management of Australian heritage. At this point, the process of reconciling distinct viewpoints has created a richer, sustainable and more robust system for evaluating competing claims to the interpretation and ownership of both Indigenous and settler heritage in Australia. The strengths that Australia has developed from this process should be used to develop cultural heritage capacity in neighbouring countries.

1c. What aspects of Australia's site management expertise do you feel would benefit other signatories to the World Heritage Convention?

Australian expertise is world leading in terms of the training of Indigenous site managers, implementing the notion of shared landscapes (especially through the work of NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, particularly Denis Byrne), heritage landscapes and the ethics of working with Indigenous populations.

Australia has been designated the Asia Pacific Focal Point for World Heritage managers. In this capacity, Australia's strengths should be drawn upon to create training opportunities for cultural heritage managers in other countries in the region. Australia has fantastic training resources and this strength should be used to strengthen cultural heritage management in the Pacific region. Implementation could include twinning arrangements between Indigenous site managers in Australia and the Pacific into the area of cultural heritage management.

2a. Which aspects of World Heritage Committee governance would you like to see changed? How?

There needs to be greater representation of Indigenous voices, and of community voices, in line with the recognition of a 5th 'C' in the operational guidelines.

2b. How would you ensure implementation of the Convention is inclusive and relevant?

Greater inclusivity and relevance could be obtained through holding regional workshops with cultural heritage professionals and Indigenous populations and other members of local communities.

2c. What do you see as the key issues impacting on the integrity of the World Heritage Convention and how would you like to see these issues addressed?

A lack of training that results in under-representation of World Heritage sites in economically disadvantaged countries, such as those of the Pacific. Broad based heritage management/conservation training will provide the basis for provide a credible and sustainable platform for World Heritage nominations and protection of World Heritage properties.

3a. How should Australia enhance implementation of the World Heritage Convention in the region?

Now that the concept of community has been recognized in the 5th 'C' in the operational guidelines, the next step is to build cultural heritage capacity in local communities, especially with site managers, tourism workers and other people involved in cultural heritage management. This will provide a platform for credible site nominations and for the protection of World Heritage sites.

3b. What resources do you think the Pacific needs to assist in implementing the World Heritage Convention?

The major resource has to be professional training. Broad and sustained impact for the best use of funding can be achieved through effective partnering. For example, the World Archaeological Congress is developing a new program 'Archaeologists without Borders', which will be developing training opportunities for archaeologists and cultural heritage managers in economically disadvantaged countries, including those in the Pacific. Similarly, the International Association for Impact Assessment are currently drafting best practice principles for Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) and the evolving Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).

3c. How should implementation of the World Heritage Convention recognise and support the unique character of heritage in the Pacific?

It is essential that cultural heritage sites of Outstanding Universal Value in under-represented countries are identified and inscribed on the World Heritage List. The most effective way of ensuring that this happens is through education and training, in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions.