



# A guide to heritage listing in Australia

## Thresholds for different levels of heritage listing

This guide outlines how the different levels of heritage listing in Australia – world, national, state/territory and local are determined. At the highest level are places on the World Heritage List like Kakadu National Park and the Sydney Opera House, while on a local heritage list there might be a nature reserve or the local Post Office.

While all of these places are important, the Australian, state and territory and local government heritage systems distinguish between these levels for legal and practical reasons.

# heritage listing

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## Thresholds for different levels of heritage

### How heritage lists work

There are many heritage lists in Australia, and they can have different names – like register or inventory. Some are kept by the different levels of government while others are maintained by community or professional organisations. The main ones are Australia's World Heritage List; National and Commonwealth Heritage Lists; State and Territory heritage registers; and local government lists, which are integrated into planning systems.

In addition, community and professional organisations maintain lists, including those kept by the National Trusts in most states and territories; the Royal Australian Institute of Architects; and Engineering Heritage Australia. These lists recognise special places but do not provide legal protection.

Listing arrangements vary, some lists deal with all types of places, and some also deal with objects (eg documents or paintings). However, others only address one type of heritage, usually historic places. In some states, territories and local government areas there are no lists for natural and Indigenous heritage places.

Natural heritage is generally identified and protected through national or state/territory parks.

Many Indigenous heritage places are protected by specific state or territory legislation. Rather than relying on lists, this legislation provides blanket protection for types of places whether they have been formally identified or not. Individual places may also be listed, for example in those cases where a place may be affected by development.

### Criteria and thresholds

The key question in assessing any place is 'does it have sufficient heritage value to be put on the list?' Not every place has heritage value, and not every place with heritage value has sufficient value to meet the threshold justifying inclusion on a particular list.

Criteria and thresholds are key tools used to help decide these questions. Criteria are a collection of principles, characteristics and categories used to help decide if a place has heritage value.

While there are some minor differences in the wording of the statutory criteria used by jurisdictions, the Commonwealth/States and Territories have endorsed the following standard criteria, and agreed to move towards their adoption.

### Model criteria for identifying heritage places

*Criteria for identifying heritage significance taking into account aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or other special values to all generations.*

- Importance to the course, or pattern, of our cultural or natural history.
- Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history.
- Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history.
- Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments.
- Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.
- Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.
- Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions.
- Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history.

One or more of these criteria might apply to a place being considered for listing. Information to assist the use of heritage criteria includes the *Guidelines for the Assessment of Places for the National Heritage List*, available at [www.environment.gov.au/heritage/ahc/publications](http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/ahc/publications).

In addition to criteria, there is also a question of the threshold of significance required to achieve heritage listing – does it have sufficient value to justify listing and therefore protection by government? For example, a suburban hotel may be of historic significance to the local area and have interesting architecture, and the level of value might justify local listing. However, it may not have the very high level of value required for State/Territory, National, or World Heritage listing.

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Australian Scenics

### Applying to list a heritage place

This usually involves making a formal application or nomination to the agency which manages the list (see contact information on the back page). Often there is a standard form to complete and specific information to provide. Local government heritage lists are usually managed differently to national, state and territory government heritage lists because they are part of land use or planning systems, so it is best to contact them directly.

### Implications of heritage listing

This varies between governments. Generally, heritage listing provides protection for the place – focused on its heritage values or significance. Development or planning approval processes take account of the listing. In some cases, owners may also be eligible for financial or other conservation assistance.

A list of heritage agencies and their websites and contact details are on the back page – they will be happy to help with any questions.

### Roles and responsibilities – the different levels of government

All three levels of government – Australian (or Commonwealth), state and territory, and local – have a role in identifying and protecting heritage places. Some places can be important at more than one level (eg the Great Barrier Reef). In such cases, the place may be on more than one list and several levels of government may share responsibility for it.

This division of responsibility partly reflects the Australian Constitution and also an agreement made between all governments to rationalise responsibility for heritage. The role of governments in protecting places is undertaken in various ways. For example, the Australian and state and territory governments use legislation to protect heritage places from impacts, while local governments use planning schemes and instruments.



NSW Heritage Branch, Department of Planning



J. McKinnon/DEWHA



LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT	HERITAGE RESPONSIBILITY	HERITAGE LIST	THRESHOLD FOR LISTING
AUSTRALIAN / NATIONAL	<b>World Heritage</b> These places have outstanding universal values above and beyond the values they hold for a particular nation. For example, the Great Barrier Reef.	<b>World Heritage List</b> Places in Australia are nominated by the Australian Government but the list is maintained by the World Heritage Centre of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), based in Paris.	Outstanding universal value
	<b>National Heritage</b> Our most valued natural, Indigenous and historic heritage sites. They reflect the richness of our natural heritage and the story of our development, from our original inhabitants to present day, Australia's spirit and ingenuity, and our unique, living landscapes. For example, Old Parliament House in Canberra.	<b>National Heritage List</b>	Outstanding heritage value to the nation
	<b>Commonwealth Heritage</b> These are places owned or controlled by the Australian Government. For example, Geraldton Drill Hall Complex, WA.	<b>Commonwealth Heritage List</b>	Significant heritage value
STATE AND TERRITORY	<b>State and territory heritage</b> These are places of special interest in the broader context of the state or territory. They must have some important significance to the state or territory in its widest sense (rather than just a locally important place). For example, a colonial building.	<b>ACT Heritage Register</b> <b>NSW State Heritage Register</b> <b>NT Heritage Register</b> <b>Queensland Heritage Register</b> <b>SA Heritage Register</b> <b>Tasmanian Heritage Register</b> <b>Victorian Heritage Register</b> <b>WA Register of Heritage Places</b>  Some of these lists deal with all types of heritage – natural, Indigenous and historic, and some also deal with heritage objects. Some states and territories also have a separate Indigenous site register.	Importance or significance to the state or territory
LOCAL GOVERNMENT	<b>Local heritage</b> These places are significant in the context of a local area. They contribute to the individuality and streetscape, townscape, landscape or natural character of an area and are matters controlled by local government. They often reflect the socio-economic or natural history of a local area. For example, a church or town hall.	ACT: incorporated in the territory register  NSW: NSW State Heritage Inventory/Local Environment Plan  Qld: local government heritage register  SA: list in Council Development Plan  Tas: list in planning scheme heritage schedules  Vic: scheduling in Heritage Overlay or other mechanism in local government planning scheme  WA: Municipal Inventory.	Importance or significance to the local community.

# Examples of different lists and thresholds

## LOCAL HERITAGE



NSW Heritage Branch, Department of Planning

### Catherine Hill Bay Coal Loader Jetty, NSW

Built in c1974, this long jetty is a substantial reminder of the two earliest coal mining ventures in Lake Macquarie, in 1873 and 1889, both of which had similar jetties at this site. The jetty is an outstanding and picturesque feature of the historic landscape.



Townsville City Council

### House, Townsville, QLD

This house appears to have been built after World War II and, with its late use of decorative shingle boards, it is a unique example of continuing influence of the Californian Bungalow and Queen Anne styles into the mid-20th century. It also contributes to the streetscape.



Duncan Marshall

### Dog Rock, Albany, WA

A distinctive geological monument made of granite resembling the head of a dog. A local landmark.

## STATE OR TERRITORY HERITAGE



Carnarvon Heritage Group Inc

### One Mile Jetty and Tramway Carnarvon, WA

Built in 1897–98 and later extended, the timber jetty is one of the few remaining from the period when shipping was the principal form of WA transportation. It was essential to the development of Carnarvon and the north west of WA.



J. McKinnon/DEWHA

### Ewanninga Conservation Reserve, NT

Prehistoric abraded and pecked engravings, which are an outstanding example of central Australian rock art, provide a source of information about the occupation of the Central Desert prior to European occupation.



Courtesy Heritage Victoria

### Gabo Island Lighthouse Gabo Island, VIC

Built of local pink granite in 1859–62, this lighthouse was a key part of the system of navigation aids planned for Bass Strait in 1841. The tower's profile was replicated for all later lighthouses in Victoria.



Philip Wright/DEWHA

### Adelaide Mosque, 1889, SA

Historically significant as one of the few relics of Afghan immigration to South Australia in the 19th century. Afghan camel drivers played an important role in the development of outback South Australia.



EPA Qld

### Adelaide Steamship Company Ltd Building, Cairns, QLD

The building is important in contributing to our understanding of the evolution of Cairns as the major port of far north Queensland in the early 20th century, and for its special association with the Adelaide Steamship Company Ltd. This company made a major contribution to the economic development of far north Queensland in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.



Michelle McAulay/DEWHA

### Great Zig Zag Railway and Reserves Lithgow, NSW

This railway, constructed 1863–69, had a profound influence upon the development and economy of western NSW. At the time it was the greatest civil engineering work in Australia, considered worldwide as an engineering marvel. It reflects the difficulty experienced in crossing the Blue Mountains and engineering compromises. The sandstone escarpments and viaducts provide a dramatic juxtaposition to the nearby urban development.



DEWHA

### Reid Housing Precinct mostly 1926–27, ACT

One of Canberra's Garden City heritage precincts that collectively and individually demonstrate the early principles of Garden City planning. One of the underpinnings of the initial planning of Canberra by a sequence of government authorities between 1920 and the Second World War (1939–45). Its intention was to create healthy working and living environments for urban residents, many of the principles being integral to Walter Burley Griffin's winning design for the new Australian capital.



Claire Baker/DEWHA

### Kangaroo Bluff Battery 1881–85, TAS

This battery is excavated into the bedrock of the bluff and is placed to allow a clear field of fire across the channel of the Derwent River below. The Bluff Battery is significant as a manifestation of the phases of military history from 1867–c1920, its ability to demonstrate the principal characteristics of a Victorian era military facility, and has archaeological potential to contribute to a greater understanding of Tasmanian history.



Mark Mohell/DEWHA

### Lithgow Blast Furnace 1906–1928, NSW

This blast furnace was the sole Australian producer of iron ore during its first seven years of operation and remained the major producer until closure in 1928. It reflects the growth of the Australian iron and steel industry and the confidence of the emerging nation. These industries were of enormous importance to NSW and Lithgow. The furnace has aesthetic appeal as a ruin and significance as a symbol of the struggle for labour conditions and its surviving features are a resource for studying technological change in ironmaking.



## NATIONAL HERITAGE



John Baker/DEWHA

### Echuca Wharf, Echuca, VIC

An outstanding survivor of the booming Murray River trade of the late 1800s, servicing the pastoral districts of the Riverina and Western NSW during a boom that transformed Australia's economy, and contributing to the move to Federation. Echuca quickly became the pre-eminent port on the river, and the second biggest port in Victoria.



Mark Mohell/DEWHA

### Mount William stone hatchet quarry, VIC

An important source of stone hatchet heads which were traded over a wide area of south-east Australia. The quarry area has evidence of both surface and underground mining, with 268 pits and shafts, some several metres deep, where sub-surface stone was quarried.



DEWHA

### Old Parliament House 1927, ACT

The home of Australia's federal Parliament for 61 years, and important for significant milestones of Australia's democratic history that were forged here.



Philip Wright/DEWHA

### Old and New Parliament Houses, SA

These buildings are significant for their association with the enfranchisement of men and women in the 19th century: full adult manhood suffrage (1856) first fully secret ballot elections (1857); and votes for women and ability to stand for parliament (1894). It was one of the first jurisdictions worldwide to give women the vote and the first jurisdiction in the world to allow women to stand for parliament. South Australia also strongly influenced the granting of voting and standing rights to women in federal elections (1902).



Australian Scenics

### Richmond Bridge, TAS

This 1825 convict bridge has outstanding heritage value to the nation because of its rarity as the earliest Australian large stone arch bridge and its aesthetic value. It has survived with few significant changes since it was first constructed.



DEWHA

### Bondi Beach, Sydney, NSW

Bondi Beach is one of the world's most famous beaches. It is also significant as the site of the foundation of Australia's first recognised surf lifesaving club in 1907. Its central place in the development of beach culture in Australia is also significant.

# More information

This guide has been produced as an initiative of all the heritage and environment ministers of Australian Governments – the Environment Protection and Heritage Council.

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Front cover image: Echuca Wharf, Victoria, John Baker/DEWHA



**Australian Government**

## **NATIONAL**

(including World Heritage, National Heritage, Commonwealth Heritage)  
Heritage Division

Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts

Phone: 02 6274 1111

Web: [www.environment.gov.au/heritage](http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage)



## **ACT**

ACT Heritage

Department of Territory & Municipal Services

Phone: 13 2281

Web: [www.tams.act.gov.au/live/heritage](http://www.tams.act.gov.au/live/heritage)



**NSW GOVERNMENT**  
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**Queensland  
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**Government of South Australia**  
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**Tasmania**  
Explore the possibilities

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