Key opportunities for national cooperation and action

Following are a set of key opportunities for developing natural and cultural heritage tourism in Australia. These have been extracted from the issues identification process, and based on comments received from Taskforce members to date.

The Taskforce was particularly asked to identify opportunities for tourism and heritage which:

- Develop nationally agreed approaches for marketing, training and management
- Promote partnerships in industry, state and local government and communities
- Build on other national initiatives in tourism and natural and cultural heritage
- Provide practical approaches for assisting regional communities
- Expand Indigenous involvement in the tourism industry

The Issues Identification Paper detailed issues and potential actions under the four headings:

1. Developing the product
2. Managing tourism at natural and cultural heritage places
3. Planning and coordination
4. Supporting people and products

Potential actions that relate to issues identified, and the opportunities most frequently suggested often have multiple benefits, so defy categorisation under these headings. The headings used to group the key opportunities are:

Getting people to places
Developing regional potential
Keeping places special
Building Skills
Developing Indigenous tourism

These opportunities present a realistic number of key activities that have both national scope, and direct practical application. You will note that there is a relationship between many of opportunities. Persued in combination these opportunities would create greater momentum for sustainable development of heritage and tourism in Australia.

This version is for Taskforce consideration only.

Getting people to places

Key opportunity: An Australian heritage and travel website

A new key website linking heritage and travel information. The site would give international and domestic travellers access to information about places, pre-organised itineraries (including existing trails) and allow users to customise or 'build' their own itineraries based on their personal interests. The site would enable users to undertake combinations of place searches (eg.'all World Heritage Areas' or 'fossil sites'), regional searches (eg.'National Parks in Western NSW') or thematic searches (eg. 'convict heritage').

The site could provide links to key tourism and heritage agency sites, providing a nationally-coordinated 'front-end' for agencies to service tourist needs more effectively. There is potential for this project to be a partnership initiative with State tourism and heritage agencies, national institutions such as the National Museum of Australia, and other partners such as motoring organisations. The initiative would have to be developed in relation to other key tourism web facilities such as the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse, australia.com and seeaustralia.com sites.

Limited heritage-based travel websites have been developed elsewhere (e.g. United States National Parks Service Travel Website: http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/travel/), however this project would be a major new development internationally in its concept and scope. Corporate support could be encouraged through 'key partner' corporate links or sensitively placed advertising on the site.

Initially the functionality of the site should be trialled using a few key regions, later to extend nationally.

The key outcomes would be:

- Information about heritage places made more accessible for international and domestic tourists.
- A respected and influential travel planning tool enabling information to be downloaded and printed prior to travel.
- A focus for heritage assets and itinerary options in regional Australia.
- Increased profile for small regional destinations and operations to travellers.
- Existing, specifically-developed travel guides and other publications made available to travellers through the site.

Key opportunity: Nationally-coordinated heritage destination signage

Coordinated national action to improved the standard and profile of road, wayside and destination point signage relating to heritage destinations.

Establishment of national guidelines for signage for heritage destinations to be used across Australia at different levels of application from state road programs to individual places. This would provide national coordination through state signage policies and regional and local signage guidelines. Building on the current *Information Signage Project* being undertaken by the state tourism organisations, signage would be developed for greater international recognition and be in alignment with the *Australian Standard 1742 Part 6 – Services for Tourist Signs for Motorists*.

The key outcomes would be:

- A more distinctive, standard and systematic approach to signage for natural, Indigenous and historic heritage attractions nationally;

- Road and destination signage which provides a higher profile for Australian heritage places, and which is more recognisable to international visitors.

Key opportunity: Using heritage themes in tourism - *Telling the story*

Development of key products which promote stronger links between tourism and heritage themes. Greater use of themes in product development, interpretation and marketing will help increase the quality and diversity of tourism product available. Existing sets of themes agreed by state heritage agencies should be built on, and working with tourism industry representatives, ensure these are presented in a useful form for the tourism industry, such as through a specific guide and/or a training module. The Australian heritage and travel website, nationally coordinated signage and other cooperative initiatives would also assist in seeing themes more effectively used.

Themes that have particular potential for further tourism product development could be identified with recommendations provided for state and regional tourism organisations and other agencies. Examples of key themes that could be coordinated nationally from a travel perspective include convict heritage, maritime heritage, goldfields, Australia at war, fossil sites, etc.

An information package for the tourism industry to assist it to use heritage themes more effectively in product development, interpretation and marketing would be developed. This would assist operators developing tours and interpretation and local governments and regional organisations to better identify local development opportunities.

The key outcomes would be:

- A collaboration between state heritage agencies building on existing work on heritage themes.

- A broad set of national themes accessible for the tourist industry with a structure for developing regional and local themes.

- Identification of themes considered to have a high potential for developing new tourism products or improving existing products.

- A short publication for tourism operators, regional tourism organisations, local governments and others that covers an introduction to heritage themes and how to use themes to market products and improve visitor experience.

Developing regional potential

Key opportunity: *Assessing needs for action* **- Integrated regional heritage and tourism assessments**

This area of activity would promote and implement more effective integration of heritage and tourism planning in regions and at heritage places. Based on existing tourism and heritage planning materials, a heritage and tourism assessment model will be further refined and its application demonstrated in one or two key heritage destinations and contexts. *Ecoram – Ecotourism Rapid Assessment Model* and the assessment model workshopped at the *Cairns 2002 International Ecotourism Conference* provides the basis for refining the process to be used for regional development.

This opportunity would produce a key resource for use by local government in particular, but also regional tourism organisations, and land and heritage managers. A quick and straightforward assessment process will assist in:

- preliminary assessments of tourism development potential in regions.
- identification of tourism and heritage issues to be considered in management or regional planning.
- development of regional heritage and tourism plans and action plans
- more effective planning for infrastructure considering both heritage and tourism needs.

The process should be demonstrated at a number of locations with different tourism and heritage characteristics. Purnululu in Western Australia, currently the subject of a World Heritage nomination is an immediate candidate for such an assessment, where it could be used to help plan in an integrated way for tourism growth, protecting heritage values, infrastructure and community development.

The key outcomes would be:

▪ An established integrated planning model that can be used nationally.

▪ Materials and training for professional development in applying the model.

▪ Demonstrated application of integrated tourism and heritage planning at key heritage destinations.

Key opportunity: *People who can help* **– Access to advice**

This opportunity focuses on providing access to the advice and information that people need to more effectively realise the potential of tourism based on heritage.

The gap between the desire to develop sustainable tourism, and knowing how to go about it, needs to be bridged. Some form of facilitation or more effective access to information and advice has been identified as crucial. This would enable people 'at the coal face' such as tourism operators, local governments, regional tourism organisations and Indigenous communities to realise the potential that exists. Specific support to areas and products most likely to achieve success, and a specific regional development and training role could be very effective. Delivery could be achieved through facilitators or resource officers, working in a similar way to agricultural

extension officers or environment facilitators (eg. Landcare, Bushcare and Indigenous land management facilitators).

Tourism and heritage facilitators/resource officers would:

- Provide advice to local government, regional tourism organisations, heritage managers and community organisations on heritage and tourism issues.

- Connect people to suitable expertise.

- Facilitate links to available information and resources.

- Track and report on case studies and success stories.

- Facilitate project development;

- Promote professional development courses.

Options include placing resource officers in each state local government association (eg. Commonwealth Environment Resource Officer Scheme), at state government level, or funding 'travelling trainers' for a period of time (eg. national *Leave No Trace* Program in USA). Work programs for such officers should be overseen by a national steering committee. Some travelling component to visit regional, remote and Indigenous communities would be necessary. The facilitators could be responsible for identifying areas with potential for Heritage and Tourism development.

A web-based 'where to go for help' page would be a practical outcome associated with this opportunity.

The key outcomes would be:

- Specific encouragement provided to regional projects with a higher potential for success - 'backing the winners'.

- Access to information and links to existing programs improved for rural and regional communities

- Training and professional development taken to the people that need it.

Keeping places special

Key opportunity: *Learning from others* **– A coordinated online 'clearinghouse' for information on developing and managing tourism at heritage places.**

The key opportunity is to provide a central information point ('clearinghouse') accessible to all that collects and disseminates information on issues, research, practice in heritage and tourism and resources available. This would provide a central point for information on managing tourism impacts, monitoring heritage values, examples of heritage and tourism in practice and key contacts and weblinks to government and other resources and support.

The facility would be a key resource for everyone working in, or interested in heritage and tourism. It would provide a mechanism for coordinating information held by state and commonwealth agencies, national research institutions and industry bodies. The CRC for Sustainable Tourism would be a key component/partner of the initiative. The clearinghouse could be run as a partnership between government and academic institutions. Its functions could be extended to provide a nationally-coordinated system to categorise research and monitoring activities and identify specific research needs. A commitment for regular exchange of information and liaison between heritage and tourism interests regarding information needs would be desirable.

The clearing house could act as a central repository of case study information. Specific areas of the site can be devoted to case studies for natural, Indigenous and historic heritage. Information can be updated over time, and previous case studies revisited. Content could be contributed to and updated by facilitators and agency contacts. There are numerous examples of clearinghouses used to support good practice, particularly in healthcare, education, environment and information technology.

The key outcomes would be:

- Online central access point for information relating to managing impacts, monitoring of heritage values and case studies of heritage and tourism in action.
- A tool to assist in identifying gaps and priorities for further research.

Key opportunity: *Travel well* **- Coordinated national minimal impact program**

This opportunity would see the development of a common core set of minimal impact communications messages, including both environmental and social factors. These core messages could inform local and environment-specific minimal impact programs.

Key activities to communicate these messages more effectively would be persued (eg. domestic media, info provided to tourist visa applicants or back of toilet doors). At a later stage the program could be extended to identify national needs for environment-specific, or site-type specific minimal impact materials. There is potential for industry/corporate partnerships to assist in delivering this initiative (eg. In the USA, *Leave No Trace* is a national program run by an independent non-profit organization which receives corporate sponsorship to promote messages of environmental and cultural responsibility).

The key outcomes would be:

- Tighter set of national core messages appropriate to Australia that includes both environmental and social factors.
- Strategy determining appropriate communication methods.

Building skills

Key opportunity: Professional development for tourism and heritage

Develop specific professional development programs relevant to tourism and heritage with key education partners.

This could be in the form of nationally-available online courses (eg. through Open Learning Australia) and supporting hardcopy resources linked to both the Tourism Industry Training Package (through Tourism Training Australia) and, for example, the ANTA Land Management Training Package (through the Rural Training Council of Australia). Various training providers around Australia would be offered to develop components of the nationally-coordinated program. These components would also complement and augment existing courses offered around Australia. Four principal professional development components would be focussed on and developed in stages:

1. integrated tourism and heritage planning

2. monitoring and managing impacts of tourism on natural and cultural heritage

3. utilising heritage themes in tourism product development and interpretation

4. managing the business of heritage and tourism

These would augment the recently developed online Open Learning Australia Course on *Protecting Heritage Places: An introduction to planning for the conservation of natural, Indigenous and historic heritage*.

Components of these training modules could also be delivered in a workshop format (as is the *Protecting Heritage Places* materials) to assist in product development, project planning, and grant application preparation.

Take up of these professional development modules would be encouraged by links to ANTA national accredited training programs in tourism and land management, promotion through industry, heritage and local government channels, and links to industry accreditation (NEAP, Green Globe).

Overall, this would provide a flexible model for professional development available across the country in both urban and remote areas that can be used by the Industry itself, and encouraged and supported by Commonwealth, State/Territory and Local Governments.

The key outcomes would be:

▪ A flexible set of core modules available for professional development nationally.

▪ Making training and professional development available for people living and working in remote and rural Australia.

▪ Opportunities through workshops related to these training modules, to assist communities and regions in planning and implementation of heritage and tourism.

Developing Indigenous tourism

Key opportunity: *Stepping stones* - Supporting Indigenous tourism product development

These proposals build on the identification of key issues and recommendations from Indigenous tourism interests prepared in response to *The 10 Year Plan for Tourism – A discussion paper*.

This key opportunity concentrates on supporting development of Indigenous tourism products in areas likely to achieve success. Based on proven experience in providing information and support for heritage planning in Indigenous communities where there are tourism issues, this component will refine a process and materials for use with Indigenous communities and tourism enterprises. Delivered through locally-based workshops, the aim would be to build confidence and skills with application to projects, leading toward longer-term partnership initiatives. The workshops would focus on developing quality products around local heritage and introduce communities, individuals and enterprises to relevant experience of other Indigenous communities and businesses in tourism.

This component would be multi-dimensional package, linking with and assisting in delivery of the *Respecting Our Culture (ROC) Tourism Development Initiative*. It would be a complementary part of the program of the proposed ROC coordinators, and associated support initiatives for managing businesses. Locally-based training workshops could be extended to partnerships with Indigenous education providers.

Pilot Projects supported by the Local Government Association of the Northern Territory, currently being developed, could be used to demonstrate the development and support process. These include: Daguragu/Kalkaringi area and Wave Hill walk off sites with the Daguragu Community Council and Macassan and World War II heritage sites and established enterprises in East Arnhem Land with the Milingimbi Community Council. Other projects should be trialled with Indigenous enterprises, possibly in conjunction with ROC operator trials commencing in 2003.

The key outcomes would be:

▪   A set of resource materials based on proven experience, to be used in regional Indigenous heritage tourism development.

▪   Demonstration of how supported Indigenous tourism development can work in practice.

Key opportunity: *Business on track* – Building business skills for Indigenous tourism

Building sound business and management skills for Indigenous tourism can be supported by delivering appropriate resources and advice at the right stages in business development. This opportunity would see the reactivation of business support tools which have been useful and appropriate but which are now out of print, such as the ATSIC *Strong Business, Strong Culture, Strong Country* workbook and video and the South Australian Tourism Commission publication *Guidelines for Tourism Joint Ventures between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Partners*. In addition, the *Financial Management Guide for Indigenous Tourism Businesses* (ATA 2002) is a comprehensive guide with practical support for operators. Cooperative production, promotion and distribution of these Indigenous tourism business development tools would represent a more effective national use of resources.

Indigenous tourism products presented in *A Talent for Tourism: Stories about Indigenous people in tourism* (Commonwealth Department of Tourism 1994) should be revisited to produce 'down the track' stories to present successful sustainable business advice to developing businesses. These

could be augmented with other suitable key case studies. This resource material should be actively used in any indigenous business development workshops or symposiums nationally, and made accessible to a wide audience.

The delivery mechanisms for providing these much needed resources in a timely and appropriate manner to Indigenous operators and communities should be addressed through workshop formats, business development symposia and facilitators/coordinators.

The key outcomes would be:

- Increased awareness in Indigenous communities of the business realities of getting involved in tourism.

- Improved business skills in existing and entrant Indigenous tourism businesses.

Key opportunity: *Welcome to Country -* **Raising awareness of Indigenous custodianship**

This key opportunity represents a national focus for raising awareness of Indigenous issues as people travel. There would be encouragement for broader use of 'welcome to country' messages from Indigenous groups through information in accommodation, welcome signage and in interpretation. 'welcome to country' materials would raise awareness about the Indigenous connection to country and appropriate behaviour at Indigenous sites and about Indigenous culture appropriate to regions.

There is an opportunity to advance the welcome to country concept through promoting partnership programs with major hotel and resort management groups, local governments, land management agencies and others.

This initiative would include seeking wider distribution channels and audience for messages contained in the brochure '*Welcome to our land*' (Aboriginal Tourism Australia) for both International and domestic visitors.

The key outcomes would be:

- Improved awareness about Indigenous groups' connection to country as people travel.

- Greater penetration of key messages relating to the diversity of Indigenous culture and appropriate behaviour at Indigenous sites and amongst Indigenous people.