



Australian Government

AUSTRALIA'S

National Heritage



Australia's Heritage Lists – Which List is which?

- ▶ **World Heritage List**
- ▶ **National Heritage List**
- ▶ **Commonwealth Heritage List**
- ▶ **Register of the National Estate**
- ▶ **State and territory heritage lists**
- ▶ **Local government lists**
- ▶ **National Trust list**
- ▶ **Indigenous site registers**
- ▶ **Historic shipwrecks register**
- ▶ **Other lists**
- ▶ **Multiple listings**
- ▶ **Accessing the lists**

There are many different lists or registers of natural and cultural heritage places throughout Australia. These are not comprehensive lists of heritage places, but lists of the places that have been identified and recorded up to the present time.

A heritage register listing will usually include the location of a place, ownership and title details, a description of the place, and sometimes a statement of significance explaining why the place is important.

Many registers emphasise the physical aspects of a place, or its scientific value, but may not document all the heritage values of a place.

World Heritage List

This is a list of places that are important to all the peoples of the world. The places on this list have outstanding universal values above and beyond the values they hold for a particular nation.

Sites nominated for World Heritage listing are inscribed on the list only after they have been carefully assessed as representing the best examples of the world's cultural and natural heritage. Australia currently has seventeen properties on the World Heritage List.

Only the Australian Government can nominate Australian places for entry on this list. The World Heritage Committee assesses nominated places against set criteria and makes the final decision on places that go on the World Heritage List. World Heritage sites in Australia are protected under Australian Government law.

National Heritage List

This is Australia's list of places with outstanding heritage value to our nation.

It is the national heritage values of a place that are recorded in the National Heritage List, and it is these values that are protected by listing. A place may have natural, Indigenous or historic values, or a combination of all three.

Anyone can nominate a place with outstanding heritage values for inclusion in the National Heritage List.

The Australian Heritage Council (the Council) assesses the values of nominated places against set criteria and makes recommendations to the Minister for the Department of the Environment and Water Resources (the Minister) about listing. The final decision on listing is made by the Minister.

So important are the heritage values of these places that they are protected by Australian Government laws and through special agreements with state and territory governments and with Indigenous and private owners.

Commonwealth Heritage List

The Commonwealth Heritage List is a list of natural and Indigenous and historic heritage places owned or controlled by the Australian Government.

These include places connected to defence, communications, customs and other government activities that also reflect Australia's development as a nation. The list comprises places, or groups of places, in Commonwealth lands and waters, that are identified as having Commonwealth heritage values.

Anyone can nominate a place for inclusion in the list. The Australian Heritage Council assesses nominated places against set criteria and makes recommendations to the Minister about listing. The final decision on listing is made by the Minister.

Australian Government agencies that own or control places included in the Commonwealth Heritage List are legally required to develop a plan to protect those places. Where agencies do not have their plans endorsed, they must ask the Australian Government Minister for the Environment and Water Resources for advice if they propose taking any action that may have a significant impact on the Commonwealth heritage place they own or control.

Register of the National Estate

The Commonwealth will phase out the Register of the National Estate (RNE) and introduced provisions to this effect in the Environment and Heritage Legislation Amendment Act (No.1) 2006. The provisions freeze the RNE, meaning that no new places can be added, or removed. In addition its statutory basis will be removed after a period of five years. The transition period will allow states, territories, local and the Australian Government to complete the task of transferring places to appropriate heritage registers where necessary and to amend legislation that refers to the RNE as a statutory list. The RNE will be maintained after this time on a non-statutory basis as a publicly available archive.

Historic shipwrecks register

The Australian National Shipwreck Database is a register of historic shipwrecks in Australian waters.

This register is funded by the Australian Government and by state governments and the Northern Territory and Norfolk Island Governments. The Department of the Environment and Water Resources administers the database.

State and territory heritage lists

The states and territories all maintain lists or registers of heritage places that have particular importance to the people of a particular state or territory.

Most states and territories limit their lists to places of historic and Indigenous importance. Others have lists that include natural, historic and Indigenous places. Places on a state or territory list are protected by that jurisdiction's laws.

Local government lists

In most states and territories, local government authorities keep heritage registers or lists often attached to the local or municipal planning scheme.

Some lists cover only historic places, while others also include natural areas and Indigenous places. Local governments may conserve heritage places through town planning and land use regulations. Their authority to protect places depends on the state's laws and council regulations.

National Trust list

This list is maintained by the National Trust in each state and territory.

The National Trust of Australia is a community-based organisation with independently constituted Trusts in each state and territory. Most National Trusts compile a heritage list for their state or territory, primarily of historic places, but they also include some Indigenous and natural places. Listing helps to provide recognition, and promote public appreciation and concern for local heritage.

Indigenous site registers

Indigenous site registers are lists of recorded Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander places which include religious or 'dreaming' sites, burial sites, rock art places, traditional camping sites and sometimes historic sites such as Aboriginal missions and massacre sites.

These registers are maintained by state and territory government Indigenous heritage authorities and by local land councils in some parts of Australia. Access to some information on Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander places may be restricted to respect the wishes of Indigenous communities and to ensure that access to this information does not put any cultural heritage places at risk.

Other lists

Some specialist organisations, such as the Royal Australian Institute of Architects and Engineers Australia, keep lists of important historic places, eg trees, Art Deco buildings, gardens and bridges.

Multiple listings

It is quite possible for a heritage place to be on more than one list.

World Heritage sites, for example, are also listed in the National Heritage List in recognition of their special significance to Australia, as well as the world. A national heritage place on Commonwealth land may also be included in the Commonwealth Heritage List. Non-statutory lists, like those maintained by the National Trust, may contain many places also found in Australian Government and state government registers.

The inclusion of a place in a number of heritage lists does not necessarily mean that it is subject to many regulations. For example, a place may be entered in the National Heritage List, but the Australian Government can decide to accredit relevant state laws if satisfied that they are adequate to ensure the protection of the National Heritage values of the place.

Accessing the lists

Many government heritage lists may be found on www.environment.gov.au/heritage and www.heritage.gov.au

Further information:

Heritage Division
Department of the Environment and Water Resources
GPO Box 787
Canberra ACT 2601
Tel: (02) 6274 1111
Fax: (02) 6274 2095
Email: heritage@environment.gov.au
Web: www.environment.gov.au/heritage