



MEDIA RELEASE

The Hon Peter Garrett AM MP

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts

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SEEKING COMMENTS ON INDIGENOUS HERITAGE LAW

Heritage Minister Peter Garrett today released a discussion paper for public comment on Australian laws to protect Indigenous heritage.

Mr Garrett said this is an opportunity for the public to contribute ideas on making the Commonwealth's *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984* (ATSIHP Act) more effective as a way to protect traditional areas and objects significant to Indigenous Australians.

"Working with Indigenous Australians, industry and all levels of government, my department will seek feedback on the current operation of the *ATSIHP Act 1984*, and how it could promote a more cooperative approach to Indigenous heritage protection nationally.

"It's important to make sure that any reforms to this legislation give Indigenous Australians the best opportunities to protect their traditional heritage, in balance with other social and economic considerations.

"This will help Indigenous Australians to maintain their traditions and cultural identity, ensuring Australia's exceptional cultural heritage is conserved and shared for generations to come.

"The Australian Government has released a discussion paper outlining proposals for possible reforms. I encourage all stakeholders to consider the discussion paper so a full range of views are available before the Government makes any decisions about changes to Indigenous heritage legislation."

Mr Garrett said during the public submission period representatives of the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts would visit about 30 regional centres across Australia to help explain the proposals and provide information on how to comment.

"All Australians benefit from protecting Indigenous heritage. It enriches our shared culture and demonstrates our nation's commitment to respecting Indigenous culture," Mr Garrett said.

Comments on the proposed reforms should be made in writing to the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts. More information about the consultation process and access to the discussion paper is available at www.heritage.gov.au/indigenous/lawreform