



HERITAGE
COUNCIL

OUR HERITAGE – WHAT MAKES US WESTERN AUSTRALIAN

STRATEGIC PLAN 2026–2029

Heritage places and stories are valued as part of our Western Australian identity



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Heritage Council of Western Australia acknowledges the Aboriginal people as the traditional custodians of Western Australia. We pay our respects to the Ancestors and Elders, both past and present, and the ongoing connection between people, land, waters and community. We acknowledge those who continue to share knowledge, their traditions and culture to support our journey for reconciliation. In particular, we recognise land and cultural heritage as places that hold great significance for Aboriginal people.

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INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIR

In the life of this plan Western Australia will commemorate the 200th anniversary of its founding as the Swan River colony. Of course, that is but a fleeting moment in a 60,000-year history of Aboriginal stewardship and continuing culture.

We have had Dutch exploration as early as 1616. French explorers visited our shores long before the British, and there is evidence of long-standing Indonesian trade with Aboriginal people. Albany celebrated its bicentenary in 2026 as did our Cocos Islands territory.

The date, 2029 is therefore not as significant as the opportunity it represents. It is a chance to celebrate our shared identity as Western Australians – from Perth to Kununurra to Kalgoorlie and Esperance and all points in between.

For its part, the Heritage Council of Western Australia is acutely aware of the part it plays in celebrating our shared identity. We do this by recognising and protecting significant heritage places across the length and breadth of the state, and by promoting the stories within those places.

Our heritage places are not just about buildings or locations. Their true worth is derived from the stories of the people who used them. Their history is painted through all cultures – from Aboriginal people to convicts and free settlers, and for workers and migrants. They are places of importance, their stories are embraced and celebrated by all.

It is our responsibility to make sure these places are valued and celebrated by present and future generations as an integral part of our diverse Western Australian identity.

This plan explains how we will discharge this responsibility for the next three years.

Darren Foster GAICD

THE ROLE OF THE HERITAGE COUNCIL

The Heritage Council of Western Australia serves as the State's principal advisory body on heritage matters, guiding the conservation, care and promotion of the places and stories that define Western Australia's identity. Operating under the *Heritage Act 2018*, the Council embodies a vision where our heritage places and stories are valued and shared as part of what makes us Western Australian. Through its statutory responsibilities, the Council maintains the State Register of Heritage Places, provides expert advice on heritage development, and ensures that Western Australia's cultural legacy is protected for current and future generations.

Beyond its regulatory functions, the Council actively works to increase both understanding and appreciation of Western Australia's cultural heritage, ensuring the full spectrum of Western Australia's stories and sense of place is preserved for generations to come. By administering conservation grants, sponsoring heritage events, and celebrating excellence through annual Heritage Awards, the Council fosters community connections to the stories that shape our State identity.

Looking ahead, the Heritage Council will continue strengthening partnerships with proponents, local governments, community organisations, and heritage owners to ensure Western Australia's heritage remains accessible, relevant and valued.



VISION

Heritage places and stories are valued as part of our Western Australian identity.

PURPOSE

Lead the conservation, care and promotion of heritage places and stories across Western Australia.

OBJECTIVES

1. Promote understanding and appreciation of Western Australia's cultural heritage.
2. Recognise the importance of places of cultural heritage significance and their stories in understanding the course of Western Australia's history.
3. Provide for the identification and documentation of Western Australia's places of cultural heritage significance.
4. Encourage and facilitate the conservation, continuing use, development and adaptive reuse of places of cultural heritage significance in ways that represent high standards of heritage conservation and in harmony with cultural heritage values.

WAYS OF WORKING

- Encourage and support good practice by owners, boost appreciation and understanding of heritage places, and build cultural tourism.
- Work constructively with those who are prepared to invest in the conservation and adaptive reuse of heritage places.
- Make it easier to do business, without compromising heritage standards.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- 1. Share the epic stories of Western Australia**
- 2. Enable the activation of heritage places**

PRIORITIES	STRATEGY	ACTIONS
Share the epic stories of Western Australia	1.1 Recognise significant places of importance to underrepresented groups	1. Progress identified HCWA priority registrations 2. Reduce assessment backlog 3. Undertake non-contiguous registrations (thematic)* 4. Streamline registration procedures and practices 5. Progress registrations with intangible values and provide advice on regulatory response to reduce red tape
	1.2 Promote the stories associated with heritage places	1. Increase visibility of places to tourists (multilingual) and locals through plaque program 2. Publish (online) significant dates in WA history, ensuring it is optimised for search engines 3. Through Heritage Conferences, promote appreciation of WA history and heritage 4. Promote history and heritage through social media and engagement with key identified stakeholders
Enable the activation of heritage places	2.1 Provide timely, practical and pragmatic advice to proponents	1. Undertake early engagement with proponents to achieve good heritage outcomes 2. Publish policies that are clear, effective and risk-based 3. Monitor compliance with Heritage Agreements and periodically review the condition of places on the State Register
	2.2 Recognise best practice in heritage conservation	1. Through grants program, mobilise private sector investment to achieve conservation outcomes 2. Through Heritage Awards, celebrate and promote high-quality heritage outcomes 3. Promote the economic and cultural value of good heritage outcomes through purposeful engagement (including by Council members) 4. Collaborate with government agencies on conservation or divestment of heritage buildings

* Non-contiguous registrations: A registered place, precinct or group that comprises multiple elements, which are captured within curtilages or boundaries that are spatially separate from one another. These curtilages can be separated by a few metres or can be kilometres apart. The thing that 'connects' the elements is their shared story or cultural significance. Also known as discontinuous registrations.