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AUSTRALIA ICOMOS ENGAGEMENT IN WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION PROCESSES

Australia ICOMOS Policy Paper

Introduction

International ICOMOS supports and provides expert guidance to States Parties regarding World Heritage nominations. Australia ICOMOS and individual members can also provide certain support for Australian nomination projects.

The *World Heritage Convention*¹ and the *Operational Guidelines*² set out a system and procedures for the nomination, inscription, protection and management of World Heritage properties. ICOMOS International has policy guidance documents to assist its members in understanding the role of members and committees, including Australia ICOMOS, in the context of World Heritage³. A common theme in these documents and other practice is that ICOMOS and its national committees must exercise a high degree of rigour and objectivity in providing advice to all parties, and refrain from expressing opinions on whether a place definitively has Outstanding Universal Value (which can only be determined by the World Heritage Committee), as opposed to potential OUV (which is acceptable. ICOMOS members should have a general understanding of the application of these documents when engaging in World Heritage processes.

It is vital that ICOMOS speak with one institutional voice, in a balanced and coordinated way that reflects broad international experience and expertise; notwithstanding that there may be differences of professional opinion among ICOMOS members. To maintain the credibility of its institutional advice, that advice and the process for formulating it must be based on sound expertise and demonstrably free from bias or influence. ICOMOS understands that situations may arise that have potential to create a *perception* of conflict of interest that are as damaging to the credibility of its work as those in which an *actual* conflict may exist.⁴

Australia ICOMOS or individual members may, from time to time, be approached to provide advice or participate in activities related to the preparation of a nomination to the World

¹ *Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*, UNESCO, 1972.
<https://whc.unesco.org/archive/convention-en.pdf>

² *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, UNESCO, version 31 July 2021.
<https://whc.unesco.org/document/190976>

³ *The Role of ICOMOS members and Committees in the context of the World Heritage Convention* (version 14 October 2019) https://www.icomos.org/images/DOCUMENTS/Secretariat/2020/ADCOM_Info/WH_RoleofCommittees_20191014_EN.pdf, *Policy for the Implementation of the ICOMOS World Heritage Mandate* (October 2015) https://usicomos.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ICOMOS_Policy-paper_EN.pdf

⁴ *The Role of ICOMOS members and Committees in the context of the World Heritage Convention* (version 14 October 2019) https://www.icomos.org/images/DOCUMENTS/Secretariat/2020/ADCOM_Info/WH_RoleofCommittees_20191014_EN.pdf

Heritage List, including in some cases being requested to provide support for a potential nomination. It is timely therefore for Australia ICOMOS to develop a targeted policy to guide its response to such approaches.

This policy draws upon the above references, as well as the policy on *Australia's World Heritage Tentative List* (final draft 23 August 2022), prepared by Australia ICOMOS.

ICOMOS International

ICOMOS International has a number of roles and responsibilities in the context of the *World Heritage Convention* as an Advisory Body to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in the nomination and evaluation of properties for inscription on the World Heritage List. ICOMOS aims to provide the highest available degree of professional expertise in the evaluation of nominations and other aspects of implementation of the *World Heritage Convention*.

ICOMOS International's responsibilities in the nomination process are to:

- Administer and carry out the evaluation process, produce the final evaluation reports and recommendations, and present these to the session of the World Heritage Committee.
- Supply support and continuous information to States Parties, as well as provide specific assistance in the framework of the upstream process.
- Carry out missions and studies on specific matters or sites, follow up on decisions and requested additional information, and provide all types of assistance commissioned by the World Heritage Committee and UNESCO World Heritage Centre. This assistance may include upstream advice on Tentative Lists and potential sites to be nominated, as set out in the document *Guidance on Developing and Revising World Heritage Tentative Lists*⁵.

Australia ICOMOS

Australia ICOMOS plays an important role in the World Heritage process in relation to World Heritage matters within Australia. This role must be exercised with care to avoid giving any impression that the National Committee speaks for ICOMOS at the international level.

Australia ICOMOS is willing to assist in World Heritage nomination processes, however any request to provide advice or participate in activities are considered with regard to its capacity and available relevant resources at the time.

The roles and responsibilities of Australia ICOMOS and its members include:

- *At any stage*, at the request of ICOMOS World Heritage Units, identify experts for missions and desk reviews for ICOMOS evaluation, monitoring or advisory activities.
- *During any stage in the process of preparing a World Heritage nomination*,
 - May organise or take part in seminars, symposia and expert meetings while a nomination is being discussed, in order to aid comparative analysis and a better knowledge and understanding of the matter.
 - Generally would not provide a representative to, or be a member of, a nomination steering committee. However, may play a role on an expert committee, such as at the Tentative List stages.

⁵ *Guidance on Developing and Revising World Heritage Tentative Lists* (UNESCO/ICOMOS/ICCROM/IUCN, July 2020)

- General advice may also be offered regarding the World Heritage system, resources and processes.
- *During evaluations of World Heritage nominations in Australia,*
 - As a committee, comment on nominations to the ICOMOS World Heritage Evaluation Unit, when requested.
 - If requested, support the work of the ICOMOS World Heritage Evaluation Unit, being on hand to assist the ICOMOS expert undertaking the evaluation mission, answering questions and providing clarifications and additional information where necessary.

Consistent with the above, Australia ICOMOS' potential roles regarding key stages in the development of a nomination are outlined in the following table.

	Stage	Potential Role
1.	Initial nomination idea/proposal with no or very limited research	Provide general advice about World Heritage, nominations and processes (such advice can be provided at all stages). Facilitate identification of appropriate experts (at all stages).
2.	Research to develop a Tentative List submission	Provide advice about the adequacy of the research (for example, related to history, comparative analysis, etc), recognising the limited research undertaken at this stage.
3.	Draft Tentative List submission	Provide advice about the adequacy of the research, where there is sufficient evidence to warrant review.
4.	Selection for the Tentative List	Refer to the Australia ICOMOS <i>Policy on Australia's World Heritage Tentative List</i> .
5.	Research to develop a nomination	Provide more detailed advice about the adequacy of the research.
6.	Draft nomination	Provide advice about the adequacy of the nomination documentation, including the evidence for potential Outstanding Universal Value.

Individual ICOMOS members

Australia ICOMOS members, in their professional capacity, undertake much of the work for States Parties that leads to World Heritage nominations. This role must be exercised with care to avoid conflicts of interest, and also avoid giving any impression that the member can speak for ICOMOS at the international level or Australia ICOMOS at the national level. Individuals may, at the request of ICOMOS World Heritage Units, undertake expert missions and desk reviews for ICOMOS evaluation, reactive monitoring or advisory activities. Individual members may also be formally requested to represent ICOMOS at the international level or Australia ICOMOS in a clearly defined role.

Key points for such members to note when engaging in World Heritage nomination processes, either as an individual expert or as a representative of ICOMOS at the international level or Australia ICOMOS, include:

- Only provide advice to the limit of your expertise, either related to the subject of the nomination, or regarding the World Heritage system.
- Advice about the merits of a nomination should be carefully calibrated and qualified if necessary. There should be robust research to support any advice about the merits, and all advice should refer to *potential* Outstanding Universal Value, consistent with approach of ICOMOS.
- Always make clear to a meeting or in communications in which role you are speaking, working, or participating either as an *individual*, as a *representative of Australia ICOMOS* or an *International Scientific Committee*, or as a *representative of ICOMOS International*.
- When providing advice on a nominating strategy, always make clear that you are speaking in your professional capacity and that your opinion does not commit ICOMOS International, or unless authorised, Australia ICOMOS.
- Always fully disclose your potential and/or perceived conflicts of interest, and never undertake to contribute (with or without remuneration) to the evaluation of a property where you have previously been involved in the preparation of the nomination for that property.
- Do not engage with the press or any other media regarding a nomination under evaluation, or on the published evaluation, unless specifically requested and authorised by ICOMOS at the international level.
- When serving with the delegation of the Australian Government to the World Heritage Committee, ensure that any comments on evaluations are respectful of ICOMOS and its evaluation process.

Adopted by Executive Committee 12/11/2022