

Parliamentary Friends of History & Heritage – Planning Meeting, June 24 2015



On Wednesday 24 June a planning meeting of the Parliamentary Friends of History & Heritage was held at Parliament House, Canberra, convened by Hon Eric Hutchinson (Federal Member for Lyons) and Hon Laurie Ferguson (Federal Member for Werriwa) as Co Chairs of this initiative. The Department of Parliamentary Services granted formal approval for this Parliamentary Friendship Group of the 44th Parliament on 19 March 2015. The meeting was attended by the Minister for the Environment, the Hon Greg Hunt, who indicated strong personal support for this friends group, and outlined its goals as follows:

- 1 **Members** (ie interested politicians) being a group of bi partisan advocates for heritage issues generally within Parliament. Other members such as representatives of Federation of Historical Societies, ICOMOS, and Australian Council of National Trusts, would also contribute to the debate and issues considered.
- 2 The group could provide information/ suggestions for priority listings for **National Heritage list** assessment
- 3 **Arts Culture and Heritage Lottery** – this was described by the Minister as the “real prize” which is being proposed by government – and would be based on successful examples of the West Australian Government and the UK Heritage Lottery. The Minister outlined this as a high priority, with a 6 month time frame proposed to work out the details of this initiative. This funding mechanism will help address community concerns about the limited funding available for heritage initiatives.
- 4 **Australian Heritage Strategy** – this has the Minister’s support, but the release is being delayed to allow for joint announcement of the establishment of the Heritage and Arts Lottery.

Professor Don Garden, President of the Federation of Australian Historical Societies provided a short presentation outlining the importance of Australia’s heritage, the opportunities for heritage tourism, associated job creation and the importance of volunteerism. He stressed the following:

- 1 the need for a **solution to the “Williams Case”** which has resulted in the discontinuation of Commonwealth funding for community heritage initiatives.
- 2 support for a **heritage lottery** initiative as outlined above,
- 3 **Amendments required to the Australian Heritage Council legislation** particularly in relation to the ability to list serial sites across the country related to a single theme/site type
- 4 the need for **finalisation of the Australian Heritage Strategy** as outlined above.

It is proposed to have the first meeting of this Parliamentary Friends Group in the months ahead, likely September or October with a launch event at Parliament House to encourage wide participation and attendance by interested politicians and others.
