

This is a brief submission of my views.

I've used the NAA records exclusively in my work and also privately. The records are precious reminders of Australia's past and its immigrants. It must be preserved indefinitely and any review must ensure they are managed by the Government and not privatised.

My work with the Department of Immigration 1978-2009 involved the use of passenger card, alien registration and citizenship records including registration by descent registers. I also perused hundreds of ships manifests and immigration files to make decisions on cases on permanent residence and citizenship status. I digitised all the registers of descent of citizenship for the department while working for immigration as a contractor after I retired. I was also involved in a review of electronic data transfer from the department to NAA an annual automated function to ensure the guidelines of release years was met. The department relies heavily on the NAA to assist in deciding cases of people who may have arrived in Australia from its earliest days. The transitional requirements in 1949 when Australian Citizenship began under the Citizenship Act removed the British Subject status and immigration files are often crucial in these decisions. I don't know whether NAA staff understand this. I know that many immigration files during the 1970-80s were inadvertently sentenced for destruction and thus is a sad thing. This I believe may have been an immigration department error.

I understand that the NAA also holds duplicate copies of all Citizenship certificates issued in the early to mid-twentieth century. These are also valuable documents that should be digitised and made available to the immigration department to assist in their decision making especially where their own electronic records may be corrupted or missing. Often early Citizenship index cards where records of acquired citizenship are missing or have been destroyed. So these duplicate citizenship certificates are invaluable as a cross check.

Personally I have used the NAA records for family research as well.

My thoughts above are stated with utmost concern as a former public servant who tried to assist each client in determining their citizenship status and often finding them not available, it made it very difficult to do my job and provide a fair result for the client. It is the Government's duty of care to ensure these records are preserved perpetually.

I trust this provides a perspective that may not be always in the forefront of staff.

If you have any questions please ask.

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