

Good morning:

I understand that comments are requested from users of the National Archives-Australia in order to help determine needs and goals.

I have used the Archives twice in the last four months, over three days each visit. The research was part of a project for which I received an Australian--American Fulbright Commission award. The Archives research was one of the most rewarding experiences of my four months in Australia.

My experience is only with the web site and the Reading Room and staff in Canberra. The staff was uniformly helpful, going out of their way to ensure I had what I needed, even on short notice. I loved the reading room in Old Parliament House, which is a fabulous space, although the staff must find it difficult to be disconnected from their main building. The reading room was often full, and staff was usually engaged in helping researchers, or just drop in visitors - answering questions, showing how to use the web site. It was a busy and seemingly productive atmosphere. Staff members were patient, welcoming, helpful, and cheerful even when they were obviously extremely busy.

All of the materials I requested were already in Open status, so I can't comment on wait times for materials to be released. I do think it looks like there is some catch-up to do in reviewing papers, and additional staff would certainly help with that. It was phenomenal in my own research to be able to review files from different offices of the government with the same topic, which gave insights into how issues were viewed from different departmental perspectives. The scope of the collections was incredibly valuable.

The web site has really great aspects - I think the online exhibitions are extraordinary. The online search for materials is sometimes cumbersome and slow, but it works. I expect there is a digitization backlog, which would be a good thing to throw money at.

All in all, my experience at NAA was terrific, and I hope to be able to return to Australia and visit the NAA reading rooms in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, and Adelaide. Keep up the good work, and give the Archives the tools it needs going forward to maintain the records that document the workings and decision making and issues of Australia's government and people and place in the world!

Thank you

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