



PO Box 9177
Deakin ACT 2600

10 June 2019

Mr David Tune AO PSM
Independent Reviewer
c/o Tune Review Secretariat
National Archives of Australia
Queen Victoria Terrace
Parkes ACT 2600

Dear Mr Tune,

On behalf of Professional Historians Australia (PHA), I welcome this opportunity to contribute a submission to the review of the functioning and efficiency of the National Archives of Australia. PHA represents over 500 professionally-accredited historians across all Australian states and territories, most of whom are engaged in the professional practice of history, be it in institutions, government departments or as private consultants. For many members, access to archival records is integral to the successful practice of their work.

As historians, our members are also vitally aware of the crucial role that our national archives play, not only in preserving our national heritage and history for future generations, but also in encouraging broad participation in our national story by allowing access to a range of Australian government-generated records.

We believe that the role of the National Archives as a repository and preserver of records should be maintained. A central repository that makes records accessible to all Australians is essential to our democracy and PHA would argue against the transfer of any of the NAA's key functions or services to another agency or department, whether government or non-government.

We believe that the preservation of the records collected and held by the NAA is an essential role that can be best achieved by the eventual digitisation of all records. While this process has been underway for some time, we would advocate increased resources to be allocated for the digitisation of records. At present, while there is a service for digitisation on demand, the costs involved for users of the archives may discriminate against those without the financial means to pay for the digitisation of the records they request or to travel to Canberra (if the record is held there) to view the record. We would advocate an increased budget for the archive to continue to build the digital collection without having to rely on the user pays system.

Similarly, PHA would argue for increased human resourcing of the NAA to enable records to be examined more quickly before they are released for open access. At present, the examination of records that have been requested but are not yet deemed open can take up to 90 days. This can mean serious delays for researchers working to set deadlines, with the possible consequence that, in some cases, researchers may have to proceed without access to all possible sources of information about their subject.

PHA suggests that policy should be developed to ensure that aspects of contemporary government records, such as emails, 'sticky notes', etc should be transferable with the files as they are moved from government departments to the NAA. Increasingly, these aspects are integral to the record and should not be removed before transfer to the archives.

PHA supports the retention of state and territory-based NAA reading rooms, as well as the central Canberra-based reading room. The co-located reading room with the Public Record Office Victoria is of benefit to researchers, especially non-professional researchers, who can receive advice from staff of both agencies. It would be of use to many researchers if records could be ordered and transferred to be viewed at the most convenient location for researchers.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jill Barnard". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jill Barnard

President,

Professional Historians Australia