

ECO 2019/016
25 June 2019

Mr David Tune,
c/- Tune Review Secretariat,
National Archives of Australia,
Queen Victoria Terrace
PARKES ACT 2600

Dear Mr Tune,

This submission is made on behalf of the family history community, in particular the members of the Society of Australian Genealogists (SAG). Based in Sydney, the SAG has been helping researchers from around the world since its foundation in 1932.

Over that time there has been a steadily increasing interest in family history. While once seen as the preserve of retired hobbyists who had the time to personally visit archival repositories and libraries, family history research is now embraced by people of all ages and backgrounds. 24/7 online access to digitised records makes this possible for all, including those who are geographically distant from the records they seek. There is a growing expectation that online access is the default.

The National Archives of Australia (NAA) has an excellent reputation for preserving and making available a diverse range of records. Two examples which are prized by those undertaking genealogical research are defence personnel records and information relating to immigration and citizenship.

In respect of defence personnel records the digitisation of WW1 dossiers has made it possible for Australians to document the role of their fathers, grandfathers and great-grandfathers in the First World War, including events such as the landing at Gallipoli and the Battle of the Somme. As these dossiers are freely available for download it is possible for Australians from all walks of life to undertake such searches, whatever their age or socio-economic group.

For those who have made Australia their home in more recent generations the preservation and availability of immigration and naturalisation records has allowed them, and often more importantly their surviving descendants, to make the link between their new home and place of origin, giving them a firm foundation upon which to begin the search for their ancestry.

These are just two examples of the many resources available online through the NAA's *RecordSearch* which are highly valued by researchers throughout the world.

The role of the National Archives is to *protect, preserve* and make *accessible* the records of the Commonwealth. It has a unique mandate to maintain details of the federal government's activities and decisions for all Australians.

The National Archives can only *protect* the history of the nation if it is backed by robust legislation which allows it to do its work without intervention. This legislation must be reviewed regularly and adapted to meet the changing expectations of those who utilise the records held by NAA.

It can only *preserve* records if it is given sufficient funding and can attract the right people to its staff. As the keeper of the Commonwealth's memory and records it is essential that the NAA is well resourced. This is especially important as the collection evolves and becomes increasingly digitised. The key areas of preservation, storage and access require constant technological update to avoid obsolescence and possible loss of vital information. NAA must be given a budget which allows it to continually evolve and update.

Providing *access* to its collections is one of its greatest challenges. While a national institution, it is also important that the NAA maintains repositories around Australia so that records which are not digitised, and which are relevant to a specific state or territory, can be made available to local researchers in their own communities.

The National Archives also has an important role to play in educating Australians about our democracy and our history. NAA must be able to inform young Australians about our history through expanded school programs and specialist resources. Exhibitions, online learning and other outreach services are an important part of its work and must also be properly resourced if they are to be successful.

The focus for earlier generations of family historians was on colonial records held by state archival repositories. We have now reached a stage in our nation's history where the post-Federation era has become more relevant and we can safely assume that NAA will have increased demands placed on it by researchers. It is imperative that it be given the resources it needs to meet these expectations and that it be allowed to continue its fine work as the keeper of our nation's Commonwealth memory.

Yours sincerely,

Heather Garnsey
Executive Officer