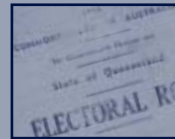


NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF AUSTRALIA ADVISORY COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT





Advisory Council members in Canberra at the 31 May 2002 meeting.
Front row (left to right): Mr Patrick Morgan, Ms Nina Riemer, Dr Helen Irving, Ms Anne-Marie Schwirtlich, Mr Tony Rutherford. Middle row: Senator the Hon. John Faulkner, the Hon. Jim Carlton AO, Professor Graeme Davison, the Hon. Alex Somlyay, MP. Back row: Ms Helen Heslop (Executive Officer), Mr Alan Henderson, PSM, Mr Paul Santamaria, Mr Bill Blick, PSM.



NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF AUSTRALIA ADVISORY COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2001–02

ESTABLISHMENT AND FUNCTIONS

The National Archives of Australia Advisory Council is established as the Advisory Council on the National Archives of Australia, under subsection 10(1) of the *Archives Act 1983*.

The principal function of the Council is to furnish advice to the Minister and the Director-General on matters that relate to the functions of the Archives.

The Minister or the Director-General may refer matters relating to the functions of the Archives to the Council for advice, or the Council may in turn furnish advice to the Minister or the Director-General.

ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

Composition

The Archives Act provides for a Council consisting of:

- a senator chosen by the Senate;
- a member of the House of Representatives chosen by the House of Representatives;
- 11 other members appointed by the Minister for the Arts and Sport.

Membership during the year

The Hon. Jim Carlton, AO (Chairman)

Ms Susan Pascoe (Deputy Chair) (until November 2001)

Mr Bill Blick, PSM

Professor Graeme Davison

Senator the Hon. John Faulkner (reappointed 27 June 2002)

Mr Alan Henderson, PSM

Dr Helen Irving

Mr Patrick Morgan

Mr Robert Piper, AO

Ms Nina Riemer

Mr Tony Rutherford (from 31 July 2001)

Mr Paul Santamaria

The Hon. Alex Somlyay, MP (reappointed 15 May 2002)

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

Meetings

The Council met on four occasions this year, as follows:

- 17 August 2001, Canberra
- 30 November 2001, Canberra
- 22 February 2002, Canberra
- 31 May 2002, Canberra

Statements required under the Act

The Archives Act requires the Minister and the Archives to place certain materials before the Council that specifically relate to disposal practices and special access matters.

National Archives records disposal practices

The Council received no statutory reports under subsection 25(1) of the Act.

Although no statutory reports under subsection 25(1) of the Act were received, the Council has continued to take a great interest in the disposal practices of the

National Archives. The principal issue engaging the Council's attention has been the most effective method of consulting the community about appraisal decision-making in the interests of producing better appraisal outcomes. The Council took a keen interest in the stakeholder consultation process developed by the Archives and the Australian Historical Association and in the subsequent trial of the process. This led to the articulation of objectives and principles for community consultation, which were discussed and endorsed by the Council.

In the course of the reporting year the Council was briefed about the number and range of Commonwealth agencies working with the Archives on Designing and Implementing Recordkeeping Systems (DIRKS) projects.

Special access to official records

Under subsection 56(2) of the *Archives Act 1983*, access may be granted to official records under the 30-year age threshold. Application is made directly to agencies responsible for controlling the relevant records. Deciding whether to grant access is the responsibility of the agency. Special arrangements have been in place since 1988 to assist agencies in this decision-making. At each meeting Council members noted reports prepared by the Archives on requests and decisions relating to access requested under section 56(2) of the Act.

Five applications were received by agencies in the reporting period 2001–02, four of which were granted by the agencies concerned.

There were no access applications under consideration at the beginning of the reporting period, and there was one case still under consideration at the end of the reporting period.

PARTICULAR ISSUES

In addition to considering regular statements provided in accordance with the Archives Act, the Council receives regular reports from the Archives on its activities in managing archival records and its role in ensuring the preservation of the essential current records of the Government.

Specific areas of focus for the Council during the year include the following.

Census 2001 – Time Capsule Project

The Council has long held the view that name-identified records of the population census should be preserved and, ultimately, made publicly available. Consequently,

the Government's initiative, the Centenary of Federation Time Capsule Project, was of particular interest to the Council. This initiative allowed census respondents to determine whether their name-identified information would be retained and be made publicly available by the National Archives after 99 years. The Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Archives released information about participation rates in the Time Capsule Project on 20 June 2002. The national participation rate was 52.7 per cent – that is, 9 998 428 Australians elected to have name-identified data preserved. It is worth noting that 15.4 per cent of respondents did not answer this question, as it was not compulsory. This means that only 31.9 per cent of Australians opted out of the Time Capsule Project. The Council believes that the fact that more than half of census respondents elected to have their name-identified census information preserved is positive. The Council argues that the figure would have been higher had the question been framed in such a way that it required respondents to 'opt out' rather than to consciously 'opt in'.

Promoting recordkeeping

The Council strongly supports the work done by the Archives to promote good recordkeeping and to assist Commonwealth agencies to best position themselves to implement and maintain reliable recordkeeping. Without this work there is every likelihood that modern records will not be preserved for future generations.

Consequently, the Council was briefed about the redevelopment of the recordkeeping training offered to agencies. The Council probed the issue of agency attendance, seeking information about the agencies participating and the appropriateness of the staff representing them. The collaboration between the Archives and the Australian National Audit Office on the Assurance and Control Assessment Audit of recordkeeping was endorsed by the Council as a key strategy in raising the awareness of recordkeeping at the most senior levels in the Australian Public Service. The Council welcomed the Archives' forthcoming survey of recordkeeping, and suggested ways by which agency responses could be encouraged.

Given the contribution of the Archives, and of the Australian recordkeeping community as a whole, to the development of *ISO 15489 Information and Documentation – Records Management*, the Chairman was pleased to launch the International Standard in Australia on 16 October 2001 at the Museum of Victoria.

Amending the Archives Act to provide a better basis for recordkeeping

The Council has a keen interest in the operation of the *Archives Act 1983* and advocates the strengthening of the legislation in key areas to provide a legislative basis for the recordkeeping role of the Archives. At the August 2001 and May 2002 meetings, the Council was provided with information about the consultation process for the proposed amendments and updates on progress.

Digitising the collection

The Council has championed the need to increase the public presence and community appreciation, and use, of the National Archives. The Council recognises that the digitisation on demand service is a most significant initiative in making the collection accessible to Australians wherever they may be. The 1.2 million images accessible on the Archives website constitute a remarkable achievement. The Council visited the digitising team to better understand the variety of material digitised and the processes involved.

Publishing program

The National Archives publishing program began in earnest in 1993. As the program nears the conclusion of its first decade, the Council considered a report on the program noting its range of achievements and discussing the major issues. The Council established a subcommittee to look at these issues in greater detail. The publishing program incorporates the Archives websites, which are the single most significant communication vehicle for the organisation. For this reason the Council took particular interest in evaluations of the websites and progress with implementing changes.

Exhibitions program

The Council also began a discussion of the exhibitions program, noting the number, variety and reach of exhibitions and considering several key questions about how best to identify and focus on the strengths of the collection.

Prime Ministers' Papers Project

The Council was briefed on the progress of the Prime Ministers' Papers Project. Members had the opportunity of reviewing a prototype of the website, *Australia's Prime Ministers*, hearing about its intended audience, and considering its content and functionality.

Bringing Them Home Index

In this final year of Government funding for the Bringing Them Home Index the Council was pleased to receive an overview of the project's achievements. Members were disappointed that some two years of work remains to be completed even though the four-year funding, provided by the Government in response to the 1995 Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's *Bringing Them Home* report, concluded on 30 June 2002. The Council has encouraged the Archives to continue the project, at a more modest pace, if at all possible.

Preserving Commonwealth records created in digital form

In August 2001, Council members received a presentation on the Archives' approach to the preservation of records in digital form. A proportion of the electronic records created by Commonwealth agencies will be selected for inclusion in the archival collection. The Council heard about the thinking underpinning, and the processes involved in, the conversion of these records from their proprietary format to an 'archival' format for long term preservation and access. The Council also discussed the approaches adopted by other organisations in Australia and overseas as it recognises that this is a major issue facing archives internationally.

ADVISORY COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEES

The Council establishes subcommittees to deal with specific issues. Details of the subcommittee established during the year and its membership are given below.

Publications subcommittee

The Publications subcommittee was established in November 2001. It was asked to consider and advise on the Archives' publications policy and to discuss publishing opportunities with the Acting Director-General. The subcommittee conducted much of its deliberations electronically and met in February 2002 to finalise its advice to the Council.

The members of the Publications subcommittee are Professor Graeme Davison, Dr Helen Irving and Ms Nina Riemer.

SECRETARIAT INFORMATION

Financial information and secretariat services

Funds for the operation of the Council are provided from funds allocated to the Archives. Major expenditure items consist of members' remuneration (a *per diem* fee), travel allowances and fares to attend Council and subcommittee meetings.

Major expenditure items for 2001–02

Item	\$
Remuneration	10 840
Travelling allowance	5 368
Fares	22 024
Other travel expenses	2 657
Total	40 889

In addition to direct financial support to the Council, the Archives provides secretariat and administrative services from within its budget. Secretariat and administrative services were provided by the equivalent of 0.8 of a full time member of staff.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION SECTION 8 STATEMENT

Section 8 of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (the FOI Act) requires each agency to publish detailed information about the way it is organised, its powers, the kinds of decisions it makes, the documents it holds, the ways members of the public can obtain access to these documents and any arrangements for public involvement in the work of the agency.

The body of this Annual Report explains the establishment and major functions of the Advisory Council. This statement supplements that general information to meet the requirements of section 8 of the FOI Act. It is correct as at 30 June 2002.

Organisation

Secretariat and administrative support for the Council are provided by the National Archives of Australia. The Executive Officer is an officer employed by the National Archives.

The Advisory Council usually meets four times each year. Members serve for terms not exceeding three years and may serve additional terms.

Functions

The functions of the Advisory Council are defined under section 11 of the *Archives Act 1983*, as follows:

- (1) The Council shall furnish advice to the Minister and the Director-General with respect to matters to which the functions of the Archives relate.
- (2) The Minister or the Director-General may refer any matter of the kind referred to in subsection (1) to the Council for advice and the Council may, if it thinks fit, consider and advise the Minister or the Director-General on a matter of that kind of its own motion.

Powers

As an advisory body, the National Archives of Australia Advisory Council has no decision-making or other powers directly affecting members of the public.

Categories of documents

The National Archives of Australia Advisory Council does not hold any documents that are open to public access on payment of a fee or customarily available free of charge. The annual report of the Advisory Council is tabled in Parliament. The Secretariat maintains files that contain documents relating to the administration of the Council, papers discussed at Council meetings and correspondence relating to the activities of the Council.

Freedom of Information procedures and initial contact points

All inquiries concerning access to documents under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* may be directed during normal business hours to:

Executive Officer
National Archives of Australia Advisory Council
c/- National Archives of Australia
Queen Victoria Terrace, Parkes ACT 2600
PO Box 7425, Canberra Business Centre ACT 2610
Telephone (02) 6212 3643
Facsimile (02) 6212 3931
Email execoff@naa.gov.au

The Executive Officer may also be contacted regarding inquiries or comments relating to the National Archives of Australia Advisory Council Annual Report.

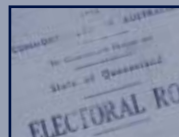
Facilities for access

Facilities for access to documents are provided at the office of the National Archives of Australia, Queen Victoria Terrace, Parkes ACT.

Arrangement for outside participation

Persons or bodies outside the Commonwealth administration may contribute to the Council's advisory role by making representations to the Chairman or any member of the Council.

INDEXES





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This index is a guide to the report's compliance with the *Requirements for Annual Reports* as approved by the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit.

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Correction of material errors in previous annual report

No material errors have been identified in the 2000–01 National Archives of Australia Annual Report or the National Archives of Australia Advisory Council Annual Report.



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