

APPENDIX E

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION SECTION 8 STATEMENT

Section 8 of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (the FOI Act) requires each Australian government agency to publish detailed information about the way it is organised, its powers, the kinds of decisions it makes, the documents it holds, the way 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 organisation and major functions of the Archives. This statement supplements that general information to meet the requirements of section 8 of the FOI Act. It is correct to 30 June 2003.

Functions

The National Archives is responsible for the broad management of all records generated by the Australian Government between Federation and the present day. Under the provisions of section 5 of the *Archives Act 1983*, in carrying out its responsibility the organisation:

- develops and provides policy advice on the management of Commonwealth records;
- promotes and ensures the preservation of Commonwealth records for as long as they are needed;
- determines which categories of records should be retained for use and which should be destroyed;
- provides storage services for records of enduring value;
- provides personal and corporate records services for people or organisations closely associated with the Government;
- assembles and makes available management and descriptive information about records and the agencies, current as well as past, responsible for them;
- gives effect to public rights of access and appeal relating to records more than 30 years old;

- provides reference and information services to agencies and to the public; and
- facilitates the awareness and use of records by the public.

Powers

Under the provisions of section 6 of the Archives Act, the powers of the National Archives that can directly affect members of the public are:

- the determination of custodial and storage arrangements for Commonwealth records which are of enduring value;
- the authorisation of the retention or destruction (after a specified period) of records, with the concurrence of the agency whose records are involved;
- the regulation of public access to records more than 30 years old, in accordance with the Archives Act and in consultation with the agencies concerned; and
- the determination of the standards of reference and advisory services provided to the public including reading room hours, levels of reference assistance and of documentation provided about the collection.

Categories of documents

There are two major groups of documents held by the Archives, as follows.

Group 1

The first group covers documents which the Archives itself creates as an Australian government agency, in the following categories:

- general correspondence and related records;
- guides, finding aids and associated administrative histories and contextual narratives;
- technical papers and reference materials;
- procedure manuals, internal instructions and guidelines; and
- publications and training materials.

The Archives applies the *Administrative Functions Disposal Authority* (AFDA) to general administrative documents such as financial, personnel and routine office documents.

Group 2

The second group covers records that the Archives holds in its repositories throughout Australia on behalf of other agencies.

The Archives is not responsible for responding to requests for access under the FOI Act to documents in this category. Its role is confined to ensuring that the documents involved are available to the agency responding to the FOI request.

FOI procedures and contact

Anyone is entitled to apply for access to documents under the FOI Act. In many cases, however, applications under the FOI Act may not be necessary. Those with an inquiry are advised to first consult the nearest office of the Archives, or look at the Archives' website www.naa.gov.au, as the information required may be readily available.

Freedom of Information requests for access to records that the Archives may hold in its custody on behalf of other agencies should be addressed to an appropriate officer in the agency concerned.

To make a formal request for access to the Archives' own documents under the FOI Act, applicants may contact the Archives in writing, by telephone, facsimile, email or in person to the Canberra office of the Archives. Applications should be addressed to:

The FOI Contact Officer
Secretariat
National Archives of Australia
PO Box 7425
Canberra Business Centre ACT 2610

Phone: (02) 6212 3925
Fax: (02) 6212 3931
Email: foi@naa.gov.au

If any difficulty is encountered in identifying a document of the Archives, an Archives' officer will contact the applicant with a view to resolving the difficulty. In consultation with the applicant, documents will be made available either by mail to the address specified by the applicant or at the reading room (Information Access Office) at the Archives' office nearest to the applicant's normal place of residence.

The Director-General and the Assistant Directors-General are authorised decision-makers under the FOI Act who may refuse, defer or grant access to documents.

Facilities for access

The decision of whether original documents or copies will be made available will be made in consultation with the applicant. If copies are required, they will be mailed to the applicant's usual place of residence.

Addresses of Archives' reading rooms are given at Appendix B. Current details of reading room hours are available from the office concerned and on the Archives' website. Information about facilities for people with disabilities can be obtained by contacting the FOI Contact Officer in the Canberra Office or the Director of any Archives' office outside Canberra.

Arrangements for outside participation

The National Archives of Australia Advisory Council, which includes community representation, is a prescribed authority for the purpose of the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*. The Advisory Council's own annual report is contained in this publication.

In addition, there is frequent consultation with other governments, particularly in relation to access matters.