

*Illuminating the past,
guiding the future.*



NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF AUSTRALIA
ADVISORY COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT

2002 - 2003



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT

- 1** Ms Nina Riemer **2** Mr Patrick Morgan **3** The Hon. Alex Somlyay, MP
4 Dr Helen Irving **5** Mr Paul Santamaria, SC **6** Dr Jane Wilson
7 Professor Graeme Davison **8** Senator the Hon. John Faulkner
9 The Hon. Jim Carlton, AO **10** Ms Barbara Belcher
11 Mr Robert Piper, AO **12** Mr Ross Gibbs, PSM
13 Mr Tony Rutherford



NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF AUSTRALIA ADVISORY COUNCIL

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; and
- 11 other members appointed by the Minister for the Arts and Sport.

Membership during the year

The Hon. Jim Carlton, AO (Chairman)	Mr Patrick Morgan
Mr Paul Santamaria, SC (Deputy Chair)	Mr Robert Piper, AO
Ms Barbara Belcher	Ms Nina Riemer
Professor Graeme Davison	Mr Tony Rutherford
Senator the Hon. John Faulkner	The Hon. Alex Somlyay, MP
Dr Helen Irving	Dr Jane Wilson (from July 2002)

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

Meetings

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

30 August 2002	Canberra
29 November 2002	Hobart
21 February 2003	Canberra
23 May 2003	Canberra

Statements required under the Act

The Archives Act requires the Minister and the Archives to place before the Council certain materials which 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.

The Council has continued to take an active interest in the records disposal practices of the National Archives, and has received regular briefings.

During the year, the Council was briefed on the number and range of Australian government agencies working with the Archives on Designing and Implementing Recordkeeping Systems (DIRKS) projects.

The Council also followed the progress of the Collection Review projects with great interest.

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 Council meeting, members noted reports prepared by the Archives on requests for and decisions relating to access requested under section 56(2) of the Act.

Nine applications for access to records under section 56(2) of the Archives Act were received in the reporting period. Of these, eight were granted access by the agencies concerned and one request was withdrawn.

PARTICULAR ISSUES

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

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

Governance

At the request of the Minister the Council gave consideration to improved systems of governance within the Archives. As a result, the Council has been provided with six-monthly reports on the financial position of the Archives, and the Director-General has appointed an external independent member of the internal Audit Committee. In addition the Chairman and the Director-General now meet with the Minister at six-monthly intervals to discuss matters of significance to the good governance of the Archives.

Department of Veterans' Affairs records

The Advisory Council was provided with a detailed report in February 2003 on the management of Department of Veterans' Affairs individual case files.

Of particular concern to the Council were the magnitude, organisation, sensitivity and enduring value of the case files.

The Council established a subcommittee to give detailed consideration to the issue. The Council endorsed the subcommittee's recommendations on issues relating to the management of veterans' case files at its meeting in May 2003.

Publications program

The Council continued its interest in the National Archives' publications program, focusing on print runs and sales figures for recent commercial publications. The Council also expressed an interest in targeting the promotion of the Archives' publications to specific areas. During the reporting period the Council recommended that a review of the Archives' publication policy be undertaken.

Exhibitions program

The Council continued its interest in the Archives' 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.

Legislation

The Advisory Council has a keen interest in the operation of the *Archives Act 1983* and has supported the strengthening of the legislation to provide for the recordkeeping role of the National Archives while at the same time ensuring that the current access provisions in the Act are not altered. Members were kept informed of the progress of the draft amendments and provided advice to the Minister recommending that the amendments be placed on the legislative agenda in a timely manner.

ADVISORY COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEES

Department of Veterans' Affairs Records Subcommittee

The Council establishes subcommittees to deal with specific issues. Only one subcommittee met during the year, the Department of Veterans' Affairs Records Subcommittee, which was established in February 2003 to consider and advise the Archives on the management of veterans' case files. The subcommittee met in May 2003 and proposed a framework to resolve issues relating to the retention and management of these records. The members of the subcommittee were the Hon. Jim Carlton, AO, Professor Graeme Davison and Dr Jane Wilson.

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) and travel allowances and fares to attend Council and subcommittee meetings.

MAJOR EXPENDITURE ITEMS FOR 2002-03

Item	\$
Remuneration	11 737
Travelling allowance	5 700
Fares	22 355
Other travel expenses	5 242
Total	45 034

In addition to direct financial support, the Archives provides secretariat and administrative services to the Council from 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 2003.

Organisation

Secretariat and administrative support for the Council is 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 an additional term.

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 which 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 Mail 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 Australian government administration may participate in the Council's advisory role by making representations to the Chairman or any member of the Council.

