

National Archives
of Australia
Advisory Council

Annual Report 2004–05





National Archives of Australia Advisory Council

Establishment and functions

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

The principal function of the Council is to provide 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 furnish advice to the Minister or the Director-General.

Advisory Council membership

Composition

The *Archives Act 1983* 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
- eleven other members appointed by the Minister for the Arts and Sport.

Membership during the year

Mr Paul Santamaria, SC (Chairman)

Ms Barbara Belcher

Professor Graeme Davison

Senator the Hon. John Faulkner

Mr Peter Grant

Mr Ian Hancock



The National Archives of Australia Advisory Council meeting, May 2005. From left to right: (back row) Mr Patrick Morgan, Mr Peter Grant, Mr Tony Rutherford, Senator the Hon. John Faulkner, The Hon. Alex Somlyay, MP, (front rows) Mr Ross Gibbs, PSM, Ms Barbara Belcher, Professor Graeme Davison, Ms Nina Riemer, Mr Robert Piper, AO, Mr Paul Santamaria, SC (Chairman), Dr Jane Wilson, Ms Belinda Hogarth-Boyd (Executive Officer). Mr Ian Hancock is absent.

- Mr Patrick Morgan
- Mr Robert Piper, AO
- Ms Nina Riemer
- Mr Tony Rutherford
- The Hon. Alex Somlyay, MP
- Dr Jane Wilson

National Archives' records disposal practices

Under subsection 25(1) of the Archives Act, the Archives is required to inform the Advisory Council of disposal practices followed by the Archives or approved for other agencies. The Council received a briefing on the Archives' macro-appraisal project on 27 May 2005.

Summary of activities

The Council met on four occasions this year:

10 September 2004	Canberra
26 November 2004	Canberra
25 February 2005	Canberra
27 May 2005	Canberra

Statements required under the Act

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

Special access to official records

Under subsection 56(2) of the Archives Act, 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.

Five applications for access to records under section 56(2) of the Archives Act were received

in the reporting period. Of these, four were granted access by the agencies concerned and one was refused. One request received before the reporting period was approved, and two requests received before the reporting period are pending a decision by the agencies concerned.

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 are discussed below.

The cultural sector

To learn about the Archives' environment and business, the Advisory Council arranged for guest speakers to attend Council meetings. Speakers included recipients of Archives' research awards and representatives from other cultural institutions. Guest speakers during the year were:

- Ms Kate Cowie, General Manager, Old Parliament House;
- Mr Bill Bleathman, Director of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery and Chair of Visions of Australia;
- Mr Frank Moorhouse, the 2004 recipient of the National Archives Fredrick Watson Fellowship; and
- Dr Christina Twomey, one of two recipients of the National Archives Margaret George Award in 2004.

The Advisory Council also extended hospitality to staff of the National Portrait Gallery, Manning Clarke House Inc., and the National Library of Australia.

Public events

Council members involved themselves in the Archives' activities through their attendance at State consultative forums. Specifically:

- Mr Paul Santamaria, SC attended a Melbourne consultative forum.
- Dr Jane Wilson attended two Brisbane consultative forums.
- Ms Nina Riemer attended a Sydney consultative forum.
- The Hon. Mr Alex Somlyay MP attended a Brisbane consultative forum.

The Council was represented at a number of exhibition openings throughout the country.

The Council attended a tour of *The Petrov Affair* exhibition at Old Parliament House, to which the Archives contributed material.

Promotion of the National Archives

The Council took a keen interest in the promotion of the Archives, particularly in regional and remote areas.

The Council was very interested in *Vrroom*, the Archives' virtual reading room allowing teachers and students to easily access and use records relevant to their curriculum and interests. *Vrroom* offers pre-packaged resources for use in the classroom, as well as an online experience in archival research. The Council commended the Archives for its ability to reach into the classroom through *Vrroom*, and for other programs written especially for the assistance of teachers.

The Council paid particular attention to the Archives' exhibition program and events as a means of promoting the Archives. The Council received regular updates of activities including the 'Find of the Month' and travelling exhibitions.

Storage

The Council monitored the refurbishments and reconfigurations undertaken by the

Archives to best use its increasingly limited storage capacity. The Minister informed the Council that the Archives would share, as an interim measure, storage space within the new National Library of Australia facility. The Council notes the importance of a long-term solution to the storage needs of the Archives.

Archives logo

In early 2005, the Archives received permission from the Government to adopt a co-branding approach to the use of the logo and Commonwealth Coat of Arms. The Council was very pleased with this outcome.

Advisory Council subcommittees

Publications Subcommittee

In November 2001, the Council established a Publications Subcommittee to consider the Archives' publications program. The subcommittee oversaw a review of the publications program that was completed in November 2004. The review made a number of recommendations, including the creation of an external group to advise the Archives' publishing program. The membership of the advisory group includes a Council member. In light of the new advisory group, the Council agreed that the Publications Subcommittee would no longer meet. The members of the subcommittee were Ms Nina Riemer, Professor Graeme Davison and Mr Tony Rutherford.

Department of Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee

The Department of Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee was formed in May 2003 to identify and advise on the key issues relating to Veteran' Affairs case files. The subcommittee has been consulting with the Archives to consider the ongoing storage requirements

and treatment of these records. Members of the subcommittee were Mr Peter Grant, Professor Graeme Davison and Dr Jane Wilson.

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 2004–05

Item	
Remuneration	\$13 440
Travelling allowance	\$4 994
Fares	\$36 797
Other travel expenses	\$84
Total	\$55 315

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

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 2005.

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 that are open to the public either on payment of a fee or customarily available free of charge. The Council's 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.

The Annual Report of the Advisory Council is tabled in Parliament.

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

Tel (02) 6212 3643
Fax (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 participate in the Council's advisory role by making representations to the Chairman or any member of the Council.