

Mr David Tune AO PSM
Independent Reviewer
c/o Tune Review Secretariat National Archives of Australia
Queen Victoria Terrace
Parkes ACT 2600

26 June 2019

Dear Mr Tune

As professional historians with over 15 years of experience researching, writing and producing history, we are pleased to contribute a submission to the review of the functioning and efficiency of the National Archives of Australia (NAA).

A central, accessible repository of government and national records is a democratic right. The NAA ensures government transparency, accountability and integrity. It is critical that the NAA continues to do this and to promote its collections through public exhibitions, education programs and events. Records created by the government and funded at public expense are national resources and should be made publicly available. The better informed the Australian community is about the existence of records and archives that relate to our nation, the more effectively community members will be able to participate in national democratic processes.

Preservation of our national history and heritage is a key role of the NAA and we see this as an increasingly important function in the near future, with the huge increase in digital archives. There needs to be adequate funding to deal with the challenges of digital preservation, not only of digital-born material, but also digitised archives and records.

Archival research is an essential part of our work and we have accessed records at the NAA countless times. We have come across serious delays as researchers when trying to access records that have not yet been examined but are categorised as open access. In some cases, this has resulted in projects being completed without the inclusion of these records. Increased resourcing would enable records to be examined more quickly, which would allow researchers to produce work that utilises and showcases the NAA collection, and that is completed within reasonable time frames. Our work would greatly benefit from the faster digitisation of requested records.

As we are based in Victoria, having access to NAA records through the reading room at the Victorian Archives Centre is a great benefit to us. It is not always possible to travel to Canberra to access records through the central reading room. The co-location of the Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) and NAA collections also encourages expert knowledge to be shared between the two agencies, which also in turn benefits us as researchers. It is essential that the NAA is funded to maintain and improve its services.

We appreciate the opportunity to make this submission.

Sarah Rood, Katherine Sheedy, Fiona Poulton and Lucy Bracey
Way Back When Consulting Historians