



NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF AUSTRALIA

Personal Records Collections - Acquisitions Policy and Strategic Framework 2021-2024

**REFERENCE & DESCRIPTION SERVICES
ACCESS & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT BRANCH**

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

National Archives of Australia has collected the official and private records (personal records) collections of significant individuals who served within, or were closely associated with the Commonwealth government since the early 1960s.

Approximately 7 kilometres or 2% of the 360 kilometres which constitutes the national archival collection consists of personal records collections acquired from a broad range of donors.

The Personal Records Collections Acquisitions Policy and Strategic Framework 2021-2024 (the Policy and Framework) will enable National Archives to continue to build and provide access to a significant body of personal records collections of national significance, that complement the official record and provide a rich source for future research and scholarship.

The Policy and Framework articulates National Archives' approach to the acquisition, management and provision of access to personal records collections during the period 2021-2024. It identifies and commits National Archives to a number of principles, strategic objectives and actions required for the effective management of personal records collections nationally and outlines the decentralised approach to this ongoing management.

A list of definitions for common terms used throughout the Policy and Framework is provided in [Attachment A](#).

2. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

National Archives of Australia acknowledges all Indigenous Australians and their continuing connection to Country, culture and community. Through considered practice, we commit to archival practices that respect and uphold the rights and cultural obligations that are inherent in our collection.

3. PURPOSE

The Personal Records Collections Acquisitions Policy and Strategic Framework 2021-2024 (the Policy and Framework) provides the business context within which activities focused on personal records collections within National Archives are undertaken nationally.

The Policy and Framework outlines the National Archives' approach to the acquisition, management and provision of access to personal records collections during the next three years and provides the foundation for the annual Personal Records Collections Implementation Plan. It also aligns with the National Archives' strategic direction as articulated in the *Corporate Plan 2020-21 to 2022-24* and *Strategy 2030: A Transformed and Trusted National Archives* and facilitates a contribution the strategic 'secure' and 'connect' objectives.¹

¹ National Archives of Australia - Strategy 2030: A Transformed and Trusted National Archives

4. SCOPE

The Policy and Framework is relevant for all personal records collections being considered for acquisition and those collections for which National Archives already has responsibility. Its implementation is not restricted to a particular donor type, record format, or area of operational responsibility.

The Policy and Framework replaces the National Archives' Official and Private Record Collections Acquisition Policy endorsed in 2016.

5. OUR CONTEXT

National Archives is committed to being a world leading archive, and strives to strengthen Australia's cultural identity and democracy by connecting people with the evidence of Australian Government activities and decisions.²

National Archives seeks to acquire and provide access to personal records collections that are of national significance and public interest which complement official Commonwealth records maintained within Departmental or agency recordkeeping systems.

The National Archives' activities to acquire personal records collections is provided for by section 5(2) (f) of the *Archives Act 1983*. Under this section National Archives is able 'to seek to obtain, and to have the care and management of, material (including Commonwealth records) not in the custody of a Commonwealth institution, that forms part of the archival resources of the Commonwealth and, *in the opinion of the Director-General*, ought to be in the care of National Archives.³

The national archival collection contains 360 kilometres of analogue records and objects, and 5PB of digital records, constituting some 40 million individual records. Approximately 7 kilometres or 2% of the national archival collection consists of personal records collections. These collections represent the contribution of some 600 significant individuals who served in, or were closely associated with the Commonwealth, and include records created and maintained by former Governors-General, Prime Ministers, Justices of the High Court, Attorneys-General, senior public servants, engineers, prime ministers' spouses, photographers, journalists, ambassadors and academics.

The broad range of roles and responsibilities held by individuals who have donated their personal records collections to National Archives' custody, has resulted in a complex and highly heterogenous collection containing a mix of both official Commonwealth records and private personal records often arranged within the same record or series of records.

6. POLICY STATEMENT

² Ibid

³ *Archives Act 1983*

National Archives' policy approach to the acquisition, management and provision of access to personal records collections during the period 2021 to 2024 is underpinned and governed by four principles.

These principles ensure that: only records of archival significance, that add unique and substantial value to the national collection are acquired; a clear delineation of custody and ownership of personal records collections is agreed on; and donors are provided with appropriate advice and support regarding personal records collections.

Principle 1: Acquisition and archival significance

National Archives will **actively seek** to acquire official Commonwealth, and private records of archival significance that add unique and substantial value to the national collection from two primary focus groups, namely:

1. current and former **Governors-General** and **Prime Ministers**; and
2. **individuals who have made a significant contribution** to the Commonwealth including former and current Cabinet Ministers and High Court Judges

National Archives will not consider for acquisition the records of individuals with no connection or relationship to the Commonwealth.

National Archives will consider for acquisition the records of individuals who have previously donated collections to the national archival collection.

Records in any format will be considered for acquisition.

Donations will continue to be the primary avenue through which National Archives will seek to acquire personal records collections. National Archives will accept donations directly from a donor, or after the death of a donor, from an heir, executor or by bequest, or by a member of the community who has appropriate custody of records.

Personal records collections will be assessed for archival significance prior to acquisition to the national archival collection. The significance of a collection will be assessed with consideration of the National Archives' appraisal principles,⁴ and where it is relevant, practical and efficient to do so, in terms of the provisions of Records Authorities including *General Records Authority 38 - 2018/00273960 Ministers of State*.

In exceptional circumstances, National Archives may seek to purchase records that become available for sale. If purchased, personal record collections will be determined to be archival resources of the Commonwealth under 3C of the *Archives Act 1983* and will be subject to the full provisions of the Act.

⁴ How we select national archives see: <https://www.naa.gov.au/information-management/disposing-information/transferring-information/transferring-information-national-archives/how-we-select-national-archives#what-we-keep>

Where National Archives chooses not to acquire a personal records collection, the inquirer will be referred to other relevant collecting institutions as identified by the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program (CGP) administered by the Office for the Arts within Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications.⁵

Principle 2: Custody and ownership agreement

All donations acquired by National Archives will be governed by a Deed of Gift agreement signed by National Archives and the donor.

The Deed of Gift agreement formalises the donation and ensures personal records collections are managed under the provisions of the *Archives Act 1983* and in accordance with any specific terms agreed to by both parties.

Principle 3: Management of collections

Personal records collections will be accepted into the National Archives' custody and managed as part of the National Archives collection in accordance with the Deed of Gift agreement with donors and approved organisational strategies, policies, procedures and practices.

The advice and support from functional areas responsible for the implementation of these strategies, policies and procedures, will be required to enable Reference and Description Services to effectively manage personal records collections.

Principle 4: Advice and support for donors

National Archives will provide advice and support to donors prior to taking custody of personal records collections. Advice will be provided to donors regarding the types of records to be acquired, listing and repackaging requirements, and transport of records prior to acquisition.

Once records are in custody, National Archives will endeavour to ensure timely and appropriate access to the donor, their heirs or executors and other individuals previously identified within the Deed of Gift agreement.

National Archives will also provide support to donors pursuing the provisions of the Cultural Gifts Program (CGP) and will assist in the coordination of applications made by donors under the program. Donors will however be responsible for arranging and paying for valuations required by this program.

⁵ List of institutions CGP at: <http://arts.gov.au/cgp>

In exceptional circumstances, including where the material proposed for donation is assessed as of high significance, National Archives may agree to providing financial support to donors to assist with repackaging, transport and the valuation of records as part of the CGP.

7. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

During the period 2021 to 2024 National Archives is committed to achieving a number of strategic objectives that embed these policy principles to strengthen organisational capacity and capability for successful acquisition, management and provision of access to personal records collections.

The objectives identified are:

- acquisition of personal records collections of all living former and current Prime Ministers and Governors-General
- acquisition of personal records collections from individuals who have made a significant contribution to the Commonwealth
- revision of Deed of Gift agreements with existing donors as far as is practical
- development of mechanisms for collaboration with government agencies including the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) and the Office of the Governor-General to provide advice to, and facilitate relationships with potential donors
- development of partnerships with other cultural institutions to cultivate equity of access opportunities for personal records collections
- management of agreements for Commonwealth records in the custody of institutions other than National Archives

8. ACTIONS TO DELIVER STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

During the period 2021 to 2024 National Archives will deliver the strategic objectives outlined above by undertaking the following actions:

acquisition of personal records collections of all living former and current Prime Ministers and Governors-General

acquisition of personal records collections of individuals who have made a significant contribution to the Commonwealth

revise Deed of Gift Agreements with existing donors development mechanisms for collaboration with government agencies to provide advice to, and facilitate relationships with, potential donors

development of partnerships with other cultural institutions to cultivate equity of access opportunities for personal records collections

management of agreements for Commonwealth records in the custody of institutions other than the National Archives

9. DEPENDENCIES AND RISKS

The following dependencies and risks have been identified that have significant capacity to affect the National Archives' ability to meet the objectives and actions in this Policy and Framework.

- Organisation prioritisation and support for delivery of personal records collections activities including, Deed of Gift negotiations
- Sufficient resourcing including budget and staff time to implement, develop and undertake identified initiatives
- Availability and capability of IT infrastructure, including hardware and software systems to support, develop and further enhance personal records collections activities and business requirements
- Opportunity to coordinate initiatives nationally across offices while maintaining business-as-usual services and projects
- Opportunity to integrate objectives and initiatives identified with other National Archives' projects and initiatives nationally, particularly those that relate to appropriate storage, digitisation and preservation of highly variable records formats and object types including gifts
- Clear communications and engagement strategies to identify new donors and opportunities for collaboration and partnerships
- A collegiate culture within National Archives and an environment within which staff can explore, create, test and contribute
- The availability of skilled and experienced staff to manage and provide access to personal records collections
- Clear and consistent interpretation and application of records authorities including General Records Authority 38 and appraisal principles

Risks identified include:

- Competing organisational priorities particularly those that relate to the storage, preservation and digitisation of the national archival collection
- Lack of resources to facilitate, manage and support personal records collections priorities across National Archives' offices
- Lack of understanding of the cost-benefit realisation of acquisition and provision of access to personal records collections
- Opportunities for connection and collaboration with current donors and researchers, and potential donors, partners and researchers not fully realised

10 MEASURES OF SUCCESS

The National Archives' success at implementing the objectives and initiatives of the Policy and Framework during 2021 to 2024 will be measured by:

- Increase in the number of acquisitions of personal records collections of former and current Prime Ministers, Governors-General and other individuals who have made a significant contribution to the Commonwealth
- Increase in the number of current Deed of Gift agreements with donors
- Establishment and management of successful collaborative mechanisms with other government agencies
- Establishment and management of successful partnerships with cultural institutions to facilitate federated access to personal records collections
- Successful management of and provision of access to personal records collections in the custody of cultural institutions other than the National Archives □ Positive feedback from partners, donors, and researchers

11 RELATED DOCUMENTATION

- Legislative framework – *Archives Act 1983*
- National Archives: Corporate Plan 2020-21 to 2023-24
- National Archives of Australia – Strategy 2030: A Transformed and Trusted National Archives
- National Description Strategy 2021-2024 R752372021
- Public Programs Strategic Framework 2019-2024
- National Digitisation Strategic Framework (DRAFT)
- National Preservation Policy 2021-2024
- Digital Publishing Strategic Framework (DRAFT)
- Personal Records Collections Implementation Plan 2021-2022 (DRAFT)
- Assessment of Archival Significance R904342021
- Disposal Authorities – General Records Authority 38 see: [General Records Authority 38 | naa.gov.au](#)

DEFINITIONS

ATTACHMENT A

A list of definitions of common terms is provided below. Definitions are sourced from:

- the National Archives of Australia Glossary of terms
- *Keeping Archives*, Second Edition, The Australian Society of Archivists, Ed Judith Ellis, 2008 3rd Edition.

Acquisition The process by which the Archives adds to its holdings by accepting material for transfer, donation, loan or purchase.

Deed of Gift Agreement A legal agreement between National Archives and donor documenting the terms of the donation for records into the Archives' custody and transferring ownership of the records donated to the Archives.

Donor An individual who donates records to National Archives. This individual can also be the individual who created, received, accumulates or otherwise brings into existence the records.

Commonwealth person A significant individual such as a Governor-General, Prime Minister, Minister, Member of Parliament or senior public servant who has been associated with the Commonwealth and who has created official and private record collections held by the National Archives and is included in the CRS System as a Commonwealth Person.

Commonwealth record A record that is the property of the Commonwealth or of a Commonwealth institution; or a record that is deemed to be a Commonwealth record by virtue of a regulation under the Archives Act 1983, but does not include a record that is exempt material or is a register or guide maintained in accordance with the Act.

GRA 38 General Records Authority that sets out the requirements for keeping or destroying records created or received in the course of discharging official functions as a Minister or made or received by the Ministerial office in relation to those duties.

Instrument of Deposit A legal agreement between National Archives and donor documenting the terms of the deposit of records into the Archives' custody. This agreement was previously used to facilitate the acquisition of official and private record collections by National Archives. This instrument has been replaced by Deed of Gift agreements.

Official records See Commonwealth record.

Personal records collections Records of a person who is, or has been, associated with the Commonwealth (e.g. prime ministers, ministers or judges). These records are not maintained in the recordkeeping systems of an Australian Government agency or organisation. Personal records collections held by National Archives may include official Commonwealth records as well as private records. These records are accumulated by an individual, as distinct from records accumulated by an agency.

Private, personal records A record which is the property of a person, rather than that of the Commonwealth.