



The Hon Tony Burke MP
Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations
Minister for the Arts
Leader of the House

MS23-004827

Mr Simon Froude
Director-General
National Archives of Australia
GPO Box 4924
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Dear Mr Froude

I am writing to set out my expectations of the National Archives of Australia (National Archives).

As you are aware, the Prime Minister, the Hon Anthony Albanese MP and I launched the National Cultural Policy *Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place* on 30 January 2023. This sets Australia's cultural policy for the next five years. As one of the nine National Collecting Institutions in the Arts portfolio, the National Archives is vital to Australia's cultural sector and has an important role to play in achieving the National Cultural Policy outcomes.

The National Collecting Institutions hold a special place in Australia's cultural infrastructure. They preserve, share and celebrate our stories, reflect our diversity and creativity, and inspire audiences to learn, imagine and create. *Revive* also recognises their pivotal roles in supporting truth-telling for First Nations people and fostering international collaboration and cultural exchange.

The five interconnected pillars of *Revive* strongly resonate with the objectives and aims of the National Collecting Institutions. Sitting across these pillars are ten principles which recognise that galleries, libraries, archives and museums sector is an essential part of the Australian arts ecology. I acknowledge the National Archives' commitment to these pillars and principles in its work in Australia and internationally.

I ask that the National Archives clearly reflect the aims of *Revive* in its purpose as articulated in its Corporate Plan, noting that the Policy is aimed at guiding the Australian Government's actions and investment over the next five years. It is also important for the National Archives to report against its delivery of *Revive* in its Annual Reports.

I expect the National Archives to focus on the following strategic priorities over the next year:

- provide strong leadership and foster collaboration within national and international archives and record keeping sectors to promote the five pillars of *Revive*;
- ensure policies and procedures are in place to promote diversity, sustainability, reconciliation and inclusion;
- ensure it has a current Disability Action Plan in place to support people with disability to participate fully in Australia's cultural and creative life;
- continue to foster appreciation and understanding of First Nations arts, culture and knowledge systems, and contribute to a professional, viable and ethical First Nations engagement with archives in line with the principle that First Nations arts and culture are First Nations led;
- provide greater opportunities for all Australians to access arts and culture, including through a diverse range of exhibitions, programs, events and digital offerings; and
- engage in activities to enrich archival and cultural education at all levels.

Revive is underpinned by commitments to recognise the value of Australia's cultural and creative practitioners, to create safe and secure workplaces (including cultural safety), and to provide sustainable pathways for cultural sector workers throughout the different stages of their careers. Creative Workplaces and its Council in Creative Australia have been established to support workers across the cultural and creative sectors to have safe and inclusive workplaces. Compliance with codes of conduct developed by Creative Workplaces will be a condition of Government funding.

In addition, I expect the National Archives to work cooperatively with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts and other portfolio agencies, especially the other National Collecting Institutions, to deliver the many relevant actions outlined in *Revive* including the modernisation of the *Archives Act 1983*. This also includes supporting the telling of First Nations stories in the cultural sector, partnering with other cultural institutions to display works from the national collections, and the review of policies and frameworks such as *Significance 2.0*.

Funding Commitment

As you are aware, the Government made a landmark funding commitment to the National Collecting Institutions in the 2023-24 Budget, which is designed to respond to legacy issues. For the National Archives this represents an uplift in funding of \$36.5 million over four years, with an additional \$8.2 million per annum (indexed and ongoing) increase to funding from 2027-28 to protect existing jobs, support long-term financial sustainability and allow the National Archives to maintain and manage the national collection. The funding provides certainty for future activities to preserve, protect and celebrate Australia's stories and history.

While decisions about the expenditure of available resources appropriately remain subject to Accountable Authority decisions, I expect that the allocation of Government funding across staffing, suppliers and asset replacement should be responsibly prioritised by need within the allocation. The financial sustainability element of this additional funding is designed to make it affordable to maintain existing staffing levels, upgrade information technology infrastructure and support the National Archives' budget sustainability.

Information management

I note the recommendations of the Auditor-General Report No.44 of 2022-23 *Management of Information Assets* and the National Archives' role in supporting Commonwealth entity and company compliance with the *Building trust in the public record: managing information and data for government and community policy* (Building Trust policy). I expect that the National Archives will engage with other Commonwealth entities and companies to ensure successful implementation of the Building Trust policy, and play an influencing role in Australian Public Service professionalism in record-keeping.

In addition to your role supporting Commonwealth entities and companies, National Archives should be an exemplar in having established governance and reporting arrangements for internal information management consistent with the *Archives Act 1983* and the Building Trust policy.

Additional reporting

The Government is committed to fiscal responsibility and transparency. As you are aware, each National Collecting Institution is now required to provide biannual updates about its financial performance, including funded and unfunded capital asset maintenance. This is a new reporting requirement, in addition to what is required under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*. The biannual reports will inform the Government of current financial performance and raise awareness of forecast funding pressures.

It is important that the National Archives maintains an accurate Asset Management Plan to enable capital maintenance to be managed proactively to protect the collection, and keep workplaces safe, efficient and suitable for visitors. The additional reporting requirements will inform the process for any future funding considerations and it will therefore be necessary to identify any capital works funding pressures through the biannual reports.

I expect the National Archives to continue to effectively manage its available resources and ensure that any future funding requests are limited to essential needs and are cost-effective. I trust you will continue to keep me informed of any significant events or developments related to the National Archives' activities and functions.

I look forward to your response in the form of a Statement of Intent as to how the National Archives will meet the Government's expectations. This Statement of Expectations and your corresponding Statement of Intent form an important component of your organisation's governance framework. As such, I expect both documents will be made publicly available. I am writing to all National Collecting Institutions in similar terms and have copied this letter to Dr Denver Beanland AM, the Chair of the National Archives of Australia Advisory Council.

I wish the National Archives every success in meeting its objectives and in continuing to contribute to the cultural growth of Australia, including through supporting the objectives of *Revive*.

Yours sincerely



TONY BURKE

18/1/2024

cc Dr Denver Beanland AM, Chair, National Archives of Australia Advisory Council