



**NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF AUSTRALIA**

18 April 2024

The Hon Tony Burke MP  
Minister for the Arts  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Copied to: Dr Denver Beanland AM, Chair, National Archives Advisory Council

Dear Minister

### **National Archives of Australia – Statement of Intent**

Thank you for your letter of 18 January 2024, setting out your expectations for National Archives of Australia (National Archives). I am pleased to respond to your Statement of Expectations with this Statement of Intent.

National Archives is unique among Australia's cultural and collecting institutions. In addition to our role as a public archive, we set the information management standards for the Commonwealth and provide best practice advice to Australian Government agencies. This ensures the Australian Government creates and keeps records of its decisions and actions to demonstrate accountability to the community and evidence the integrity of the operations of the Commonwealth.

National Archives welcomes the Government's National Cultural Policy, *Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place*, and recognition of the important role National Collecting Institutions (NCIs) hold in achieving cultural policy outcomes. National Archives is developing its Corporate Plan for 2024-25 – 2027-28, with consideration of how to further embed the 5 interconnected pillars of *Revive* into our purpose and performance measures. This includes strengthening our connection with First Nations people to facilitate culturally appropriate access to collections, services and resources.

I thank the Government for its commitment in *Revive* to modernise the *Archives Act 1983* (Archives Act) to enhance National Archives' ability to manage government records reflective of the digital age. Good information governance is a cornerstone of accountability, transparency and integrity in the Australian Government. Information management capability continues to be a challenge for Australian Government agencies, as is sustaining appropriate recordkeeping practices. Modernisation of the Archives Act will assist in improving this capability.

National Archives looks forward to working with the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (the Department) and Australian Government agencies, including the NCIs, to deliver *Revive* and ensure effective information management across the Commonwealth.



I thank you again for the funding commitment in the 2023-24 Budget, which will help ensure National Archives can deliver on its core purposes.

It is with pleasure that I attach National Archives Statement of Intent for 2024.

Your faithfully,



Simon Froude  
Director-General

## National Archives of Australia Statement of Intent 2024

National Archives will undertake a range of activities that support the Statement of Expectations, outlined below.

### **Provide strong leadership and foster collaboration within national and international archives and record keeping sectors to promote the 5 pillars of *Revive***

National Archives actively supports the preservation of documentary heritage through information and data management roles to secure, digitise, preserve and facilitate access to government information, as well as through archival and research partnerships and public and education programs.

National Archives' participation in peak bodies representing the archival, information management and cultural sectors will continue this year, including:

- active membership of the Council of Australasian Archives and Records Authorities (CAARA) which comprises the heads of the government archives authorities of the Commonwealth of Australia, New Zealand and each of the Australian states and territories. The aims of CAARA include collaboration across the jurisdictions, identifying and responding to emerging issues on government archives and records management and being an advocate for government archives and records management.
- active membership of the International Council on Archives (ICA) and its Pacific Regional Branch (PARBICA), which supports the ICA's leadership and collaboration in archival policy, research, skills development and capability development programs, education, conferences and information sharing fora
- the Director-General being a member of the Forum of National Archivists Steering Committee, which is the lead body for national archives around the world, supporting ICA members to develop strategic responses to contemporary archive management challenges
- maintaining our membership of GLAM Peak, which includes contribution to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals
- liaising and actively supporting key professional groups including: Records and Information Management Practitioners Alliance (RIMPA Global), the Australian Society of Archivists (ASA) and the Data Management Association of Australia (DAMA).
- participating in Australian Government information and data management groups such as the Data Champions Network.

Our leadership and collaboration extends internationally, supporting the sharing of knowledge and expertise between institutions. We have memorandums of understanding in place or planned with Archives Nationales (France), National Archives of India, Archivo General de la Nación de México (National Archives of Mexico), Arhivele Naționale ale României (National Archives of Romania) and National Archives and Public Records Services of Papua New Guinea. National Archives will also continue to engage with archival organisations across the Asia-Pacific region as a leading member of PARBICA.

National Archives also acknowledges expectations around collaboration with the Department and other portfolio agencies, in particular NCIs, to deliver on relevant actions in *Revive*, including the modernisation of the *Archives Act 1983* (Archives Act) and supporting the telling of First Nations stories. Examples of collaboration with other portfolio agencies include:

- collaborating with other NCIs in support of the *Strengthening Democracy Taskforce*, to build a resilient Australian democracy.
- partnering with national and local cultural institutions to deliver promotional, access and research activities to support engagement with all the national cultural collections, such as

supporting the Museum of Australian Democracy to celebrate its 100-year building anniversary in 2027.

- supporting the management, care and access to local collections by contributing to the Cultural Heritage Grants program in partnership with the National Library of Australia and other institutions.
- supporting research into the national archival collection through the Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Projects, building knowledge of the collection and identifying different stories to connect and engage with audiences.

### **Ensure policies and procedures are in place to promote diversity, sustainability, reconciliation and inclusion**

National Archives will continue to implement policies and procedures that promote diversity and inclusion within the workplace. Our *Diversity Plan 2022–25* has a specific focus on increasing the representation of people with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and young people (aged less than 25 years). In 2024, National Archives completed an inclusive position assessment to understand the physical and cognitive demands of all roles and options. As a result, National Archives is implementing a range of initiatives to support increased workforce representation of under-represented people, improve awareness of diversity issues, promote an inclusive culture and deliver a barrier free and flexible workplace.

National Archives acknowledges that *Revive* is underpinned by commitments to recognise the value of creative and cultural works and create safe workplaces for those practitioners. We will continue to implement measures to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of our workforce, and invest in the professional development of employees so that they are supported to succeed in their current roles and progress their careers in the cultural sector.

Consistent with *Revive*'s first pillar, we continue to embed a 'First Nations First' approach, not only as a key priority, but as central to how we carry out all aspects of our work. National Archives is developing a renewed Reconciliation Action Plan, which will be in place by July 2024. National Archives recognises that evidence and stories in archival documents play an important role in redress and truth-telling for First Nations people and others impacted by past events. Further detail regarding our work to engage and develop relationships with First Nations people is outlined below.

We will also ensure that our public engagement programs and services are welcoming and delivered in safe environments that foster inclusion and diversity, and support national programs such as NAIDOC Week, Reconciliation Week and International Day of People with Disability.

National Archives also recognises integrity reform work occurring across the Australian Public Service, and we are developing an integrity framework which, in addition to clearly defining expectations on integrity within the agency, promotes and emphasises an integrity culture.

We will continue to implement initiatives that reduce the impact of our operations on the environment, including implementation of our *Environmental Sustainability Policy* which seeks to improve environmental performance, including meeting the Australian Government target of net zero emissions by 2030.

## **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**

As noted above, National Archives has a Diversity Plan 2022-25 to improve diversity in the workforce. National Archives will build on that plan and develop a Disability Inclusion Action Plan which seeks to eliminate disability discrimination across the agency, including for our audiences. The plan will seek to:

- understand barriers that may stop people with disabilities accessing our exhibitions, programs and events and detail actions to remove those barriers
- commit to create programs and services, content and experience for all our audiences and ensure they are universally accessible regardless of the platform or location
- explore ways to provide 'quiet hours' for audiences looking for less stimulation and desensitised environments
- create an accessible and inclusive workplace culture and environment and strategies to attract, recruit and retain employees living with disability.

## **Continue to foster appreciation and understanding of First Nations arts, culture and knowledge systems, and contribute to professional, viable and ethical First Nations engagement with archives in line with the principle that First Nations arts and culture are First Nations led**

National Archives will continue to build and strengthen its relationship with First Nations people and adopt a 'First Nations First' approach to our work. We recognise the importance of preserving for future generations at-risk First Nations cultural material. Our approach to First Nations collaboration and engagement is supported by:

- [Our way: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander protocols](#) our framework to build a culturally competent organisation to create trust and understanding between National Archives and First Nations people and communities under 5 protocols.
- the [Tandanya-Adelaide Declaration](#), which aims to remodel traditional archival practice in support of improving access to archival resources for First Nations people and communities, informs our approach to work. The declaration is a commitment to recognising and preserving First Nations culture and knowledge methods.
- inform [What we keep: principles for selecting the Australian Government's national archives, our policy statement](#) which commits to recognising and preserving First Nations culture and knowledge methods in the selection and description of archival records.

Through the lens of First Nations people, we will deliver onsite, online and offsite public programs that connect and engage people with services, programs and collections. We will continue to support truth-telling of First Nations histories and stories through initiatives such as:

- the [Bringing Them Home name index](#) which helps First Nations people use archival records to find information about themselves, their Country and their history. National Archives has established, or is working towards establishing, memorandums of understanding with organisations at a local and national level, such as LinkUp and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), to facilitate access to the index in a secure and culturally appropriate manner
- prioritisation of the digitisation of First Nations records held in the Northern Territory repository. Given the high proportion of First Nations records, including sensitive and potentially confronting content, National Archives has selected Monash University to conduct a scoping study to determine the best approach to the digitisation of these records. The Monash team provides a unique combination of archival knowledge, with extensive specialist expertise in digitisation initiatives and standards, coupled with the

cultural understandings and experience of working with Indigenous communities that can only be provided by First Nations experts

- memorandums of understanding to support Commonwealth agencies to deliver on commitments identified in First Nations specific redress schemes, such as the Territories Stolen Generations Redress Scheme, by providing reference services to enable access to archival records
- collaboration with the Healing Foundation's Historical Records Taskforce, which the Director-General is a member of, to improve accessibility to records of importance for members of the Stolen Generations and their families.

National Archives also supports Australian Government agencies that design and implement policies and services that impact the rights and lives of First Nations people through its role in promoting and improving information management processes. Proper information management practices across the Commonwealth help to ensure that records of interactions that impact First Nations people are created and preserved for future transfer to National Archives.

### **Provide greater opportunities for all Australians to access arts and culture, including through a diverse range of exhibitions, programs, events and digital offerings**

As a truly national institution with stories of Australia held in every state and territory, National Archives delivers public engagement activities and services for all Australians. These programs and services enrich our understanding of how Australia, as a contemporary, democratic nation, has developed. Our commitment to providing greater opportunities for Australians to access the national archival collection will be met through a diverse offering of onsite, off-site and digital programs.

Our national exhibition program draws extensively from the national archival collection to deliver exhibitions, and programs that highlight Australia's diversity. Upcoming exhibitions and displays include:

- Dutch showcase at our National Office - Parkes, in November 2024
- *In real life: inventors and inventions in the National Archives* at the National Office in May 2025 which will later tour nationally
- *Sea to suburbia* at our Western Australia Office in May 2024
- *Camel trains and steel wheels* at our South Australia Office in August 2024.

We deliver dedicated programs and services to the general public to support access to and use of a range of records relating to family and historical research. These records include immigration records, photographs, and audio-visual records.

Our commitment to scaled-up capability to digitise and preserve at-risk collections is evidenced through the Second World War Digitisation Project which commenced in July 2019 and will be completed by 30 June 2024. In total, over 852,000 Army and Royal Australian Air Force service records (20 million pages) will have been digitised and made accessible online through National Archives' online collection database, RecordSearch. Through digitisation we reduce the physical wear and tear on the original fragile and aging paper records. We also enable audiences from across Australia and the globe to view records that provide valuable and often poignant personal stories, as well as uncovered stories about broader aspects of Australian life and the connections between individuals, communities, businesses and the government.

Building our digital offerings will improve direct access to the national archival collection for more Australians. We will achieve this through continuous improvement of our processes,

procedures and approaches to activities such as access examination, description and references services, which underpin and support access to the national archival collection. As custodians of the official record of the Commonwealth, we will continue to develop programs aimed at building digital literacy that will support users of our services and increase access to the collection online.

Our exhibitions, programs and events will reflect the diversity of the Australian people, creating affirming and recognisable experiences for people from all backgrounds. Supported by the National Collecting Institutions Touring and Outreach program (NCITO) and Visions of Australia, our touring exhibition program will allow us to engage with audiences in rural and remote localities around the nation and sees us working with other cultural institutions. We will use our national state and territory resources to develop and deliver public engagement activities and programs to support access to the national archival collection and the stories of Australia held within.

### **Engage in activities to enrich archival and cultural education at all levels**

The national archival collection contains records about key events and decisions that have shaped Australian society, democracy and culture. Our programs and services are opportunities to educate, using engaging face to face and digital based content, about our democratic processes, our immigration and service histories and our First Nations experiences.

We will continue to provide engaging opportunities for learners of all ages, interests and backgrounds through our learning programs to share Australian stories from the national archival collection, including:

- expanding curriculum linked experiences for school students and their teachers through programs that encourage and foster engagement with, and interest in, Australia's democracy as part of the Parliamentary and Civics Education Rebate (PACER) program.
- continuing to support teacher professional learning by offering affordable accredited development programs.

Programs aimed at building democratic resilience will continue to be delivered to youth and non-traditional museum-going audiences.

### **Funding Commitment**

The significant short-term funding boost of \$36.5m over 4 years for National Archives is welcomed. This will allow us to deliver and strengthen our core functions to ensure Australian Government information of enduring significance is secured, preserved and accessible.

The \$17.4 million over 2 years from 2024-25 will fund upgrades to National Archives' access and engagement technology platforms, and improvements to data storage. This will include replacing legacy systems not aligned with contemporary technology standards and work to modernise data storage solutions.

From the \$19.1 million over 4 years from 2023-24 National Archives will ensure funding is responsibly prioritised by need within the allocation. The remaining funds will be used for uplifting capability to support digitisation of at-risk and high priority records, for improving public-facing digital tools in state and territory offices and improving digital storage solutions.

National Archives will ensure the \$8.2 million per year ongoing from 2027-28 will support our financial sustainability, to ensure ongoing sustainment funding is responsibly prioritised and allocated. How this uplift is best utilised will be an outcome by the program management component of the \$19.1m funding.

## Information management

National Archives is pleased to see record keeping acknowledged as a key government priority. National Archives plays a key role in influencing Commonwealth professionalism through uplifting information management capability. The [Building trust in the public record: managing information and data for government and community](#) policy was developed by National Archives to help agencies improve how they create, collect, manage and use information assets.

We will undertake the following activities to support best practice in information management across the Commonwealth:

- ongoing written and face to face engagement with Australian Government agencies, including web-based information management advice and focused communications campaign to increase agency engagement and implementation of best practice record keeping.
- operating the Government Agencies Information Network (GAIN Australia), which includes regular forums and a monthly bulletin with updates of the information management related work of National Archives, and an Agency Service Centre where Australian Government agencies can contact National Archives for information management advice specific to their needs.
- undertaking annual surveys to enable Australian Government agencies to measure their information management maturity, to identify gaps and improvements, and to analyse whole-of-government maturity with the aim of identifying areas for government improvement and creation of necessary advice and guidance to improve maturity.
- working in partnership with Australian Government agencies to set minimum retention periods for Australian Government records to meet community and government needs and identify archival records of the Australian Government.
- making available many of our governance documents on information management as examples for other Australian Government agencies.
- partnering with the Australian Public Service Academy to develop a recordkeeping e-learning module targeted at APS staff, and a proposal to develop an e-learning module targeted at information management practitioners.

We acknowledge that we should be an exemplar in governance and reporting arrangements for our own information management. To that end, National Archives Information and Data Governance Framework sets out our practices in response to the Archives Act, the *Building Trust in the Public Record* policy, our internal policies and protocols including *Our way: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander protocols*, whole-of-government directions including the Office of the National Data Commissioner's (ONDC) *Foundational Four* and the Australian Signals Directorate's (ASD) *Information Security Manual* and the *Information Management Standard for Australian Government*. The framework establishes roles and responsibilities applying to leadership and to all staff of National Archives.

Oversight of our information management is through our established information and data governance arrangements. Advice and reports against our program of work to improve enterprise-wide information and data governance are presented to the National Archives Executive Board.

Under the direction of the Chief Information and Data Governance Officer, the Information Governance section continually addresses emerging data risks and works with business areas to improve governance of the information and data they use in conducting their business. This includes a regular staff training program and a program of published advice.



**Additional reporting**

National Archives will meet the new reporting requirements to provide biannual updates about financial performance.

National Archives does not own any capital assets, however we will continue to maintain an accurate asset management plan for the maintenance and replacement of operational assets such as ICT assets.

