

**ABC Submission to the Review  
of the National Archives of  
Australia**  
June 2019



# ABC submission to the National Archives of Australia Review

## Executive summary

- The ABC is a source of significant Australian stories. The archive of ABC material at NAA is a national treasure of historical and cultural significance.
- In addition to the normal records created by most Commonwealth agencies, the NAA holds a key collection of ABC historical and cultural records (5 shelf kilometres) including scripts, contracts, artist files, photographs and publicity material.
- In addition, the NAA also holds 250,000 audiovisual items created by or for the ABC in its collection. Only 16% of these items are digitised.
- The NAA should be resourced to manage the collection according to best practice and make it available in a digital form.
- A secure digital preservation infrastructure will allow for easier delivery of new digital transfers and provide the ABC with seamless digital access to ABC content held at NAA.
- The NAA is key to digitising and providing ease of access to ABC audiovisual collections for the Australian public and should be resourced to expedite digitisation, in consultation and collaboration with the ABC.
- The ABC continues to make use of ABC audiovisual material held by the NAA for new content making. This requires additional flexibility in terms of storage and retrieval arrangements compared to more traditional records.
- The NAA is key to providing strong leadership, policy and standard setting around the management of digital information (predominately non-audiovisual records).
- The NAA is critical in providing strong leadership around information security, data sharing and re-use across Commonwealth agencies.

## Scope of functions

As set out in the *Archives Act 1983*, the NAA was established to:

- Identify the archival resources of the Commonwealth;
- Preserve and make public Commonwealth archival resources;
- Develop standards and advice to Commonwealth institutions in regard to record-keeping; and
- Impose record-keeping obligations in respect of Commonwealth records.

More than 35 years later, these responsibilities remain current and valuable.

The ABC's relationship with the NAA intersect through various functions of the National Archive:

- NAA mandates standards for ABC Information Management including:
  - description standards
  - access and retrieval standards
  - storage standards

- NAA mandates appraisal and disposal standards;
- NAA is the repository of culturally significant material produced and broadcast by the ABC;
- NAA makes ABC material available for public access;

While the responsibility for preservation of, and public access to, ABC material is shared across a number of agencies, including the NAA, the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia (NFSA), as well as the ABC itself, the ABC is of the view that the NAA should continue to be the agency that has primacy to preserve, store and facilitate public access to ABC material.

The NAA faces substantial challenges in meeting the key elements of its service delivery responsibility. From the ABC's perspective the most critical priorities are:

- The provision of strong leadership, policy and standard setting for content and information management.
- Efficient material retrieval processes.
- A review and simplification of digital delivery to and from the NAA.

The ABC will address each of these in turn in this submission.

## **Leadership in Information Management**

One of the key functions of the NAA is to develop standards, policies, guidance, information and services to assist Commonwealth agencies to adopt good information and records management practices. While the ABC has special expertise in the management of the audiovisual archival material we produce, the Corporation acknowledges the value in enlisting the NAA's expertise in the identification and preservation of significant archival material.

In particular, the ABC recognises that the provision of leadership and policy setting around information management, and guidance around information security and data interoperability of digital information is essential in safeguarding valuable public records and assets.

Data interoperability refers to the potential for an agency's information and data to be shared and re-used. To achieve this potential, an agency needs to build interoperability across a range of business, security, legal and technical business and practice areas. Information governance leadership from the NAA could support inter and intra-agency standardisation and management to facilitate discoverability and sharing.

## Material access and retrieval

There are currently more than 250,000 ABC media items held by the NAA. By category these are:

Category	Number
Disc (Audio)	33920
Disc (Moving Image)	1
Film (Audio)	30462
Film (Moving Image)	57588
Tape (Audio)	108419
Tape (Moving Image)	27714
<b>Total</b>	<b>258104</b>

ABC records held at the NAA are still required on a regular basis for use in ABC productions. The ABC does not hold copies of a large proportion of this material and there is an expectation from content makers that the content will be available to them as a matter of course and sometimes with some urgency.

If the NAA restrict access, change their access costs or conditions, or impose additional limits on the Corporation, the ability for the ABC to use its archived content for productions and research may be severely compromised. As such, the ABC requests that the NAA be resourced to provide appropriate access arrangements between the NAA and the ABC.

## Future digital requirements

Approximately 16 per cent of the total ABC audiovisual material held by the NAA has been digitised. NAA have not digitised any ABC paper records.

The NAA has prioritised the digitisation of at-risk audiovisual collections through the Deadline 2025 project, a collaborative initiative with the National Film and Sound Archive. This project was established in light of the general consensus among international audiovisual archivists that magnetic media tape not digitised by 2025 will in most cases be lost. The ABC supports the principles of Deadline 2025.

As noted earlier in this submission, the ABC has some concerns about the NAA's ability to meet ABC access requirements. The ABC acknowledges that this is primarily due to limited resources within the NAA. As access requests for digital-based content becomes the norm, the ABC recommends a number of ways to facilitate improved access:

- Cloud based file delivery.
- Enable automated delivery of metadata rather than through the current manual spreadsheet system.
- A one-touch digitisation approach, reducing double-handling.
- The provision of tracking capabilities and response time estimates.

As digital information becomes the new normal, the NAA's investment in infrastructure, training and appropriately skilled staff must be its priority. This technological transition requires sufficient funding and resourcing however the long-term outcome will be a more streamlined, cost-effective and efficient service.

## **Closing comments**

The ABC would like to strengthen access arrangements with the NAA. The ABC recognises the complimentary services and functions of the NAA and ABC in recording, telling and providing access to the history and culture of Australia.

Digitisation offers the ability for the ABC to access larger collections for content making for audiences, while the NAA is able to focus on long term preservation needs, and to continue to provide access to their collections through the ABC as well as directly to the Australian public.