



**Australasian Federation of Family History Organisations Inc  
PO Box 1394, Canberra, ACT, 2601 Australia**

27 June 2019

Mr David Tune AO PSM  
Independent Reviewer  
c/- Tune Review Secretariat  
National Archives of Australia

Dear Mr Tune

Thank you for the opportunity to submit to the Tune Review of the National Archives of Australia. As the Australasian umbrella body for family historian organisations, we believe it is important that the views of Australia's family historians be heard by to this review. Following are AFFHO's thoughts on the important role of National Archives of Australia (NAA) in Australian society.

Undertaking family history for many participants assists them to understand historic events, often significant, and the factors that influenced their ancestors' lives. This contributes to the understanding of family historians' own identities, both individually and nationally. To embark on this work, original records, such as those held in the NAA need to be retained and made available to open inquiry.

To undertake the retention, storage and access requirements required, the NAA needs to be funded adequately. We are concerned that like most government agencies, the NAA has been recently subjected to budget cuts. While the rationale for these cuts are around efficiency and effectiveness, and are understood, small cultural agencies such as NAA suffer disproportionately because of their size. A cut such as the \$7 million received by the NAA leads to discontinuation of services more than the reduction of services and improved efficiency processes. More staff are required rather than less, to maintain the responsibilities of the NAA.

On a basic level, the legislation relating to the NAA requires renewal to allow it to function efficiently in a digital world. The current legislation is pre-digitisation and as such is not fit for purpose. The NAA also has responsibilities under UNESCO to which Australia made voluntary commitments and these must be met.

To date, the NAA has been a leader in providing wide access to important family history and other historical records. The AIF Personnel Dossiers for the First World War are one example. Australia's dossiers were some of the first to be digitised internationally. They were made accessible to the public and this was a wonderful gift for researchers of individual AIF members and the role of the AIF in those

traumatic years. The information available connected the activities of the AIF with individual Australian families. That this was freely available was gratefully appreciated.

The recent Coalition election promise to digitise similar records for the Second World War is now eagerly anticipated. The family history community is hoping that these records will also be publicly available and at no cost. This would make available information on another important time in Australia's history and help the public understand that history nationally and individually.

While AFFHO realises that funding limitations preclude complete digitisation and free access of many record sets, we do appreciate the option given by the NAA for digitisation of individual records through a user pays system, thus increasing access. The recent inclusion of a fourth price point for such digitisation is welcomed. AFFHO appreciates that the Archives listened to feedback, including through recognised consultation mechanisms, such as the state consultation forums.

A recent self-digitisation pilot in the Brisbane office is also welcome and I understand that the members of the Queensland Consultation Forum and others are anticipating the results of this pilot in the hope that this self-digitising process becomes an agreed procedure in all states. This will again increase access to records. This should be at minimal cost but would allow individual researchers to prioritise records of interest.

Innovative pilots such as mentioned above, and crowd sourcing projects such as ARCHIVE - <http://transcribe.naa.gov.au/> assist users to discover more records but also engage the public. ARCHIVE uses individuals online to create item level data about NAA holdings from original list of records received from agencies. I understand these records date back to the 1950s and include some hard to read hand-written lists. This is an efficient way to improve the understanding by the public of what records are held and should increase access to those records.

Transcriptions of similar items is a further mechanism for increasing access at minimal cost with little risk. We believe the NAA should be encouraged to undertake similar pilots. To identify other such opportunities, stakeholders should be encouraged to make suggestions for projects/pilots. This could be done through the State Consultation Forums or through suggestions from individuals attending Archives' events or even through the NAA website.

State Consultation Forums are a valuable way for the NAA to connect with their stakeholders. We suggest regular forums in each state and territory and further that greater links to Head Office be encouraged. The Queensland State Forum, for example, meets quarterly and has wide attendance of representatives from many stakeholder groups. At least once a year, a head office executive attends the meeting, and this is appreciated by attendees.

An up to date website is also a key communication mechanism for members of the public. The website should be current with past events rapidly removed. Websites are a main communication tool and should be informative, current and a mechanism for two-way communication. Exhibitions are another way to showcase

documents indicating their importance to the nation. Such exhibitions should be regularly changed, and they should be shared with regional areas to demonstrate the NAA's role and importance.

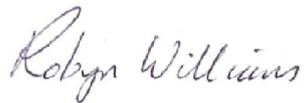
Education events such as seminars are undertaken by several states and offer opportunities to share the nation's history, particularly regarding notable events. This engages citizens and new emigrants to learn about Australian history. While such measures require some staff resources, this impost should be offset by the public participation in history and related citizenship benefits. This should also result in a higher profile for the NAA and increased understanding of its role in Australian society.

Many records are currently held in unsustainable formats e.g. audio-visual machinery. It is understood that usability will be lost and not accessible by around 2025 unless the situation is remedied. This must be a priority for funding as once these items are inaccessible, they will be lost to any future potential users.

Before closing I want to encourage the NAA to continue to make appropriate records available to family historians. This group is comprised of older members of the community who are usually retired and who often have limited discretionary income. For this reason, we urge minimal charges where possible.

Thank you for providing an opportunity to submit to the review of the NAA.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robyn Williams".

Robyn Williams  
**President**