

30 June 2019

Mr David Tune AO PSM
Independent Reviewer
C/o Tune Review Secretariat
National Archives of Australia
Queen Victoria Terrace
Parkes ACT 2600

Dear Mr Tune

Submission to the Tune Review of the National Archives of Australia

The National Archives of Australia's Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group would like to take the opportunity to make a submission to the Tune Review.

The Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group recognises the unique place that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples hold in our history and our future and acknowledges their ongoing contribution as the First Peoples of Australia. The Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group also acknowledges and pays respect to the past, present and future Traditional Custodians and Elders of the lands on which the National Archives of Australia's offices are located and honour their continued connections to those lands.

The National Archives of Australia (NAA)'s Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group (RWG) consists of staff representatives from different work areas and locations within Australia, including staff who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. The RWG is tasked with the development and successful implementation of the NAA's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP); a Plan, developed in partnership with Reconciliation Australia, that outlines specific practical actions the NAA will undertake to support and drive reconciliation. The NAA's Director-General, David Fricker, is the RAP Champion highlighting the significance and importance placed on the RAP and the NAA's commitment to reconciliation.

The RWG is currently developing the NAA's second, and first *innovate*, RAP which is specifically about *implementing reconciliation*. The *Innovate* RAP will focus on developing and strengthening relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, engaging staff and stakeholders in reconciliation and developing and piloting innovative strategies to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

National Archives of Australia's unique role to support and drive reconciliation

The RWG considers it important to make a submission to the Tune Review in order to make clear the vital and unique role the NAA has, and is **obligated**, to play in advancing Australia's reconciliation journey.

The NAA's strategic mission is to connect all Australians, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, with their identity and history through the stewardship of Australian Government records.

For more than 25 years, following consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, the NAA has offered tailored services to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to access records located within the national archival collection for a range of purposes including to link up with family and community.

Much of this work resulted out of the recommendations made by various Royal Commissions and Inquiries over the last 25 years. This includes the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (1991), the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families (1997) and the Inquiry into Indigenous Stolen Wages (2006) all of which resulted in the NAA being tasked (**obligated**) with ensuring the security and accessibility of records created and held by the Commonwealth government.

To this end, the NAA has issued disposal freezes preventing the destruction of relevant records¹, has MOUs in place with Link Up organisations² and maintains and uses the Bringing Them Home (BTH) name index³. In addition, the NAA's exhibition, education, events, web and publication programs foster understanding and respect through the sharing of the voices, stories and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

The future

Moving forward, the RWG has identified that further consultation and interactions with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations is needed to increase the confidence and awareness of NAA staff in their abilities to interact with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and history.

There is also an urgent requirement to further interpret and make available the vast and diverse collection in ways that are discoverable, respectful and meet the needs and expectations of the Indigenous communities for whom those records are most relevant.

The NAA must also create Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identified positions to provide opportunities for education and employment. This is essential for the NAA to transition into the next phase of its reconciliation journey as it is now universally recognised that Indigenous voices are lacking, within the institutions holding valuable community records. When considering these positions, NAA may need to include assistance in accommodation near NAA offices to ensure equity of access for regional Australians particularly for projects with a specific focus or timeframe. NAA should have adequate resources to ensure that existing NAA staff have time and ability to interact with communities on country.

¹ <http://www.naa.gov.au/information-management/managing-information-and-records/disposal/freezes/index.aspx>

² <http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/fact-sheets/fs205.aspx>

³ <http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/fact-sheets/fs175.aspx>

Conclusion

The NAA is **uniquely** placed, and is **obligated**, to contribute to the five dimensions of reconciliation as described by Reconciliation Australia; Race Relations, Equality and Equity, Unity, Institutional Integrity and Historical Acceptance.⁴ However, to do so requires resources. Resources that the NAA does not currently have and has not had for many years.

As part of the Commonwealth government's response to the Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families (1997), the NAA received \$2million dollars over four years (1998-2002) to identify Commonwealth records relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities and to create an index of Indigenous names contained in the records. The resulting Bringing Them Home (BTH) name index is still used today to help Indigenous people find information about themselves, their families and their country. Imagine what might be possible with further funding from the government to expand the BTH name index or to undertake new initiatives directed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The RWG encourages the government to make more resources, both in budget and staff, available to the NAA so that it can continue and expand on this vital work; vital work that the NAA is uniquely position to undertake and vital work that will help to advance Australia's reconciliation journey.

The National Archives of Australia's Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group would like to thank you for the opportunity to make this submission,

National Archives of Australia's Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group

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⁴ <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/what-is-reconciliation/>