JANUARY 2004

1973 Cabinet records
Whitlam on the web
High Court centenary
It’s a Dog’s Life
Legislation

Never before in Australian history, and never since, has a government been so prepared for comprehensive and fundamental reform, so determined to implement it, and so bent on doing it without delay.

The objective was ‘to achieve basic changes in the administration and structure of Australian society’ for ‘the promotion of equal opportunity’ and ‘the promotion of Australian ownership and control of our industries and resources’.

The scope of these principles was extraordinarily wide, encompassing programs for, among other things, the cities and local government, racial and gender equality, health, education, social security, minerals and energy, migrants, human rights, rural industries, the environment, the national estate, and electoral law reform.

The government in 1973 surpassed all its predecessors in the number of Cabinet decisions reached in any one year, and the volume of legislation introduced and approved.

Domestic politics

There were occasions when ministers very publicly clashed with each other; for example, over the competing demands of developers and environmentalists and over approaches to inflation. On occasions, too, Caucus and the Labor’s Federal Executive challenged Cabinet, while Bob Hawke – when President of the ACTU and of the ALP – openly opposed the government’s attempt by referendum to control incomes as well as prices.

Over-the-top words and actions contributed to the theatrics. In March, Senator Lionel Murphy, the Attorney-General, concerned about ASIO’s inaction in relation to Croatian terrorist training camps within Australia and the state of security for the forthcoming visit of the Yugoslav Prime Minister, led a ‘raid’ on ASIO’s headquarters in Melbourne in search of particular files.

Murphy’s inadequate responses to questions in the Senate led to widespread criticism, boosted Opposition morale, and effectively ended the government’s smooth ride with the press. In August 1973, Gough Whitlam admitted that the Murphy ‘raid’ was ‘the greatest mistake’ of his government’s nine months in office.

The Opposition, with DLP support, could obstruct the government’s program in the Senate which, by the end of 1973, had rejected 13 bills, deferred 10 and amended 2. However, the Parramatta
by-election of 22 September, where an anti-government swing of 7 per cent (one issue being the government’s apparent commitment to a second Sydney airport) converted a very marginal Liberal seat into a fairly safe one, probably sealed any prospect of an early double dissolution.

Foreign relations

The Labor government’s approach to foreign relations differed sharply both in rhetoric and in substance from that of its predecessor. Whitlam, who was also Minister for Foreign Affairs, said that the new approach was ‘towards a more independent stance’ in international affairs.

Having recognised Communist China soon after coming to office, the government canvassed the notion of a regional forum to include China and Japan. It advanced the coalition’s stand of neutrality on Middle East issues to the point of ‘even-handedness’ by supporting resolutions condemning the excesses of both sides to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Tensions in Australia’s relationship with the United States had risen in January when three ministers had fiercely denounced President Nixon’s resumption of bombing around Hanoi. They subsided following Whitlam’s visit to Washington in July where he showed that Australia’s position was not anti-American, just pro-Australian. But Labor Party unease about Australian access to, and control of, US bases in Australia escalated in October when President Nixon ordered a world-wide precautionary alert to American forces during the Arab-Israeli war – a decision which included the North-West Cape base – without officially informing the Australian government.

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We are delighted to award our 2004 Frederick Watson Fellowship to Professor Geoffrey Bolton. Professor Bolton is Chancellor of Murdoch University and an extensively published historian who has undertaken visiting fellowships at Kent, Cambridge and Oxford universities. Professor Bolton’s fellowship will enable him to complete a book about Sir Paul Hasluck and his influence on Indigenous affairs and foreign policy.

Sir Paul Hasluck made a significant contribution to modern history in Australia. In the early 1940s he was a senior officer with the Department of External Affairs under Dr Evatt, where he worked on the creation of the United Nations Charter and played a leading role in postwar planning. In the late 1940s until 1951 he was engaged as Official War Historian to write the political and social volumes of the official history of Australia in the Second World War. Sir Paul joined the Liberal Party and was elected to Federal Parliament where he served as the Member for Curtin (WA) from 1949 to 1969. During that time he was the Minister for Territories, Minister for Defence and Minister for External Affairs.

As Minister for Territories, Sir Paul supported the policy known as ‘assimilation’ which related to Aboriginal people. He also helped to build and diversify the Northern Territory economy through mineral exploration and mining. Sir Paul was Minister for External Affairs during the Vietnam War, and an advocate of Australian intervention in Vietnam. From 1969 to 1974 he was Governor-General during the prime ministries of Gorton, McMahon and Whitlam.

We have a wealth of Commonwealth government records that will be essential research material for Professor Bolton’s biography of Sir Paul Hasluck. They include records on the administration of Papua New Guinea when he was Minister for Territories, records on his work as Head of the Australian Mission to the United Nations, and records relating to his time as an official World War II historian.

We look forward to Professor Bolton taking up his fellowship in Canberra in autumn 2004.

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A central question was how to balance Labor’s reform program with Treasury’s concern about inflation, the annual rate of which had reached 10 per cent by September 1973 – that is, before the oil crisis and the wages blow-out. One solution was to pare back the previous government’s (mostly rural) handouts; another – an increase in income tax – had been ruled out in the 1972 Policy Speech. Bill Hayden as Acting Treasurer – prompted, it seems, by the Prime Minister – submitted a hard-hitting Treasury paper designed to give Cabinet a ‘pretty fair jolt’ about the deleterious effects of inflation. Declaring the current rate to be ‘untenable’, the paper argued that the source of the problem was domestic not foreign, that the main victims were members of Labor’s own constituency, and that the solution lay in part in restraining government expenditure. This proposition understandably caused considerable anguish, especially after interest rates had been lifted.

So, at the end of 1973, ministers were torn between their commitment to change, the political need to establish credibility as economic managers and the simple fact that, whatever they did, Australians would be hurt. It did not assist their equilibrium to be confronted by Treasury officials who claimed they were merely technicians asking for political direction, while resolutely rejecting every proposed alternative to expenditure cuts and tax rises.

To read Ian Hancock’s paper in full, or to view the Cabinet records online, visit ‘The Collection’ section on our website at www.naa.gov.au.
Gough Whitlam travelled widely as Prime Minister. In 1973, his first full year of government, Whitlam and his wife Margaret visited many countries in the Asia-Pacific region including the United States, Canada, India, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Japan. In October, he made the first visit to the People's Republic of China by an Australian prime minister. These overseas trips reflected Whitlam's desire to reform Australia's foreign policy, and in particular to engage Australia with Asia. The Whitlam government also fostered Australian participation in international agreements on the environment, heritage and human rights.

These endeavours on the international scene complemented reforms at home. The new Labor government set about implementing wide-ranging changes, dubbed ‘The Program’, which they had been planning in opposition since before the December 1972 election.

Whitlam's activities at home and abroad are well documented in our collection of his records, which includes nearly 100 series held in our Sydney office. First received in 1975, the records cover Whitlam's early political life, his term as prime minister, and the dramatic events of his dismissal.

The fascinating collection includes documents as well as photographs, film and audio tapes. Particular highlights are the photographs which show the active role Margaret Whitlam took as a political and prime ministerial wife, especially on their overseas trips; the comprehensive collection of Whitlam's press releases and speeches; and the correspondence between Whitlam and overseas heads of state, members of parliament, and ‘fellow Australians’.

Explore our online resources on Gough Whitlam, his government and their records at whitlam.naa.gov.au.
Maev O’Collins is Emeritus Professor at the University of Papua New Guinea, Visiting Fellow at the Department of Political and Social Change, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies at the Australian National University, and Adjunct Professor at the Australian Catholic University, Signadou Campus. Her book explores the history of the relationship between Norfolk Island and its inhabitants and the Australian Government and its official representatives after the transfer of the island’s administration from the British in 1914. The key players in this new arrangement were Commonwealth Minister for External Affairs Patrick McMahon Glynn, Departmental Secretary Atlee Hunt, Administrator Michael Murphy, and community leader Charles Chase Ray Nobbs. Drawing on official and unofficial correspondence, the book shows the influence of these four players on the decision-making of the time.

Below Professor Maev O’Collins discusses how she went about her research and what she found.

Official departmental files from the early years after Federation often reflect a much more personal engagement than the minimalist records of later years. The value for the researcher is that they provide significant insights into the way governors and governors-general, politicians, public servants and influential members of the community viewed their roles and responsibilities.

The focus of my research was on the socio-political context of the transfer, on 1 July 1914, of authority for Norfolk Island from Britain to the Commonwealth of Australia. This only came about after lengthy negotiations between governors, politicians and public servants, generally with little or no consultation with Norfolk Islanders – the people who would be most affected.

In order to really understand the processes involved, it was important to read official reports and other communications, and then check these against other less formal sources such as private letters, diaries, newspaper articles and reports of community meetings. Days spent at the National Archives combing through boxes of files related to Norfolk Island were balanced by similar activities in the Manuscript Collection and Newspaper Room at the National Library, and occasional contacts with the Mitchell Library and other research collections.
Intemperate language in government files
As my research gathered momentum, it quickly emerged that the tense and often vituperative nature of some official and unofficial communications during the post-Federation years also reflected historical relationships between Britain, the colony of New South Wales and Norfolk Island. At the same time, informal contacts affected official decisions in unexpected and surprising ways.

It is hard to describe how exciting it was to suddenly come across personal notations, often in exasperated and intemperate language, in the margins of formal reports, official despatches, and letters from lobbyists or complainants. These illuminated situations and issues from the past in a way that can never be completely understood by just reading the carefully worded official communications.

After the transfer to Australian control, Norfolk Islander CCR Nobbs continued to campaign vigorously for greater independence and deeply resented the authority of the Commonwealth Administrator. Letters in the official file on his complaints to the Administrator had notations such as ‘Who are “we”? Mr Nobbs is the only complainant’, and an observation by Secretary Atlee Hunt that the letter ‘appears to contain further evidence of Mr Nobbs’ policy of obstruction’. By February 1918, it appeared that even the Minister (my grandfather) had had enough, commenting rather sternly that ‘Similar complaints in the past have not raised any prima facie evidence of reasonableness’.

Serendipitous discoveries of particularly useful material greatly enlivened and enriched the daily research routine. Checking boxes of photographs that spanned several periods, I came across one with the wonderfully evocative description: ‘Four Imperial Bushmen, natives of Norfolk Island, in Commonwealth contingent sent to London for the Coronation of King Edward VII; also one clergyman and one civilian, London’. Nothing could have better depicted these Norfolk Islanders’ fierce loyalty to the British Crown and their sense of betrayal when unceremoniously handed over, first to New South Wales, and then to Australian control.

Disputes in the time of Spanish flu
Other valuable discoveries included fragile material rescued by the Archives, such as the Administrator’s official diaries for 1915–19. The diaries had been extensively water-damaged, but I was able to look at them with the assistance of a conservator who turned the pages for me. At first the entries were routine, but when we reached the end of 1918 we found a few roughly typed pages attached by a rusty pin. This was the semaphore record of communications on behalf of Administrator Murphy to the captain of the Southern Cross. The vessel had arrived from New Zealand and reported a person on board with a high temperature. On board were passengers for the Melanesian Mission, and the ship also had passengers to collect.

It was at the height of the Spanish influenza epidemic, an obvious threat to a small enclosed community, and Murphy was taking no chances. This terse record of signals reveals Murphy’s refusal to allow any direct contact and the captain’s protests.

SHIP: Is the doctor coming off?
SHORE: No. Not permitted.
SHIP: We must have food, water.
SHORE: Will try to get supplies and medicine.
SHIP: We protest against treatment.
SHORE: The Administrator will be informed.

NAA: CP 697, Administrator’s Diary, 1918
Finally, Murphy decided that a shore boat would take embarking passengers to ‘High Rock’, where they would be collected by the ship’s boat after the shore boat withdrew. Reading records such as these gave me a sense of ‘being there’ with those who were facing difficult times and decisions.

All this would not have been possible without the enthusiastic and knowledgeable support of so many at the National Archives. On reflection, serendipitous may not be quite the right word after all!
Keeping the knowledge

Last year we released a training package for agencies called Keep the Knowledge - Make a Record! More than 100 copies of the package (or 22,000 booklets and ready reference cards) have been requested by Australian government agencies, keen to ensure their staff understand the principles and practices that support good recordkeeping.

We have also responded to many requests for the training package from other jurisdictions and private organisations, including some from overseas. To facilitate access to this information we are planning to make it available through our website. This is one of the many ways we provide assistance to the wider records and archives community.

Ever wondered where the records of government businesses that are sold to the private sector end up? Can the public still access them in the future? Which records do the new owners need, and which ones does the government need to keep?

Our role is to advise the government on the best way to deal with such records, so they continue to be available in the future. These records can provide evidence of rights, entitlements and obligations, and may be important for historical research.

A recent example involves the records of the Bankstown, Camden and Hoxton Park Airports in Sydney, which are currently being privatised.

We are developing a records disposal authority to allow records to be transferred from the Australian Government to the newly privatised companies. These records, which will be vital to the new owners, cover administrative and operational matters such as corporate governance, financial management, personnel, property management, strategic planning and environmental strategies.

For records of continuing value to both the government and the new owner, we may authorise other arrangements, such as copying or the transfer of temporary custody.

Wherever the records are kept, by government or business, our role is to ensure they remain available for the future.

Up, up and away

Recordkeeping audit of large agencies

In September 2003 the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) released its audit report on recordkeeping in large Australian government agencies. The report concluded that there was a significant risk of the non-capture and unauthorised disposal of records. It found that although the audited agencies had taken active steps to improve their recordkeeping, many digital records lacked corporate control due to the use of shared network drives and personal computers for storing records.

The audit report also highlighted recordkeeping issues related to outsourced functions and activities and pinpointed the need for organisations to identify their vital records in Business Continuity Plans. The report’s conclusions and recommendations will be used to inform our priorities and directions in supporting and promoting good government recordkeeping in 2004.

The audit report (no. 7 of 2003–04) is available from the ANAO website at www.anao.gov.au.

For information on the training package go to www.naa.gov.au/recordkeeping/training/keep/package.html, or contact recordkeeping@naa.gov.au.
These days it seems that if your archives are not on the web, they are nowhere. At least, that was the view of most delegates who attended the international seminar at Parliament House in Canberra on 31 October 2003, organised by the National Archives.

The Internet has undoubtedly improved the ability of archives to publicise and provide access to their often underutilised resources. But what works and what doesn’t in this new virtual environment? Are researchers able to navigate the new online archives or are they finding them just as perplexing as physical archives? What standards should archives adopt in cyberspace?

The seminar, entitled ‘The Use of Standards in the Development of Online Access Systems for Archives’, addressed these and many more questions. Held in conjunction with a meeting of the International Council on Archives (ICA) Committee on Descriptive Standards and attended by 150 delegates from Australia and New Zealand, the seminar brought together speakers from Sweden, the UK, the USA, Italy and Australia to compare experiences.

Dick Sargent from the UK National Archives and Historical Manuscripts Commission discussed the use of National Lottery funds to develop archival portals and databases, making collections across the country more accessible and involving communities in the process. From the National Archives of Sweden, Per-Gunnar Ottosson described European Union online projects that aim to provide borderless access to Europe’s dispersed archival heritage. Michael Fox from the Minnesota Historical Society demonstrated the use of websites to provide well researched and designed interpretation of significant issues in order to engage people with archival collections.

Australian experience was explored by a number of speakers. From the National Archives, Adrian Cunningham spoke about the Australian Society of Archivists’ project to publish a guide to Australian archival descriptive practice, while Derina McLaughlin’s paper drew on her recent user research to deliver ten rules for successful online access systems. David Roberts and Joanne Evans from State Records NSW presented case studies on the development of free standards-compliant archival software for small archives in Australia.

The day-long seminar concluded with Philip Dermody’s presentation about plans for an Australian National Online Archival Network to give all Australians better access to the rich treasures in Australian archival collections.
When you think of public servants, you don’t usually imagine them barking, braying, neighing or cooing! Yet over the years, thousands of dogs, horses, camels, cats, donkeys, pigeons, bullocks, beetles and even tiny worms have been employed by the government. They have carried the mail, delivered messages, served in war, saved lives, sniffed out contraband, hauled heavy loads, devoured noxious plants, killed pests and pulled sleds in the snow. From the largest beast of burden to the tiniest nematode, they have selflessly contributed to the Australian economy, never once agitating for better conditions!

Currently on exhibition in our Canberra gallery, It's a Dog's Life! Animals in the Public Service celebrates the daily duties and admirable deeds of the many animals that have worked for the government. The exhibition has four main themes - animals in war, animals that pull their weight, animals on guard, and animals engaged in biological control.

Some stories recount sad tales of the relationship between humans and animals, like the pain of leaving horses and dogs behind after war service. Others recall the joy of close partnerships such as the Antarctic expeditioners and their huskies, outback workers and their camels, and even entomologists and their industrious little worms.

The exhibition appeals to young and old - sit on a full-size replica of a camel saddle, view live worms through a microscope or play an interactive game about husky sledding in Antarctica. And read the stories of animals that have helped shape our history!
Animals in war

Donkeys, mules, dogs and pigeons have all been involved in war. Remember how Simpson and his famous donkey saved the lives of soldiers at Gallipoli? And what about the brave and valiant little dog from Egypt, Horrie, who served with the 2/1st Machine Gun Battalion in Egypt, Greece, Crete, Palestine and Syria and was smuggled back to Australia in 1942? And let's not forget the message-carrying pigeons that were awarded medals for bravery nor the mules that struggled over the Kokoda Trail ...

It has been the Australian horse, however, that has made the greatest sacrifice to the war effort. In 1885 hundreds of horses went to the Sudan with the NSW contingent; during the Boer War, 37,000 horses left our shores; and over 130,000 horses took part in World War I. Unbelievably, of all those horses, only one came home.

Animals on guard

Lots of different dogs have worked at keeping Australia and Australians safe.

During the Vietnam War, Australian tracker dogs went out in front of the patrols to catch the scent of the enemy. Vietnam veteran Ian Atkinson once remarked that 'there’d be a lot more names in that War Memorial in Canberra if we didn’t have these dogs with us.'

Today the defence forces use more military working dogs than ever to protect military bases and to sniff for explosives.

Every day, more than 50 Customs dogs diligently search for illicit drugs at airports and other entry points around the country. At the same time, detector dog teams of the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service work four- to six-hour ‘sniff’ shifts, helping to protect Australia from exotic pests and diseases.

Animals that pull their weight

Australia owes much to the muscle of draught animals and their work on the railways. Today passengers sit comfortably aboard the Indian-Pacific between Sydney and Perth as it glides across tracks and sleepers lugged there by hundreds of camels, horses, donkeys and mules in the 1910s.

Animals engaged in biological control

While dung beetles, moths and worms might have a low profile, their work for the government has been essential in preserving Australia’s environment. The Cactoblastis moth, for example, saved an area of Australia the size of England from an invasion of prickly pear.

And do you know why the CSIRO introduced dung beetles? To clear Australian paddocks of unwanted droppings – the cowpats promote grass that animals won’t eat and lock up valuable nutrients. The beetles bury the cowpats in tunnels, aerating the soil and leaving food for their larvae.

Even the humble nematode carries out an important job. These tiny worms are mixed with water and sprayed onto lawn to kill destructive scarab grubs.

Animal stats

One trained guard dog can secure an area of up to 1 sq km.

On average, each Customs dog makes a drug seizure each week.

Detector dogs are trained to recognise more than 30 alien smells.

A camel, if thirsty, can drink up to 100 litres in one go.

Clydesdales can pull 1200 kg all day, walking at 7 km per hour.

Husky teams in the Antarctic can travel up to 60 km a day in spring and 40 km in winter.

After insects, nematodes (worms) are the most populous creatures on Earth. The smallest measures 0.08 mm and the largest 8 metres (found inside a whale!).

Forty dung beetles can bury a cowpat in under two days.

The exhibition is on show in our Canberra exhibition gallery until 4 April 2004.
Aboriginal storyteller, writer and performer Boori ‘Monty’ Pryor spoke to an enraptured audience at the Archives in Canberra last October about his life experiences.

Former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam (accompanied by his former press secretary Graham Freudenberg) was special guest speaker at our December media briefing when journalists were given embargoed access to the 1973 Cabinet papers.

Executive Director Jan Ferguson (Policy & Planning, SA Department of Administrative & Information Services) and Director-General Ross Gibbs at the Beacons by the Sea: Stories of Australian Lighthouses exhibition opening in Adelaide.

Congratulations to Nicola Connell, a Year 10 student from St Francis Xavier College, ACT, a winner in last year’s National History Challenge. Her essay Conflicts and Resolutions Arising from the Petrov Defections won the Archives sponsored category for best use of primary sources. Nicola’s winning essay is on our website at www.naa.gov.au/education/challenge.html.
At the launch of our guides on Prime Ministers archives at Parliament House were (left to right): former President of the Senate the Hon. Margaret Reid, our Director-General Ross Gibbs, Minister for the Arts and Sport Senator the Hon. Rod Kemp, author Frank Moorhouse who launched the guides, and Senator the Hon. John Faulkner, a member of our Advisory Council.

Visitors were keen to examine original records on display on Open Day at our Chester Hill repository in Sydney last September.

Seated from centre to right: Jan Fullerton, Director-General, National Library of Australia, Senator the Hon. Rod Kemp, Minister for the Arts and Sport, Nelly Siegmund, Territory Director, ACT & Regions, Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, Maggie Shapley, Acting Assistant Director-General, Public and Reader Services, National Archives of Australia, with recipients of the 2003 Community Heritage Grants.

Keen genealogists flocked to our stand at the inaugural South Australian Family History Fair last October, where they were ably assisted by Jan Hall from our Adelaide office.

Celebrating the launch of our guides with Frank Moorhouse were (left to right): Michael Body (great-grandson of PM George Reid), Lara Bredikhina and Jessie Deakin Clarke (granddaughter of PM Alfred Deakin).
Communists, spies and red tape

I F Y O U K N O W W H E R E T O L O O K I N O U R collection, you can uncover files from the Department of Immigration with the intriguing titles of ‘secret correspondence’ and ‘restricted immigration’. Here you will come across records on the Petrov affair, files on the admission of suspected communists to Australia, and applications from Australian servicemen to bring their Japanese wives to Australia.

These records document the Australian Government’s administration of sensitive and non-European immigration over 70 years. Dating from the first decade of Federation to 1980, they reflect significant concerns which still resonate today. In them we find a history of Australia’s attempts to guard its borders from external threats and to create a racial and political homogeneity within. The body of information is enormous in its range and variety and often contains moving and extraordinary human stories.

The records reflect the government’s role as a gatekeeper, scrutinising intending migrants. The bulk of the restricted immigration series (A2998) documents the controls placed on migrants (mostly Asian) and visitors, including those whose immediate family had settled here before Federation. They illustrate the impact of the White Australia Policy on Chinese Australians throughout the twentieth century. The secret correspondence series (A6980) is concerned with potential political or criminal threats posed by intending migrants. It shows the wide range of people entering Australia in the postwar period from almost every part of the globe.

Both series provide an insight into Australia’s conservative politics and racial attitudes at times in its history. They also constitute a history of the nation’s present multicultural fabric. One of the more fascinating stories in the secret correspondence files concerns the emigration of White Russians from China to Australia. Copies of newspapers and magazines produced by the Macedonian, Greek and other communities in the 1950s can also be found in this series. Migrant case files reveal changes in the government’s policies on Asian immigration over the period. A few files relate to suspected Nazi war criminals.

While the individual stories are fascinating, collectively the records also show the characteristics of government administrations over time. The secret correspondence files reveal ASIO’s power to influence the make-up of Australian society in the 1950s and 1960s. Migrant applications were vetted by ASIO which rejected people with any perceived communist connection. Those considered security risks were refused citizenship, sometimes for years. The files show how the change of policy that the Whitlam government introduced was reflected in decisions to reverse these refusals.

Many of the files contain ASIO’s advice to the Minister, which was rarely rejected. In the early 1950s, the Department of Immigration had the power to cancel the passports of citizens thought to be communists, some of them well-known Australians. Frank and Rosslyn Hardy’s passports, for example, were impounded following a visit to Moscow, and returned to them only after approval at the highest level.

A moving episode recorded in the files is the repatriation of Australian citizens of Yugoslav descent who had been persuaded to return to Yugoslavia in the late 1940s. Disillusioned by their experiences there, a number sought to return to Australia in the early 1950s. ASIO requested that each returnee be subjected to a security clearance before they were granted re-admission. In contrast, the Department of Immigration supported the right of Australian citizens to re-enter the country without going through this process.

These records demonstrate the human impact of the bureaucracy on individuals, often in distressing and difficult circumstances. Many are case files, accessible through the name of the applicant. Others are policy files where the title is a guide to the contents. They are a rich source of primary material on a subject of great significance to Australia as a nation.

Evdokia Petrov at Mascot Airport, Sydney being ‘escorted’ across the tarmac to a waiting plane by two armed Russian diplomatic couriers. During a refuelling stop at Darwin airport, Mrs Petrov joined her husband, Vladimir Petrov, in requesting political asylum in Australia, 1954. NAA: A6201, 62

14 MEMENTO News from the National Archives
Many people don’t realise that cine film and any negative still film with an acetate base - so-called ‘safety film’ - can be just as vulnerable to deterioration as the nitrate film it replaced in the late 1940s.

While not as volatile as nitrate stock, acetate film has its preservation challenges. If the film is poorly stored, particularly in a warm and humid climate for a long time, water molecules can permeate the acetate base and acetic acid (vinegar) is formed. From that point the film begins to deteriorate and eventually the image becomes distorted and fades as the film shrinks and the emulsion cracks. Once it starts, the process is unstoppable.

The other danger is that the acetic acid vapour released by the affected film can contaminate other film stored nearby.

The only way to save the affected film is to copy it either onto a stable polyester based film stock or into a digital medium.

But copying such a large collection as ours is expensive and time consuming. In the meantime, the affected film needs to be isolated in a cold, dry stable environment, to halt the deterioration process and prevent contamination of other film. This measure also allows us the time to evaluate the film and put a copying program in place.

To address the vinegar syndrome problem, we are building a new isolation vault in Sydney for affected film. This million-dollar vault, made possible by special preservation funding from the Australian Government, will store more than 40,000 film cans and a large quantity of boxes of still negatives. Climatic conditions inside the vault will be set at 8°C and 30 per cent relative humidity. We estimate the vault will give us five to ten years to program the copying of affected cine and still film stock in our collection.

So pretty soon if you’re having fish and chips in our Sydney office, you’ll have to bring your own vinegar!
In October last year, we celebrated the 100th birthday of the High Court with the opening of our exhibition, No Common Creation. On opening night Justice Callinan of the High Court addressed 100 invited guests, including such distinguished members of the legal profession as Justice Ken Hayne and Justice Dyson Heydon of the High Court; Chief Justice Jeffrey Miles of the Supreme Court of the ACT; the Honourable John Von Doussa, President of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission; Justice John Faulks and Justice Mary Finn of the Family Court of Australia.

Close relationship between the High Court and the Archives

Introducing Justice Callinan, Paul Santamaria, QC, deputy chair of our Advisory Council, spoke about the close relationship between the High Court and the Archives:

From its commencement in 1903, the High Court accumulated all manner of files in its Registry, together with judges’ notebooks and other records of the Court. In late 1994, the Archives assisted the Court to develop a long-term management program for its records. By the end of 1996, the records of the High Court covering the period from 1903 to 1930, had been transferred to the Archives.

In 2003 the Archives and the High Court began the process of transferring to our custody about 500 shelf metres of Court records created between 1930 and 1980. The Court is providing funding for this project as part of its 100th birthday celebrations.

In his introduction, Mr Santamaria also spoke briefly about the significance of the third arm of government:
The centenary of the High Court causes us to pause, and to reflect upon, the profoundly important role and influence the High Court has had in Australian society. Not only in the interpretation of the Australian Constitution, and in the Court's exposition of the legislative and administrative powers of the Commonwealth, but also in the Court's development of the common law, and the definition of the rights and obligations of Australian citizens, of civil liberties in the absence of a constitutionally entrenched Bill of Rights.

Justice Callinan then spoke about the role of the High Court and argued for better education in Australian schools to enable students ‘to understand something about government in Australia, and the role of the courts in relation to the people and their government’. He went on to say that our exhibition is much more than a civics course: ‘It offers an interesting and sophisticated examination of the activities of the High Court over its first 100 years’. Justice Callinan concluded his address by launching the exhibition ‘for which I express the gratitude of the Court, and, in admiration and with pleasure formally open’.

Wigs and judgments
The exhibition, curated by Roslyn Russell and Mary Hutchison, explores the Court and its history through different perspectives and mediums. Along with informative panels, it features exhibits from the collections of the High Court and the National Archives, including the original wig worn by the first Chief Justice Sir Samuel Griffith, Justice Barton’s bench book showing his personal working notes during the Coal Vend Case of 1911, and the final page of Justice Brennan’s judgment in the Mabo Case.

The section called ‘A Balancing Act’ shows how High Court Justices have interpreted the Constitution in three landmark cases. In the Engineers Case in 1920 they decided that the Commonwealth Government had the power to determine the pay and conditions of workers in the engineering industry across Australia. In the Communist Party Case in 1951 they declared that the Menzies government’s Communist Party Dissolution Act, which outlawed the Communist Party, was invalid. In the Tasmanian Dam Case in 1983 they concluded that the Commonwealth’s obligation to an international treaty allowed it to stop the Tasmanian government from proceeding with the Franklin Dam.

‘Under the Wig’ provides a glimpse of the changing character of the High Court under the leadership of three different Chief Justices. Each period of the Court is known by the name of the Chief Justice of that time. The Griffith Court, 1903–19, brought the spirit of Federation to the Court’s first years. The Dixon Court, 1952–64, was acclaimed as the Court’s ‘golden age’ of interpreting the law. The Mason Court, 1987–95, is known for its significant and sometimes controversial decisions, including the recognition of native title in the Mabo Case.

The exhibition also includes an innovative touch-screen animation. For those all at sea about the High Court, some friendly fish guide us through an actual case involving a young woman, Beryl Duncan, who took the Commonwealth, the Army and the Northern Territory Police to court in 1944. This lively exhibit invites visitors to recognise the importance of the Court to ordinary Australians.

No Common Creation will remain in our Treasures Gallery in Canberra throughout the High Court centenary year and beyond.
Our Photographic Collection

They say that a picture is worth a thousand words. With a photographic collection of more than a million images, that must make the Archives a pretty big talker!

Our photographic collection covers almost every facet of Australian life since the late 19th century – from rugby to royalty, trains to telescopes, and beaches to ballet.

The easiest way to identify photographs in the collection is via our electronic catalogue PhotoSearch which can be accessed through our website at www.naa.gov.au. PhotoSearch contains more than half a million captions, 80,000 of them with digitised images. Each month we add several thousand new images.

PhotoSearch users can search all photographic item entries by words or phrases, by series number, by date or by subject. For example, if you key in the word ‘ballet’, PhotoSearch lists over 2,000 images. If you then further refine your search and key in the word ‘Helpmann’, 100 photo captions are listed, including our cover image.

High quality prints or high-resolution digital copies of images found on PhotoSearch may be ordered by clicking the ‘purchase copy’ link that accompanies each image. Our digitisation on demand service also allows you to request a low-resolution online version of an image.

A comprehensive overview of our photographic collection can be found in our latest guide, Australia in Focus: Photographs in the National Archives. This is an essential reference tool for anyone wanting to search our full photographic collection. The guide lists photographic series under broad subject categories such as immigration, transport, Australian life and defence. It can also help you find photographs that are on a file or document. Aerial photographs used for maps, for example, may well be found in files relating to that topic rather than in a photographic series.

At a cost of $10, Australia in Focus can be purchased through our website at www.naa.gov.au, by phoning (02) 6212 3609, or emailing naasales@naa.gov.au. The guide is also available free online via our website.

Several keen-eyed readers have informed us that in the last issue of Memento we misnamed one of the rock ‘n’ rollers featured in a photo on page 5. The third person in the trio on the far right was Johnny Devlin, not Digger Revell as our caption indicated. Thank you to those who remember those golden days so well!
Exhibitions

Charters of Our Nation
Treasures Gallery, National Archives, Canberra. Permanent exhibition.

'No Common Creation':
The High Court of Australia National Archives, Canberra. Permanent exhibition.

It’s a Dog’s Life:
Animals in the Public Service
National Archives, Canberra
14 November 2003 to 4 April 2004

Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award – Celebrating 20 Years
National Archives, Canberra
23 April to 25 July 2004

Beacons by the Sea:
Stories of Australian Lighthouses
Western Australian Museum Albany
5 December 2003 to 2 March 2004
Western Australian Museum Kalgoorlie, WA
13 March to 6 June 2004

Unexpected Archives: Introduced by Robyn Archer
Katherine Public Library, NT
12 December 2003 to 15 January 2004
Mount Isa Civic Centre, Qld
22 January to 22 February 2004
Caims Civic Theatre, Qld
28 February to 28 March 2004
Gladstone Entertainment Centre, Qld
3 April to 2 May 2004

Wine! An Australian Social History
Vasse Felix, Margaret River, WA
31 October 2003 to 1 February 2004
Western Australian Museum, Geraldton, WA
Opening 14 February 2004


Events

CANBERRA

Grandkids Day, 21 January, 10.00 am – 4.00 pm. Our annual day for grandparents and their grandkids.

A Week in a Dog’s Life, 9–15 February. A week of talks and animal antics to coincide with It’s a Dog’s Life.

Family History Fair, 4 April, 10.00 am – 4.00 pm. Speakers and displays on family history records.

TASMANIA

Regional tour, 25–27 February. Joint tour with the Archives Office of Tasmania. Venues include Campbell Town, Launceston and St Helens.

Defence seminar, 22 April. In the lead-up to Anzac Day, a joint seminar with the Archives Office of Tasmania, the RSL, and the Military Museum.


SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Regional tour, 29 March – 4 April. Venues include the Laura Folk Fair, 2–4 April, and surrounding mid-North towns. Contact Enid Netting (08) 8409 8401.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Regional tour, 18–20 March, Albany. Joint tour with the State Records Office of WA, the Battye Library of West Australian History and the State Library of WA Genealogical Centre. Contact James Butterfield (08) 9470 7531.

Perth Office Open Day, 16 May, 10.00 am – 4.00 pm. Talks and tours. Contact Jen Ford (08) 9470 7530.

QUEENSLAND

Regional tour, 23–25 February, Wide Bay and Burnett regions, including Hervey Bay, Bundaberg and Gayndah. Joint tour with Queensland State Archives and John Oxley Library. Contact Greg Cope (07) 3249 4224.

‘Schools in: records on schools and education’, 27 March, 1.00–4.30 pm. Joint seminar with Queensland State Archives and John Oxley Library. Held at QSA, 435 Compton Rd, Runcorn. Bookings: (07) 3875 8755.

VICTORIA

‘Settlers in the Sun’, 5th Victorian Family History State Conference, 16–18 April. Topics include our immigration and defence service records. Held at St Josephs College, Mildura. Contact Anne Piggott (03) 9285 7900.

www.naa.gov.au/exhibitions/events/events.html
At the end of the day, if it’s worth keeping, it’s in the Archives