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Australia through the lens

The National Archives’ extensive collection of photographs gives a unique picture of Australia and its citizens. It was created by a team of talented government photographers that travelled across the nation. John Schilling outlines the history of this unique collection.


[above] This image of the finish of the 1985 Melbourne Cup, won by What a Nuisance, was captured by government photographer P McArdell.
Olympian Dawn Fraser emerging from the pool, Albert Namatjira staring inscrutably at the camera, Don Bradman at the crease, the action on and off the track at the Melbourne Cup, the construction and opening of the Sydney Opera House: these snapshots of Australian life were all captured by Australian Government photographers between 1939 and 1996.

In 1939, the Department of Information was formed in response to the beginning of World War II. Its aims were to promote morale in the civilian population and to show Australia’s allies that we were pulling our weight in the war effort. Later, in peacetime, the department was given the role of promoting Australia overseas through news and images. In 1950, it was renamed the Australian News and Information Bureau (ANIB) and its main purpose was to capture images of people and events to publicise the Australian lifestyle to potential migrants. In the 1950s and 1960s, the ANIB team of photographers travelled around Australia, capturing quintessentially Australian images of bronzed Aussies on the beach, lean muscled workers in wheat fields and scenes of suburban homes with a Hills Hoist in the backyard. This was the face Australia presented to the world.

The images captured by the ANIB photographers are a valuable record of life in postwar Australia. The collection shows scenes around the country, from outback stations to suburban backyards, mining communities to high-rise offices, and local communities to politicians and parliaments.

The images depict Australians at work and at play. They also show scenes of disaster and suffering, such as the heartbreaking image of a couple watching flames engulf their home during the 1967 Tasmanian bushfires that killed 62 people and left thousands homeless.

When the ANIB became the Australian Information Service in the 1970s, its responsibilities changed. It focused on photographing visits of foreign dignitaries not covered by the major news services. In 1994, after several name changes during the 1980s, the photographic functions and staff were absorbed into the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The photographic team was disbanded in 1996.

More than 60 photographers served in the ANIB over its history. One famous name
appears in the photographic collection – Max Dupain, who took photographs for the Department of Information in 1946–47. The National Archives holds a number of images captured by the talented photographer. The names of other photographers who worked for the ANIB over the years are not as well known – they include Bill Brindle, John Tanner, Neil Murray, Jim Fitzpatrick (Fitzy) and Bill Payne. Through their hard work and talent, they have left a valuable legacy in the thousands of images the National Archives holds of Australians and Australian life.

John Schilling is the manager of photographic services at the National Archives.


[far left] Students at Hagley area school (Tasmania) stacking hay, 1946. Photographer: Max Dupain.


Mrs O’Keefe and the battle for White Australia

The case of Annie O’Keefe was a major controversy in the election year of 1949. Immigration Minister Arthur Calwell later claimed the case knocked down the central pillar of the White Australia Policy. Sean Brawley, a National Archives Margaret George Award winner for 2006, looks at public reaction to Annie O’Keefe and her family.

In 1942, Indonesian Annie Maas Jacob, her husband Samuel and their children escaped to Australia as the Japanese military advanced into the Dutch-controlled Aru Islands in the eastern archipelago. The family settled in Melbourne and Samuel began work for the Netherlands Indies Forces Intelligence Service, a Dutch intelligence service set up in Australia to monitor the situation in the Dutch East Indies. In September 1944, he was killed in an air crash when returning to Australia from New Guinea, leaving Annie and the children to an uncertain future. The Dutch Government granted Annie a pension of £28 a month. Help also came from their landlord, a retired postal clerk named John (Jack) O’Keefe.

With the end of the war, Immigration Minister Arthur Calwell made plans to repatriate the thousands of Asian evacuees who, like the Jacob family, had sought refuge in Australia. Reluctant to return to an unsettled
Indonesia, the Jacob family sought delays to their repatriation, which the Australian Government granted. In his desire to protect Mrs Jacob and her children, Jack O’Keefe offered to marry Annie, believing that this would convey upon her British subject status and therefore prevent the family’s removal to Indonesia. The couple married in 1947.

However, the Immigration Department insisted that marriage did not change Mrs O’Keefe’s status and, after more delays, its officers finally moved to forcibly repatriate the family in early 1949. This provoked both a national and international controversy. With significant media support the family took their case to the High Court and won. The O’Keefe case was the first successful legal challenge to the White Australia Policy.

Support for Annie O’Keefe

The National Archives of Australia holds many files about the O’Keefe case. They include Immigration Department files documenting the family’s time in Australia, and their efforts to stay. Attorney-General’s Department records show the government’s efforts to defend its position in the High Court case, and cables from Australian diplomats in Asian capitals report on the harm the case was doing to the nation’s reputation in the region.

The files in the National Archives also provide an insight into Australian opinion on race and immigration at a time when the White Australia Policy was coming under sustained attack from a decolonising Asia. Immigration Department files and the personal papers of Prime Minister Ben Chifley contain letters written by private citizens and organisations expressing their opposition to the family’s deportation.

Many of the letters argued that Calwell’s administration of the policy was causing harm to Australia’s reputation in Asia. The Newcastle Housewives Association accepted that ‘immigrants into Australia should be controlled’, but argued that there should be ‘no inhuman discrimination against coloured people’ because Australia had to ‘cement friendly relations with our neighbours and not antagonise them’. The Queensland Branch of the Building Workers Industrial Union of Australia resolved that Calwell’s actions ‘only serve to alienate the coloured people of the Pacific’.

The letters also reveal that Australians were beginning to question the well-worn defence that the policy was informed by issues of economics (protecting the working conditions of Australians) and homogeneity (maintaining the racial and cultural integrity of the nation to prevent social dislocation).

The O’Keefe case seemed to show clearly the policy’s racial intent. Mr GA Dickins of Kew in Melbourne was certain that the union movement was now strong enough to protect working conditions and therefore the fear of ‘coloured people’ was no longer relevant. Supporters of the O’Keefe family, some of whom knew Annie and the children, challenged the homogeneity argument in their correspondence.

Mr F Humphries of Windsor informed the Prime Minister, ‘To say that they are an asset to our country is underestimating their value. We have never met a finer family. The intelligence and refinement of the children is of a high order. We consider ourselves fortunate in our association with them and so have the friendship of this fine family at Bonbeach.’ He pointed out that the younger children knew no country other than Australia and spoke only English. Humphries told Chifley, ‘Mrs O’Keefe is a British subject and a Christian, and to remove a woman and eight children to a land which would be foreign to the children, where discontent and trouble is rife, would be contrary to freedom and tolerance which we regard as our Australian way of living.’

For its part, the government maintained that Annie O’Keefe’s British subject status did not automatically grant her permanent residency rights in Australia.

[above left] Annie O’Keefe in 1956, with her daughter, Mary Jacob. Mary had been appointed senior staff nurse at Royal Melbourne Hospital.

[left] Mary and Peter Jacob, two of Annie and Samuel Jacob’s children, with stepfather Jack O’Keefe on Bonbeach in 1956.
Other correspondents repeated the accusation that the government’s actions challenged Australian values. The West Wallsend Branch of the Returned Sailors, Soldiers and Airmen’s Imperial League of Australia lodged its ‘very strong protest’ on the ‘grounds of humanitarianism’. Mr ER Winkle of Lane Cove in New South Wales felt compelled to write to Calwell after the Minister claimed that individuals who supported a newspaper-inspired fighting fund for the family were attempting to ‘smash’ the White Australia Policy. Winkle noted, ‘I have made a small contribution to the fund because I believe in justice.’ Miss E West informed Calwell that if he was truly representing the wishes of most Australians he would not deport the family. She insisted that ‘Most Australians are kind and friendly and not anxious to enforce the strict letter of the law where it causes suffering.’

Tasmanian Mrs Doreen Riley informed Calwell that as an ‘ordinary uneducated person’ she knew little about the law of man, but she knew something about the ‘law of God’. Mr Calwell, she claimed, was breaking up a marriage that ‘no man put asunder’. Mr Robert Ewing from the Melbourne suburb of Canterbury reminded Calwell that the White Australia Policy had been created by ‘fallible men’ who could not have foreseen the ‘possibilities that have since eventuated’. The Australia of 1949 was not the Australia of 1901.

Given that 1949 was an election year, some correspondents threatened Chifley and Calwell with their voting intentions. Mr F Machen of Parramatta informed the Minister, ‘The O’Keefe case has caused me to vote against Labor as a lesson to the Party.’ Another correspondent noted, ‘Probably this letter will not influence your decision Mr Calwell, but you will at least know that one person is dissatisfied with the way you handle your job and when it comes election time, my vote goes to the party which I think can do the best job for Australia and the Australian people.’

Mr M Chester of Bentleigh in Victoria told Chifley that it would be in the best interests of his party to ‘call [Calwell] finally to heel’. He warned that the issue would cost the government many votes, especially the Catholic vote. John O’Keefe was well connected in the Catholic Church and the Jacob children had converted to Catholicism. The Catholic Church came out in support of the O’Keefe family.

A victory

With legal victory in the High Court in 1949, Annie and her children were allowed to stay in Australia. Annie’s eldest son, Sam, left behind at school in Ambon when the family fled Indonesia, was never allowed to enter Australia. Today, the surviving children of Annie and Samuel Jacob are spread between Indonesia and Australia, and John and Annie O’Keefe’s daughter lives with her family in Parrth.

In defending the government’s actions, Arthur Calwell asked: ‘How can you administer a rigid law flexibly? Either you stand by the law or you do not. Either you believe in the maintenance of a White Australia or you water down the policy.’

The 1949 High Court decision in the O’Keefe case marked the beginning of the end of the White Australia Policy, a change that has had an important and continuing impact upon Australian society.

Dr Sean Brawley is a Senior Lecturer in the School of History and Philosophy at the University of New South Wales, and is writing a book on the Annie O’Keefe case and the White Australia Policy in the 1940s. His most recent book is The Bondi Lifesaver: A History of an Australian Icon (2007).
in the historic Archives building in Canberra is going online – and the Archives wants you to be part of the adventure.

You’ll be able to visit the Archives website and follow the prompts to where you’ll see the same collection of images of Australian life as featured in the exhibition. These are selected from tens of thousands of images held by the Archives, taken by photographers from the Australian News and Information Bureau and the Australian Information Service over nearly half a century from the 1940s to the 1990s. If you spot a person or place you recognise, you can share your memories of the moment by completing a short online form. The National Archives will store your valuable memories and post them, where appropriate, on the website for others to share. Who knows what memories your recollections will stir in other Australians?

Faces of Australia is full of surprises – have a look and see if a person or place you remember is there.

Marylou had recently joined the Archives as Strategic Marketing Manager after many years at the Australian War Memorial and her father had died a year earlier. She describes her reactions to seeing his unmistakeable image at a 1970s ANZAC Day commemoration – his towering 193 cm frame singling him out in the midst of his Army mates from Queanbeyan, many of whom he served with during the World War II New Guinea and Borneo campaigns.

‘Tears filled my eyes … was it because of the sadness with which I had commemorated his death twelve months earlier, or were they tears of happiness over the special memories that tumbled out as I looked at the photo?’

‘There were Dad’s ANZAC Day rituals … the Dawn Service at the War Memorial, followed by laying wreaths at the 2/10th’s memorial cairn out on the Federal Highway, home for a hot breakfast, then out to march with his mates.

‘ANZAC Day 2007 was special because of the image I saw only days earlier on the wall at the Archives … of a tall man who stood above the rest … not only because of his height but because he was my Dad.’

Marylou’s story is but one link in the chain that was Alan Pooley’s life in the region. A fine horseman, a champion boxer, rugby union, league and Australian Rules player – all that reach had to count for something – he was a fourth generation Canberran with family links to Long Gully at Tuggeranong and Springbank below Black Mountain.

Marylou has much to remember her father by – a strong sense of family history, sporting trophies, his war records she now has courtesy of the National Archives and a swathe of priceless detail in the War Memorial’s files. Marylou’s recollections brought to life so many other stories about Alan Pooley … one of his mates recalling that it paid to give him a ‘hook’ when they packed down in a rugby scrum to stir the normally placid Alan’s fighting spirit.

Alan Pooley is but one of the Faces of Australia, a National Archives initiative that will bring other people’s stories to life as well.
Previously unknown songs by this country music legend were recently discovered in the National Archives.

In 1942, the 15-year-old son of a cattle farmer from Nulla Creek near Kempsey in New South Wales had the foresight and ambition to copyright a song he had composed a year earlier called *Beautiful Aussie Land*. His name was David Gordon Kirkpatrick, but he had chosen the stage name of Slim Dusty when he was only 11 years old.

According to the records of the Commonwealth Registrar of Copyright, Slim submitted four songs for copyright in 1942: *Beautiful Aussie Land*, *Ramblin’ Along*, *A Yodelling Guy from Texas* and *Why Don’t You Return*. The songs were registered in 1943. In 1945 Slim submitted two more songs for copyright – *Goin’ a Settle Down (in Kempsey Town)* and *From Australia’s Heart*.

Slim Dusty was an enterprising young entertainer who realised he had to protect his product in order to succeed. The handwriting and odd spelling mistake in his application show Slim’s young age, but the fact that he registered his work for copyright shows that his professionalism and determination had developed early. The application required considerable effort; living on a farm in country New South Wales, Slim was isolated from the world of government bureaucracy. Initially, the application was not processed correctly and the Copyright Office had to ask the young composer to resubmit his song with the music score. An untrained musician, Slim needed help to write out the music he had composed on his guitar.

Slim never recorded his early copyrighted songs and the story may have ended there, with these songs kept in the Archives among thousands of other copyright files. However, through the ongoing work of the National Archives in preserving and describing valuable Commonwealth records, the songs were identified as significant and placed on the Archives’ register of “gems”.

Joy McKean, Slim’s wife and herself a respected singer and songwriter, visited the National Archives in Canberra to see these early records of her late husband’s career. Accompanying her was Professor Noeline Kyle, niece of Joy and Slim.
The documents stirring their memories, Joy and Noeline shared with National Archives staff some stories about Slim’s youth, like the moment he called out from his bedroom announcing his new name to his family, and signed a photograph of himself with the name Slim Dusty.

During her visit, Joy explained that the music scores, particularly for the earlier four songs, would probably have been written down by Slim’s elder brother, Vince, who had a piano. Slim was a natural musician, learning popular songs by ear from the radio and playing his guitar and singing along. He tuned his guitar to be in pitch with songs on the radio, and Vince transcribed this into written music on the piano.

Public interest in these unique records has been intense, enhancing the legacy of the music legend. Joy and her daughter Anne Kirkpatrick, an award-winning country singer and songwriter, plan to record a version of Beautiful Aussie Land featuring other talented family members.

Of course, the enterprising boy from Kempsey went on to record hits such as Pub with No Beer and became an Australian music icon. He was bestowed with an MBE in 1970, perhaps helped by the efforts of one supporter, Mrs B Frey of Tamworth who wrote to the Prime Minister in 1968 describing Slim Dusty as a ‘modern day Henry Lawson’. She wrote: ‘[H]e has devoted most of his working life to travelling inland Australia and recording wonderful word pictures of the country and people. He loves describing with great detail our problems, advantages, hardship, progress, the country’s beauty, ruggedness and humour.’

You can see some of Slim Dusty’s early songs in the new National Archives exhibition, Memory of a Nation, now showing in Canberra, or by visiting our website, www.naa.gov.au and clicking on Find of the Month.

National Archives curator Johanna Parker and exhibitions research assistant Jane Ellis wrote this article.

![Slim Dusty at the Tamworth country and western music festival, 1984.](image)

![Joy McKean (right) and Noeline Kyle viewed original letters and songs by Slim Dusty at the National Archives in Canberra.](image)

![Letter from Slim Dusty in support of his copyright application.](image)

![Music score for Beautiful Aussie Land.](image)
Muslims have a long history of settlement in Australia. Stories told on a new National Archives website show some of the challenges they faced in making new lives in Australia.

‘I have learned with great sadness of His Majesty the King’s ill health,’ Mahomet Allum wrote to Prime Minister Robert Menzies in 1951. Allum was a well-known herbalist who claimed to have ‘cured many patients with trouble in their legs similar to the King’. Perhaps he could help? He offered his remedies free of charge, in the hope of bringing relief to the troubled sovereign.

To establish his credentials, Allum attached a number of testimonials that glowingly praised him — ‘The Wonder Man’. Not only, these testimonials insisted, was Allum blessed with extraordinary curative powers, he was also widely recognised in his home town of Adelaide for his many acts of philanthropy. While officials from the Health Department advised that the claims of a ‘straightout herbalist’ could not be taken seriously, they conceded that he was regarded as ‘quite a reputable citizen and somewhat of a leader of the Moslem community’.

Mahomet Allum’s remarkable journey from camel driver to herbalist servicing the South Australian elite is documented in the latest addition to the National Archives’ Uncommon Lives website. Award-winning author Hanifa Deen has used the Archives’ records to build
a revealing group portrait of Muslims in Australia from 1901 to 1975.

A larger-than-life character who seemed to revel in controversy, Allum is hardly typical of the many Muslims who lived and worked unobtrusively, often on the fringes of Australian society. And yet, he could not escape the difficulties and frustrations of all whose lives were affected by the White Australia Policy. By 1951, Allum had lived in Australia for 65 years; he had enriched the community through his labours and remarkable generosity, but still, he reminded Menzies, he was ‘technically regarded as an Alien’.

Like many of the so-called Afghan cameleers (many of whom actually came from the region of India that is now Pakistan), Allum arrived in Australia before the Immigration Restriction Act 1901 provided the Commonwealth with a legal basis for excluding non-European immigrants. People like Allum were allowed to stay on after 1901, but could not be naturalised after 1903. Until changes to the law in the 1950s, they were forced to remain ‘aliens’ – denied the vote, unable to access welfare payments, and in many cases unable to bring their families to join them. If they wished to travel overseas, they had to apply for a certificate that would grant them re-entry to Australia. The day-to-day workings of this system are well documented in the National Archives’ collection, offering insight into the sometimes difficult lives of ordinary Muslims and other migrants in the first half of the twentieth century.

Samsudin bin Katib was a young Muslim from Indonesia who wanted to make Australia his home. He arrived in Broome in 1937 to work as a pearl diver, but war against Japan prompted him to sign up with the Australian Military Forces. In 1943, he became a commando in the ‘Z’ Special Unit, gathering intelligence in Borneo prior to the Allied attack. At war’s end he found work and friends in Melbourne, and applied for naturalisation. He must have known that his chances were slim, but perhaps hoped that his war service might sway officialdom in his favour.

His application was refused as it was not the government’s policy to naturalise ‘natives of Asia’, and the young man was instructed to return to Broome and resume his work as a pearl diver. Under the conditions of his entry to Australia as an indentured worker, he was not permitted to take alternative employment. Samsudin’s troubles were compounded in Broome, where the pearling boat operators singled him out as a troublemaker. As a result of his efforts to secure better pay for his fellow divers, he was refused employment and the pearling boat operators demanded his deportation. ‘It would indeed be a tragedy,’ Samsudin wrote to Arthur Calwell, Minister for Immigration, ‘if those of us who offered our lives in service for freedom and the right to work and earn at reasonable wages and conditions were to become the subject of persecution only for the reason that we desire to put those ideals into practice.’ Despite the support of the Seamen’s Union and others, Samsudin was deported in November 1948.

Many Muslims were accepted into their local communities and formed valuable friendships and business relationships. A case in point is that of Ali Abdul. Found guilty of being a ‘prohibited immigrant’, Ali took his case to the High Court of Australia in 1931 – and won. The Crown prosecutors alleged that Ali had entered

[left] Fatteh Mahomed Dean, circa 1903.
[below left] Mahomed Allum’s return to Australia was loudly proclaimed in this advertising feature published in The Mirror newspaper in 1937.
[below right] One of ‘The Wonder Man’s’ miraculous cures.
Australia illegally from India sometime after 1901. But Ali assembled a group of people who declared they had known him for 30-odd years. ‘He has always borne a first class character,’ insisted Mrs Annie Emma Croaker, a 60-year-old widow. ‘My husband became fairly fond of him.’ The witnesses helped establish that Ali had arrived prior to 1901, hence, the High Court confirmed, the provisions of the Immigration Restriction Act did not apply. Ali was free to return to his confectionery business in Sydney’s Redfern.

Fatteh Mahomed Dean came to Australia from India in 1896 and opened the way for four generations of Australian-born descendants. By 1905, Dean had built a small night-watch company in Perth. He made regular return visits to his village in the Punjab, and on one of these trips he was married. Conventional efforts to secure his wife’s entry to Australia proved fruitless, but in 1905 she arrived with a passport signed by an Indian magistrate which, it was claimed, entitled her to admittance. Australian officials allowed her to stay, even though the issue of passports by Indian authorities was intended to be limited to temporary visitors, such as merchants, students and tourists.

The Deans’ first son, Abdul Majeed, was born in November 1905, followed by his brother, Abdul Ahmed, some 18 months later. Abdul Majeed made Australia his home, working as a hawker and herbalist before marrying and settling in Perth. His children (including Hanifa Deen) and grandchildren remain practising Muslims, proud also of their long connection with Australia.

Changes to immigration laws in the 1960s and 1970s brought many more Muslims to Australia, particularly from Turkey and Lebanon. Unlike earlier generations, these Muslims were welcomed as permanent settlers, as future citizens, and as full members of Australian society. But the records in the National Archives show that, despite tensions and difficulties, Muslims have always sought to put down roots in Australia, raise families and contribute to their new home. For many, religion remained an important part of their lives in Australia.

Indeed, it was Mahomet Allum’s devotion to his religion that motivated him to do all he could to help the people of his adopted home. ‘I still do all I can to serve your country,’ he explained to Prime Minister Menzies, ‘and will do so until I die, as I am a Mighty Soldier of Allah, and only want to do his will.’

You can read more about Muslims in Australia on the National Archives’ Uncommon Lives website: uncommonlives.naa.gov.au.

This article was written by Dr Tim Sherratt, a websites content developer at the National Archives.
The 1967 referendum: remembering the struggle

On 27 May 1967, a successful referendum was held to change the Australian Constitution. These changes allowed the Australian Government to legislate for Aboriginal people and to count Indigenous Australians in the national census. The 40th anniversary of the referendum in May 2007 was a time to reflect its meaning and significance. Historian Sue Taffe examines a little-known part of the story: the decade-long campaign in support of the referendum proposals.

[above] Lobbyists from the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders meet with Prime Minister Harold Holt in February 1967. From left to right: Gordon Bryant MP, Faith Bandler, Harold Holt, Pastor Doug Nichols, Burnum Burnum (Harry Penrith), Win Branson and WC Wentworth MP. In December 1956, a report tabled in the Western Australian Parliament became the catalyst for a national movement for Aboriginal rights in Australia. The Grayden Report (named after its principal author, Perth politician Bill Grayden) drew attention to starvation and ill-health among the Aboriginal people of the Warburton Ranges in Western Australia. Prior to this report, there were already groups of people, some of whom were Indigenous, working for social and legislative reform on behalf of Aboriginal Australians. However, news of the Grayden Report led to outrage in Australia and overseas. A film of the Warburton Ranges people shocked audiences when it was shown at special screenings and on television in 1957.
people of any race, other than the aboriginal of the Commonwealth with respect to the for the peace, order, and good government this Constitution, have power to make laws which read: ‘The Parliament shall, subject to also called for the amendment of section 51, aboriginal natives shall not be counted.’ It state or other part of the Commonwealth, the people of the Commonwealth, or of a which read, ‘In reckoning the numbers of repeal of section 127 of the Constitution, Bryant in September 1958. It called for the Representatives by Labor member Gordon signatures, was tabled in the House of Australian Constitution.

Two references to Aboriginal people in the Australian Government to change the body’s first decisions was to petition the Australian Government to change the two references to Aboriginal people in the Australian Constitution.

Petitioning parliament

The FCAA petition, with more than 25,000 signatures, was tabled in the House of Representatives by Labor member Gordon Bryant in September 1958. It called for the repeal of section 127 of the Constitution, which read, ‘In reckoning the numbers of the people of the Commonwealth, or of a state or other part of the Commonwealth, aboriginal natives shall not be counted.’ It also called for the amendment of section 51, which read: ‘The Parliament shall, subject to this Constitution, have power to make laws for the peace, order, and good government of the Commonwealth with respect to the people of any race, other than the aboriginal race in any State, for whom it is deemed necessary to make special laws.’

The FCAA wanted the phrase ‘other than the aboriginal race’ deleted so that the Australian Government could pass special laws to assist Aboriginal Australians.

With no action by the government, in 1962 the FCAA circulated another petition. This time it was a national campaign and the petition was worded quite differently to the earlier one. It described the two relevant clauses in the Constitution in terms of ‘discriminations’, and linked these clauses with state laws and regulations that deprived Aboriginal people of equal wages and employment opportunities, and the opportunity to own and develop their tribal lands. The FCAA gained maximum exposure for their cause, and more than 100,000 Australians signed the petition. For a seven-week period in 1963, every parliamentary sitting day began with the tabling of petitions gathered during the national campaign, presented by members of the Liberal/Country Party Coalition Government and the Labor Party.

This campaign and other action, such as the Freedom Rides led by Charles Perkins, raised awareness of the discrimination Indigenous people faced. As a result, Cabinet considered the issue of changing the Constitution on a number of occasions. Several Bills were debated in Parliament. In February 1967, the Holt Government announced that a referendum would be held to ask people to vote on these two proposed changes to the Constitution, as well as on a separate question concerning the relationship between the number of senators and the number of lower house members. The Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI), formerly FCAA, immediately began campaigning for a yes vote. On 27 May 1967, more than 90 per cent of the Australian electorate voted yes to the proposals relating to Aboriginal people, with a majority in all states.

Democracy in action

These are the bare bones of a lively, people-driven story. It is an example of the democratic process in action, and of how activists can change social understandings over time. Records in the National Archives help tell this story.

The collection includes letters which show public reaction to the shocking images of the Warburton Ranges people in 1957, such as that of a skeletal mother trying to feed a lethargic sick baby. Members of the public wrote to the Prime Minister, imploring him to take action. ‘Surely something must be done,’ wrote one correspondent. ‘How can we boast of a free democratic Australia when things like this happen?’ Another told the Prime Minister, ‘I feel something must be done and feel so helpless to do anything about it except to write to you as our leader and Prime Minister and implore you to move heaven and earth to right this fearful wrong.’ One correspondent predicted that the film, entitled Manslaughter, would ‘undoubtedly’ be shown in Russia, and warned of the propaganda value of such images to the communist nation.

In reply to such letters, prime ministerial staff pointed out that Aboriginal welfare was a matter for the states, not the Commonwealth. However, the government used this explanation for federal government inactivity on Aboriginal affairs less and less over the decade leading up to the referendum. By the time the 1962 petition was tabled in Parliament, the activists working for constitutional change were already altering the political reality. Many Australians now believed that Aboriginal affairs ought to be a matter for the Commonwealth.
Prime Minister Menzies argued in Parliament that the inclusion of the phrase ‘other than the aboriginal race in any State’ in section 51 was actually a protection, which prevented the Commonwealth from passing laws that might discriminate unfavourably against Aboriginal people. Historically, he was right. Section 51 gave the Commonwealth the power to make laws for the ‘people of a race’ and, at the time of Federation, the races the founding fathers had in mind were South Sea Islanders (then referred to as Kanakas) and the Chinese. But the campaigns by activists in the 1950s and 1960s were so successful that the public came to understand the clause ‘other than the aboriginal race in any state’ to be discriminatory. The skilful campaigners in FCAATSI had helped change the meaning these words conveyed. They persuaded the public that section 51, as it stood, was discriminatory and argued that the referendum was about Aboriginal rights, not just a simple matter of a shift in the power of the Australian Government to make laws.

Privately, these campaigners held that discrimination – in a positive sense – was just what was needed for Aboriginal people as a group. They wanted the government to develop national policies on Aboriginal education, housing and health services, and to provide federal finances to help implement them. They thought that an overwhelming yes vote would help convince the Australian Government to use its new constitutional powers to take action to improve the lives of Indigenous Australians.

There is no evidence that, prior to the referendum, the Australian Government had definite plans to use its new powers to legislate on Aboriginal matters in the event of constitutional change. As campaigners expected, however, the fact that more than 90 per cent of voters supported the proposed changes caused the government to carefully consider its position.

**Holt government responds**

After the referendum, Harold Holt told Cabinet, ‘Since the referendum with its remarkably large “YES” vote, pressures have come on the Government from various quarters for a rather more active Commonwealth role.’ By September 1967, when there was still no announcement from the Australian Government, Liberal and Country Party parliamentarians in marginal northern Australian seats were getting nervous. They warned the Prime Minister of ‘serious repercussions’: there could be a ‘mass Aboriginal vote’ against the government in these marginal seats, and the ‘sentimental appeal of this question could cost us votes right throughout Australia’.

The pressure of the strong yes vote led finally to Harold Holt announcing the formation of a new body, a Council for Aboriginal Affairs, which would be headed by the highly-regarded Governor of the Reserve Bank, HC ‘Nugget’ Coombs. This council would play a key role in the next few years, listening to Indigenous Australians and providing policy advice to the government. In 1972, the new Whitlam Government appointed Gordon Bryant as the first Minister for Aboriginal Affairs supported by a department.

As we recall these events of 40 years ago, we should remember the efforts of activists who laboured for 10 years for this result, and admire their intelligent use of the democratic process for the end they sought: an Australian Government commitment to legislate positively for Indigenous Australians.

Dr Sue Taffe of Monash University has recently completed an Australian Research Council post-doctoral fellowship, with the National Archives of Australia, National Library of Australia, National Museum of Australia and the State Library of Victoria as industry partners. One product of this project is a website Collaborating for Indigenous Rights, 1958–1973. Visit www.nma.gov.au/indigenousrights. This is the first part of a much larger site – a section on civil rights will be released early next year, followed by content on land rights.

[far left] The yes vote on the Aboriginal question was overwhelming.
[top right] Kath Walker, who had directed the Queensland campaign, congratulated the Prime Minister on the yes vote.
Australianscreen online, developed by the Australian Film Commission, provides access to information about the Australian film and television industry. The website features hundreds of clips from feature films, documentaries, television programs, newsreels and government films, which users can download or view for free.

The moving image material on the site comes from the collections of the National Archives of Australia, the National Film and Sound Archive, the ABC, SBS, and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. It has been selected by expert curators. Some clips will be accompanied by educational material prepared by The Learning Federation to help teachers use the material in their classrooms. The website will be a valuable resource for teachers, students, researchers and fans of Australian film and television.

The National Archives’ contribution

Adrienne Parr, the curator for the National Archives material on Australianscreen online, faced some tough choices – there are more than 132,000 motion picture film items in the National Archives’ collection and more than 30,000 video records.

They include student productions from the Australian Film Television and Radio School by such well known directors as Gillian Armstrong, Jane Campion and Phillip Noyce. There are also films from the ABC Television Archive, including ABC television’s first night broadcast in 1956 and episodes of favourites such as Mr Squiggle. The National Archives preserves these audiovisual treasures in specially designed temperature and humidity-controlled vaults, and is working to make this unique collection more accessible.
The National Archives material on Australianscreen online provides, in many cases, a unique view of significant events and people in Australia’s history. There is footage of prime ministers and senior politicians – former Deputy Prime Minister Francis Forde and Dr Herbert Vere (Doc) Evatt on a trip to San Francisco for the 1945 conference where the United Nations Charter was drawn up, Harold Holt at the Seven Nations Summit in Manila in 1966, and Gough Whitlam on a visit to the Philippines in 1974. There is also film of a re-enactment of circumstances surrounding Harold Holt’s disappearance while swimming in rough seas off Cheviot Beach, Victoria, in December 1967.

There are defence films, such as Ikara the Weapon Thrower (1963), depicting the military trials of the anti-submarine Ikara missile, and Operation Buffalo, the official recording of the testing of four nuclear fission bombs at Maralinga on 27 September 1956. Operation Blowdown (1963) records the classified project that aimed to replicate the effects of a nuclear explosion on a tropical rainforest environment. The testing was carried out on Iron Range at Cape York, 500 kilometres north of Cairns. Researchers exploded 50 tonnes of TNT atop a 43-metre tower, 21 metres above the rainforest canopy to simulate an air-detonated nuclear device.

Australianscreen online also includes footage from the National Archives that depicts the launch of the first Australian satellite at the height of the space race on 29 November 1967. The Woomera launch had been planned for 28 November, but had to be aborted 30 seconds from zero because of an equipment failure. The satellite was successfully launched the next day, after most of the dignitaries had left Woomera. During the satellite’s 42-day orbit, it circled the globe 642 times and transmitted scientific data on 73 of those orbits, until its batteries were exhausted.

Viewers can also see clips from Jungle Road, a record of the role of Australian military personnel in Papua New Guinea, and army training films that show the terrain Australian soldiers faced in what was then known as South Vietnam, including the ruins of the village of Long Tan, where Australians had fought only months before.

The site features advertisements that government agencies produced to inform and educate the public. Anyone driving in Australia in 1974 would probably have seen Metric Motoring, two 60-second television advertisements explaining the changeover from imperial to metric measurement on the nation’s roads.

Through Australianscreen online, the National Archives has made available films that document the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme over its 25-year construction. Many were made by the film unit of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Authority (SMHEA) to record the progress of the scheme and explain the complex project to the public.

Where Giants Meet (1948) is both a Snowy Scheme recruitment drive and an ode to the International TD-24 bulldozer. The film was made a year before work officially began on the scheme, produced for the distributors of the bulldozer and the SMHEA. Where Giants Meet sings the praises of the bulldozer, but also highlights some of the strategies the SMHEA used to attract workers. The film depicts the potential recruit as a genuine ‘man from Snowy River’ who would ‘quit the saddle for a bit and lend a hand’. By the end of the film, the man from Snowy River has traded his moleskins for a pair of overalls, and is sitting comfortably atop a TD-24 bulldozer.

Films in the Snowy Hydro collection depict the relocation of two mountain communities, Jindabyne and Adaminaby, NSW. The towns had to be moved to avoid the waters rising behind the newly-built Jindabyne and Eucumbene dams. The Jindabyne Story (1965) gives us a last look at scenes now usually submerged under the waters of Lake Jindabyne.

You can learn more about these films and view clips from them – and hundreds of other documentaries, feature films and television shows – at www.australianscreen.com.au National Archives editor Kellie Abbott wrote this article with film curator Adrienne Parr.

[far left] A ship rolls down the slipway at Cockatoo Island Dockyard, circa 1939–40, a moment captured on film.
[top left] Workers at Cockatoo Island Dockyard, where many vessels were built during the busy years of World War II.
[top right] The town of Adaminaby, NSW was moved to avoid the rising waters of Lake Eucumbene.
In 1976, the Federal Cabinet faced a tough decision: what song should be played as the national anthem when Australia won gold at the Montreal Olympic Games? Dr Jim Stokes, the National Archives 2006 Cabinet historian, explains the difficult search for a truly Australian anthem.

For much of Australia’s history, its national anthem has been *God Save the Queen*, reflecting Australia’s shared heritage and regency with Britain. Many suggestions have been made for a distinctly Australian national song; the earliest competition to find one was held in 1840.

**Search for an anthem**

By the early 1970s, the push for a national anthem with a clearly Australian flavour to replace *God Save the Queen* had become a political concern. During the 1972 election campaign Gough Whitlam said: ‘The choice of the Australian people, not the musical tastes of George II, should determine Australia’s national anthem.’ After he became Prime Minister, Whitlam asked the Australian Council for the Arts to conduct a two-stage quest for a new national anthem, offering prizes firstly for lyrics and then for music. The competition attracted some 1400 entries for lyrics and 1200 entries for music. The journalist Phillip Adams proposed the words:

*I love this ripper country  
Full of funnel-webs and sharks!  
With blowies, big as eagles  
Where yer car gets booked by narks!  
Where your team gets trounced each Sat’dy  
Where the pubs run out of beer!  
Where there’s redbacks on the toilet seat  
And yer nagged by Germaine Greer!*

In the end the Council decided that none of the entries was as good as the three long-standing unofficial Australian songs – *Advance Australia Fair*, *Waltzing Matilda* and *Song of Australia*.

The oldest, *Song of Australia*, was written in 1859 by English-born poet Caroline J Carleton to music composed by Carl Linger. Peter Dodds McCormick, a Scot, composed *Advance Australia Fair* and it was first performed in 1878. *Waltzing Matilda* features the words of poet AB (Banjo) Patterson, written in 1895 to a tune played by Christina Macpherson, the daughter of a western Queensland pastoralist. It became famous when it was used in advertisements for Billy Tea in the early twentieth century.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics conducted a national opinion poll of 60,000 people to decide which of the three songs was the most popular. The Opposition attacked this proposal in a House of Representatives debate in December 1973 because the poll involved only a small sample of the population and did not offer *God Save the Queen* as an option. However, Fred Daly,
always the joker of the House, said that as a good Catholic he was offended by the line ‘Frustrate their Popish tricks’ in early versions of God Save the Queen.

The opinion poll in February 1974 found that just over half of those sampled preferred Advance Australia Fair, with Waltzing Matilda a fairly distant second at just under 20 per cent of the vote. Advance Australia Fair was therefore adopted as the national anthem, although God Save the Queen continued to be played on regal occasions involving the Queen as Head of State.

**Difficult decisions**

The election of the Fraser Government in late 1975 brought a change of policy. When in opposition, Fraser had expressed a personal preference for retaining God Save the Queen, and in January 1976 Cabinet decided that God Save the Queen would be played on all regal and vice-regal occasions involving defence force bands. At civilian functions the organisers could choose between God Save the Queen, Advance Australia Fair, Waltzing Matilda and Song of Australia. Cabinet also decided that there should be public consultation to decide which of these four songs should become the national anthem for occasions when it was necessary to present a separate Australian identity.

The issue came up again in May 1976 when Cabinet considered which song should be played at the Montreal Olympic Games. Consultation with the state premiers produced a range of preferences. Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania preferred Advance Australia Fair, Victoria preferred Waltzing Matilda, South Australia preferred Song of Australia and New South Wales expressed no preference. Federal Cabinet members expressed a strong preference for Waltzing Matilda and agreed that the Prime Minister should make this ‘strong view’ known.

Unfortunately, Waltzing Matilda was not played to celebrate gold at the Montreal Olympics: Australia received only one silver medal in men’s hockey and four bronze medals in swimming, equestrian and yachting events.

In 1977, the question of the national anthem went to the people in a plebiscite. Voters were offered a choice between God Save the Queen and the three Australian songs. Just over seven million of the 8.4 million people on the electoral rolls voted on the anthem. Nationally Advance Australia Fair scored a convincing win with 44 per cent of the vote, followed by Waltzing Matilda (28%), God Save the Queen (19%) and Song of Australia (10%).

A further seven years and a change of government passed before Advance Australia Fair was finally officially adopted as the national anthem. The five verses of the song written by Peter Dodds McCormick in the 1870s were reduced to two, modified to remove gender-specific language and to reflect a very different relationship with the United Kingdom than that which had existed a century before. Advance Australia Fair was proclaimed as the national anthem by the Governor-General on 19 April 1984.

You can read more about the decisions of the 1976 Cabinet and view selected Cabinet documents on the National Archives website. Visit www.naa.gov.au and click on the link ‘1976 Cabinet records’.

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*far left* Advance Australia Fair postcard sent to Prime Minister John Curtin by the niece of the song’s composer, 1943.

*left* Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser is presented with Olympic coins by the Canadian High Commissioner in 1976.

*top* Australian team uniforms for the 1976 Montreal Olympics. In 1976, it was the anthem, rather than the team uniform, that was subject to debate.
Soon the public will be able to learn more about some of Australia’s lost art heritage. The two winners of the 2006 National Archives’ Ian Maclean Award, art historian, curator and gallery director, Eileen Chanin, and archivist Steven Miller, set out to identify, locate and list the neglected records of Australian art schools, and make this information available online.

[below] Students at Julian Ashton’s art school, circa 1923.

[top] The project has uncovered much visual material, such as this 1957 design for an advertisement by East Sydney Technical College student Janelle Paisley.

[right] Painter and art teacher Frederick McCubbin, with students of the National Gallery School, Melbourne, 1895.
From the late 1800s, Australian art schools not only trained painters and sculptors, but were often places where actors, designers, writers, teachers, architects and artists alike mingled during their formative years. The art school at East Sydney, for instance, trained such diverse figures as actor Rod Taylor, photographer Max Dupain and members of the band Mental as Anything, among them graphic designer Reg Mombassa, a key contributor to the Mambo label.

As well as shedding light on the formative years of well-known artists, studying art schools can increase our understanding of women’s lives in Australia’s past. In the nineteenth century, when women had little involvement in tertiary and trade education, art schools were a rare exception. Many women studied at art schools across the nation, and were also employed as teachers. Art school records can tell us more about women’s education and how women have influenced Australian cultural life.

Despite their importance, there are not many records about art schools in archives and libraries. Few art school records are listed on the national Register of Archives and Manuscripts, a guide to collections of personal papers and non-government records held by Australian libraries and archives. Records in state and national archival authorities are often incomplete or difficult to locate, and some important collections are hidden within private manuscript collections. Further collections of national importance remain within private hands and are not recorded.

The search

We wanted to address this problem by identifying, locating and listing art school records that could be used by public researchers. In order to boost awareness of our project, we advertised widely in gallery, trade and art magazines, asking for all those with material – or even stories – of interest to contact us. With the financial assistance of the Ian Maclean Award, we visited each capital city in Australia to contact potential contributors to the project, as well as to review the holdings of libraries and archives.

These efforts have borne fruit: we have had offers of assistance from former staff and students to ‘tell the story’ of their respective schools. Relating these stories, had not really been one of our aims. But as we began to realise that so little has been formally recorded, we now feel that we should extend our project to include an oral history component. Artists and former artists have also overwhelmed us with portfolios they created as students. Once again, we did not set out to collect this material, but have since decided to photograph everything of interest. We have been surprised by the way in which a clearly defined project can expand and change as material and information becomes available.

However, what we have not uncovered are the actual records of art schools, such as student registers and reports. We are beginning to think that much of this material has been destroyed or lost as a result of administrative changes over the years. Some researchers with interest in this area have brought our attention to fascinating secondary or supporting documents which fill gaps where original records might no longer exist. For instance, in 1933 all the art schools in Sydney sent a letter to the Art Gallery of New South Wales asking the gallery to buy a collection of modern art prints. The letter was signed by staff and students alike, and, as student records no longer exist for these schools prior to World War II, this letter now has greatly added significance.

Making the results accessible

To keep our project to a manageable size, we identified 74 art schools in all Australian states and territories and decided to concentrate on records created before 1975. We are ordering and storing our research on a database, which will be made publicly accessible through the web. The database will include information about each school’s history, staff, students and surviving records. Not surprisingly for a project devoted to art schools, a fascinating range of visual material has also surfaced, so we hope that the final database will include items such as photographs of students, artworks which depict life within the schools, and examples of student exercises.

The Art Gallery of New South Wales will host our art school database on its website. Links through the National Archives website and portals such as the University of New South Wales’ Dictionary of Australian Artists Online will help publicise our research. We now know that this project will not end in June of this year, which is the official date for its completion. We will continue to expand and refine the database as information about records becomes available. This will be of interest to historians, biographers and students of Australian social and cultural history. We hope that by finding these records and making them more accessible, something of a heritage that has to date been invisible will be recovered.

Eileen Chanin is an independent researcher and Director of Macquarie Galleries. Steven Miller currently works at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Their book Degenerates and Perverts: The 1939 Herald Exhibition of French and British Contemporary Art was awarded the 2005 New South Wales Australian History Prize.
The decline in public administration that accompanied the violence in Solomon Islands in the late 1990s and early 2000s created a gap in the recorded memory of this country’s government and the nation. In 2005, Solomon Islands sought assistance from the National Archives of Australia, through the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), to help it assess the state of its recordkeeping and begin to make improvements.

RAMSI is a partnership between the government and people of Solomon Islands and contributing countries of the Pacific, including Australia. Its mandate is to help the Solomon Islands Government restore law and order, strengthen government institutions, reduce corruption and re-invigorate the economy.

A two-month study of recordkeeping in Solomon Islands government departments began in February 2006. It found that while public servants were generally supportive of moves to improve records management, they often were not aware of their responsibilities to create and keep records of their work. The existing government-wide records management procedures did not provide strong systems for keeping track of files, and records were often unable to be quickly located when needed.

In addition, the National Archives of Solomon Islands did not have efficient disposal mechanisms to decide which records could be destroyed and which should be retained to support government accountability and future historical research. Government agencies were using a very general disposal regime that retained a large number of records, and the Archives and most government departments had run out of storage space. This was putting important material in danger because it was not being stored in optimal conditions for preservation.

In response to the problems identified, the National Archives of Australia has been working with its Solomon Islands counterpart to develop new records management guidelines for all government departments. These provide advice to public servants at all levels about their responsibilities for creating

Recordkeeping support for Solomon Islands

The National Archives provides advice and support to Australian Government agencies on keeping good records. Over the last year, Dani Wickman from the Archives has worked with the Solomon Islands Government to help preserve the records and history of Australia’s Pacific neighbour.
Preparing for a digital future

Australian and overseas archives are facing a big challenge: to ensure that today’s digital records are preserved for the future. The National Archives, in partnership with the Council of Australasian Archives and Records Association (CAARA), sponsored a recent colloquium on digital futures.

Senior archivists from the National Archives, various state archives and Archives New Zealand gathered in Bungendore, New South Wales, in late 2006 for a week-long residential school, to hear expert speakers from the archives and information management professions.

The colloquium focused on digital archives. It explored systems that can store electronic files under archival conditions, and what policies and procedures are needed to support them. Because of today’s rapidly changing digital environment, it is crucial that archival organisations develop systems that can store and manage valuable digital records and make them accessible into the future. These systems need knowledgeable staff, and professional training was one of the issues discussed at the colloquium.

Speakers gave an overview of how the cultural, education and government sectors are approaching digital archiving and preservation. There were presentations, discussions and hands-on workshops for participants to brainstorm ideas and work through solutions. Participants learned about winning financial support for a digital archive, how to apply best-practice standards and adapt digital archiving models to suit their organisation’s particular needs, as well as how to use internationally-developed standards to assess their digital archives.

Participants left with a better understanding of the end-to-end process required in a digital archive. They made valuable professional contacts, which in the future will help them to draw on each other’s expertise, share information and form partnerships to advance digital archiving in Australia.

The National Archives and CAARA also ran Digital Futures, an industry briefing in Canberra to coincide with the colloquium. This event enabled a much wider audience to hear leading researchers and practitioners from Australia and overseas, and provided a broad overview of international developments in digital preservation and archiving.

During the Digital Futures week, archivists from across Australia took stock of what has been achieved, what is possible and what still needs to be done in the field of digital archives. The National Archives is not alone on the wild frontier of digital archiving. There is much to learn and much to gain by talking with colleagues who are facing similar challenges in embracing a digital future.

Dagmar Parer, director of the colloquium, wrote this article with Adrian Cunningham, director of strategic relations at the National Archives.

Dani Wickman manages Asia and Pacific projects at the National Archives.

[above] A wall of the conference room at the National Archives of Solomon Islands.

and keeping good records of their decisions and actions on behalf of the government. The guidelines contain procedures to help records management staff carry out their daily work caring for and managing government records.

The Solomon Islands Government has used the guidelines to develop new training for records management staff. The Institute of Public Administration and Management provided a test site for recordkeeping procedures while the guidelines were being drafted. Staff are now starting to use them as the basis for all public sector records management. In addition, other government departments are using the guidelines for intensive projects to improve their own recordkeeping.

This assistance from the National Archives of Australia should help ensure preservation of Solomon Islands Government records for the future.

[below] Some of the Digital Colloquium participants, from left: Toula Varvarigos, Public Record Office Victoria; Deborah Drinkell, Archives Office of Tasmania; Patrick Power, Archives New Zealand; and National Archives representatives, James Doig and Christine Johnston.
Mark King at the launch of the Drawing Together exhibition and art competition. The exhibition showcases the artwork of well-known Indigenous artists from across Australia. Works from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Art Collection are on display at the National Archives in Canberra from 18 May to 15 July 2007. The art competition explores the theme of reconciliation. Short-listed entries will be on display from 2 to 29 July.

Ms Winnie Kiap, Secretary to Papua New Guinea’s National Security Council, with National Archives Deputy Director-General James Barr. She recently visited the National Archives in Canberra to discuss information management in Australia.

Senator the Hon George Brandis, Minister for the Arts and Sport, launched Memory of a Nation, the new exhibition in the National Archives in Canberra. For the first time, visitors can see Edmund Barton’s handwritten notes on the draft Constitution, a letter from Don Bradman to Prime Minister Robert Menzies, Prime Minister Harold Holt’s briefcase and many other unique records of Australia’s history.

Scientist and author, Dr Karl Kruszelnicki, was a guest at the Memory of a Nation launch. He spoke with the ABC’s Justin Murphy about records in the exhibition that documented his family’s experience as displaced persons who migrated to Australia after World War II.
In April, the Prime Minister, the Hon John Howard, launched *A Gift to the Nation*, a project that gives Australians online access to the files of 376,000 World War I servicemen and women. The Prime Minister is pictured with National Archives Director-General Ross Gibbs, National Archives Advisory Council Chairman Paul Santamaria, Education Officer Stephanie Hammersley, in period nurse’s uniform, and students from Telopea Park High School.

The Prime Minister and Paul Santamaria view service records online with Telopea Park students Aadil Rahim and Adam Huttner.

[below left] Journalist and Chief Executive of The Pratt Foundation, Sam Lipski AM (left), launched *In the Interest of National Security: Civilian Internment in Australia during World War II* in Melbourne. He is pictured with the book’s author, Professor Klaus Neumann (centre), and Director-General Ross Gibbs.

[below right] Four-year-old James and his five-year-old sister Emma Taloni, of Googong at the National Archives Family Day in Canberra on 29 April 2007.
News in brief

Thea Exley, who made a significant contribution to the development of the National Archives, passed away in Canberra on 29 January 2007. Thea retired from the Australian Archives (now the National Archives of Australia) nearly 20 years ago. More than two dozen colleagues, including three former heads of the Archives, attended her funeral.

Thea notched up several significant firsts in her career. Eight years after joining the Archives’ Victorian office in 1953, she became the first woman to head a regional branch. As one of relatively few women in senior positions in the public service, she became a role model for young women.

In 1970, Thea was appointed the first senior archivist of reference and access, where she helped make records in the collection more accessible to the public. She also served as Chief Archivist between 1977 and 1981, and became the Archives’ first director of preservation in 1984, before retiring in 1988.

In 2003, in recognition of her contribution to the Archives, the meeting room at the Archives’ Mitchell repository in Canberra was named after her. She will be remembered not only for her professional expertise and personal dedication, but for her wry sense of humour and her encouragement and support for a generation of young archivists.

DR THEA MELVIE EXLEY (1923–2007)

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Thea was an active member of the Australian archival profession. A founding member of the Australian Society of Archivists in 1975, she was a governing council member from 1977 to 1979.

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Records online on demand

The National Archives of Australia recently introduced a national service that provides online access to records held in Canberra as well as in state offices across the country.

Researchers can visit the Archives website and use the RecordSearch database to identify and order records they want put online, and make secure payments for them. The Archives will make copies available for viewing in RecordSearch within 20 working days.

Fees for the new on-demand service are: $16.50 (incl. GST) for files under 100 pages or $38.50 (incl. GST) for files over 100 pages.

Images are optimised for on-screen viewing. Most items will be shown in two sizes, a small viewing image and a larger image suitable for printing.

The service applies to paper files less than A3 size that are publicly accessible and listed on RecordSearch. Anyone wanting access to other record types and sizes should contact the Archives’ reference service at ref@nla.gov.au or 1300 886 881.

The Archives is also making collection material available for viewing on the website without cost. Researchers who want to nominate material should send the series title and number to ref@nla.gov.au. All nominations are assessed to ensure that requests for high-use, high-value or at-risk records are processed first.

Currently 18.2 million images can be viewed on the National Archives website for free, with more images being added each week.
ARCHIVAL SUPPORT FOR THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY

The National Archives recently held archival support workshops for members of the Muslim community in Melbourne. The workshops result from a partnership between the National Archives and the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

The workshops provided the Muslim community with the opportunity to develop fundamental skills and know-how to preserve their community's documentary heritage, and make records available for present and future generations. The National Archives consulted with the Muslim community across greater Melbourne to ensure the workshop content would be useful and relevant to participants.

A launch at Brunswick Town Hall in November 2006 provided an opportunity to promote and discuss the workshops with the audience of more than 120 people, including key representatives from the various ethnic groups that make up the Muslim presence in Victoria and senior members of Muslim and multicultural organisations.

More than 30 people attended the workshops, held in November at the National Archives’ two Melbourne offices in North Melbourne and East Burwood. They learned about storing, preserving and handling paper and digital records, and investigating possible sources of funding for community archives.

Further workshops are scheduled for Sydney. The National Archives will soon publish a short guide for community organisations wanting to learn more about setting up and looking after their own archives. Keep an eye on the National Archives website and future issues of Memento for more details.

PRIME MINISTERS CENTRE OPENS IN CANBERRA

Australia’s heads of governments past and present have a new home in Canberra’s Old Parliament House, with the opening of the Australian Prime Ministers Centre. The centre includes a multimedia exhibition detailing the lives, administrations and achievements of Australia’s 25 prime ministers.

An on-site research centre holds a comprehensive collection of material on prime ministers, including parliamentary publications and biographies. While the centre does not hold original records, it is collaborating with other institutions, including the National Archives, to increase access to such material. Visitors will be able to investigate historic material, browse the web or talk to a librarian. The research centre provides study carrels, a fellowship scheme, a seminar room and a conference program.

The Australian Prime Ministers Centre is acquiring objects relating to Australian leaders, a prize exhibit being Sir Edmund Barton’s dispatch box. In keeping with longstanding British tradition, Australia’s first prime minister used the box to take the day’s work home. There was no jostling on the tram or battling traffic for Barton – he lived in a flat one flight of stairs up from the Parliament House chambers in Melbourne!

The centre is the first stage of the proposed Gallery of Australian Democracy, due to open late next year or early in 2009. The gallery will include an exhibition on Australia’s democratic development, and deliver education, research, scholarship and outreach activities. The National Archives is delighted to be part of the effort to provide a view of the nation’s political history from the top.

The Australian Prime Ministers Centre is open seven days a week, 9 am to 5 pm.

For more information, visit www.oph.gov.au or email info@oph.gov.au.

[above] Students at Australia’s first Muslim Community Primary and High School in Perth, 1990.
Closer ties with Indonesia

The National Archives of Australia signed its first international memorandum of understanding on 22 January 2007, at a ceremony attended by more than 100 archivists, government officials and journalists in Jakarta.

The MOU was signed by Ross Gibbs, Director-General of the National Archives of Australia, and Djoko Utomo, Director of Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI).

The memorandum promotes professional cooperation between the two archival institutions. This might include information and technical exchange, joint exhibitions and workshops, exchange of archivists and conservators on temporary placements, and training courses.

At the signing, Mr Gibbs said he was delighted that the National Archives of Australia's first international memorandum of understanding was with Australia's largest near neighbour.

The ceremony was the culmination of more than 16 months of discussions between the two institutions and their governments. Mr Utomo first suggested an agreement in November 2005.

As Mr Gibbs said in Jakarta, “Signing a memorandum of understanding, for all its landmark significance, is merely the start of a long-term process of developing closer ties and devising joint projects that will be of mutual benefit.”

The Australian Ambassador to Indonesia, Bill Farmer, congratulated the two national archives, saying 'the memorandum of understanding is an excellent example of how our two governments are cooperating to mutual advantage.

Over the coming months the National Archives will be working closely with ANRI colleagues and other Australian Government agencies to flesh out the details of future collaborative projects.

‘Government archives are widely recognised as vital institutions because of the crucial role they play in enabling the preservation and understanding of national history.

‘Archives are perhaps less well-known for the equally important role that they can play as key enablers of good governance, by helping government institutions to make and keep good records of their decisions and activities,’ Mr Farmer said.

The National Archives of Australia recently launched A Gift to the Nation, which gives free online access to the records of the men and women who served Australia during World War I.

Many Australians have relatives who served in this conflict. Their records, which sometimes include personal letters, can now be downloaded. The National Archives of Australia has digitised 12.3 million individual pages, preserving these records for future generations.

They include records of service in the:
• First Australian Imperial Force (1st AIF)
• Australian Flying Corps
• Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force
• Royal Australian Naval Bridging Train
• Australian Army Nursing Service
• Home or Depot units for personnel who served within Australia during World War I

The World War I records are among the most requested documents in the National Archives collection. To protect and preserve them, they were digitised in a three-year project. It included three steps: cataloguing unregistered service files, storing them in archivally-sound folders and scanning the individual pages.

The World War I service records are available at the National Archives website www.naa.gov.au
EXHIBITIONS

Memory of a Nation: Discover the National Archives of Australia
National Archives, Canberra
Now showing

Drawing Together
Showcases the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Art Collection.
National Archives, Canberra
18 May to 15 July 2007

Wrecked: Tragedy and the Southern Seas
National Archives, Canberra
1 August to 14 October 2007

2007 Waterhouse Natural History Art Prize
National Archives, Canberra
27 October to 2 December 2007

It's a Dog's Life! Animals in the Public Service
New England Regional Art Museum
13 July to 26 August 2007
Gladstone Regional Art Gallery Museum
7 September to 3 November 2007
Queensland Museum
17 December 2007 to 16 March 2008

Public Record Office Victoria
To 28 October 2007
Wollongong City Gallery
24 November 2007 to 27 February 2008

EVENTS

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY
National Archives workshops, Canberra:
• Using the collection for university studies. Tues 24 Jul, 4–5 pm.
  Bookings: events@naa.gov.au or (02) 6212 3900
• Finding families: tracking down the past. Tues 28 Aug and 23 Oct, 4–5 pm.
  Bookings: events@naa.gov.au or (02) 6212 3900
• Finding families: identifying family photographs. Tues 18 Sept, 3.30–5 pm.
  Bookings: events@naa.gov.au or (02) 6212 6217

NEW SOUTH WALES
• A legacy of suspicion – security intelligence records in the National Archives.
  Contact Fiona Burn (02) 9645 0141.
• Photographs for family and local history: hosted by the Hawkesbury Family History Group, Wed, 11 Jul, 10–11 am, Deerubbin Centre, Hawkesbury Library, Windsor.
  Bookings essential. Michelle.NICHOLS@hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au

NORTHERN TERRITORY
Immigration records seminar. National Archives, Kelsey Crescent, Millner.

QUEENSLAND
National Archives seminars, Brisbane, 9.00 to 10.00 am. Bookings (07) 3249 4226.
• The wide brown land: records on land use: 18 and 21 Jul.
• Over the floes – records of the Antarctic: 15 and 18 Aug.
• Queensland disasters and devastation: 15 and 19 Sept.
• Mining the records with Qld State Archives and State Library of Qld.
  17 and 20 Oct, 9 am–12 pm.
• A long way from Rome – Italians in Queensland. 17 and 21 Nov.
• Meet the Brisbane Director for morning tea and chat about Archives’ plans for 2008. 15 and 19 Dec.
• Just add water: with Qld State Archives and State Library of Qld.
  Sun 26 Aug, 1–4pm, State Library of Queensland, South Brisbane.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA
Saturday Speakers Series.
Victorian Archives Centre, North Melbourne, 11 am–12 pm with refreshments to follow.
• Current and completed digitisation projects. 25 Aug.
• Defence service records in the Archives. 24 Nov.

TASMANIA
National Archives seminars, Hobart. Contact (03) 6230 6111.
• Maritime history seminar: resources of the National Archives and Tasmanian Maritime Museum explained. 1 pm, 15 Aug.
• Military in Tasmania: date to be confirmed.

How can the National Archives help you?
Tasmanian Family History and Local History Fair, Westbury, 15 Sept, from 9 am.

VICTORIA
Saturday Speakers Series.
Victorian Archives Centre, North Melbourne, 11 am–12 pm with refreshments to follow.
• Current and completed digitisation projects. 25 Aug.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA
Seminars at the National Archives in Perth. Bookings (08) 9470 7500.
• Introduction to the National Archives, seminar and tour. 15 Aug, 10.30 am.
• Migrant records – Making Australia Home, seminar and tour. 11 Nov, 10.30 am.
From an outback rodeo to a crowded tram in Sydney’s Pitt Street, a team of talented government photographers travelled around Australia capturing images of the nation and its people. Read more about the unique photographic collection of the Australian News and Information Bureau inside.