

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

Dear Mr Tune

Tune Review of the National Archives of Australia

The Special Broadcasting Service Corporation (**SBS**) welcomes the opportunity to submit to the *Functional and Efficiency Review of the National Archives of Australia* (the **Review**). SBS works closely with the National Archives of Australia (the **National Archives**) to ensure the preservation and accessibility of records. SBS supports this Review, particularly at a time when digital platforms are becoming increasingly prominent in facilitating access to archival material.

Role of the National Archives

SBS appreciates and values the role of the National Archives in Australian society. The National Archives remains an important and valuable Australian cultural institution. It collects and preserves Australian Government records that reflect our history and identity. It also promotes good government recordkeeping and encourages community awareness and use of valuable Australian Government records in its care. SBS is required to provide documents and audio-visual material to the National Archives. Where possible, the National Archives provides access to the material it holds, to both broadcasters, and to the general public.

Performance of the role

This section will focus on the National Archives' processes, and consider the necessary resources for the National Archives to perform the role.

The National Archives notes in the introduction to the Review that 'budget and staffing reductions are affecting our capacity to perform our fundamental role of securing, preserving, maintaining and making accessible the authentic and essential records of the decisions and actions of government, while providing high standards of service delivery that all Australians should expect from their National Archives.'¹ SBS supports the resourcing of the National Archives to ensure that it is able to continue to perform its fundamental role.

¹ <http://www.naa.gov.au/about-us/tune-review.aspx>.



This role includes:

- identification of records to be held by the National Archives;
- transfer of Commonwealth records;
- information management; and
- access to the collection.

Records held by the National Archives

The National Archives selects material for its permanent collection, where the material '...is identified as being of permanent (or continuing) value. That is, information of national significance or public interest that will continue to have value to the Australian Government and the community for generations to come.'² This is a requirement of the *Archives Act 1983*.³

The Australian screen industry is essential to creating content that reflects and celebrates the unique Australian culture—material on which the National Archives does, and should, focus. However, for agencies such as SBS, the current archiving obligations provide resourcing challenges. The Review may consider amending the National Archives' obligations, to adopt a sampling approach to accepting materials, based on cultural significance. This may be considered a temporary process until resources and processes are aligned to again accept the full complement of archives.

SBS has considered the role of the National Film and Sound Archive (**NFSA**), and how this relates to the role of the National Archives. The NFSA is not an authority, and therefore SBS is not obligated to provide materials, however, SBS does provide samples of news reporting on a regular basis. This may be a model for the National Archives to consider, in relation to sampling archival material.

Transfer of Commonwealth records

Preparation of materials for transfer, and their archiving, has costs both for the provider of material (eg. SBS) and the National Archives. The Review may consider a reduction in the detail of information that is required for the delivery documentation to reduce the time required to comply, and associated staff costs.

In particular, there are opportunities for improvement in the processes for delivery of digital materials to the National Archives. While SBS recognises the security challenges present in the digital delivery of materials, current delivery mechanisms (such as on USB drives) are not as efficient as they could be. The Review should explore improved digital delivery processes.

The Review should also consider the communication and enquiry mechanisms of the National Archives, to ensure a customer-centric approach that emphasises clarity and service expectations. When agencies or individuals contact the National Archives, it would, for example, be useful to be provided with a reference number for the enquiry, an estimated response time, and for those response times to be

² <http://www.naa.gov.au/information-management/selecting-national-archives/index.aspx>.

³ Paragraph (5)(2)(d) of the *Archives Act 1983* provides that '[t]he functions of the Archives are, subject to this Act...to determine the material that constitutes the archival resources of the Commonwealth...'



improved from current levels. This would improve customer service, both for government agencies providing materials to the National Archives, and the general public.

Information management

The National Archives is increasingly focussed on the management of information (such as metadata use, business system interoperability and classifying of information), which is resource-intensive when compared with the traditional objective of collecting and maintaining materials. The Review may consider whether there are other agencies better placed to undertake the information management role.

The National Archives undertakes an annual 'Check-up PLUS' which is designed to collect data on Australian Government agencies' information management capability and behaviours.⁴ The report that is provided as a result of this survey is useful, and forms part of the Digital Continuity 2020 Policy. The resources required by agencies, however, to complete this survey, are significant, and the Review should consider the administrative burden associated with this process and identify ways for it to be streamlined, or for the information to be gathered in another way.

Access to the collection

Access by institutions and the general public to material held by the National Archives is key to its role. The National Archives should ensure that audio-visual materials are available for access in an appropriate format. For example, SBS is aware that there are screen assets, produced by SBS, which the National Archives holds and of which SBS does not hold any copies. Access to these materials is in the public interest, as it facilitates a broadcaster sharing material of national significance with the Australian public. Access to an agency's deposits should be prioritised and costs deferred, if applicable.

In order to defray some of the costs associated with access to materials held by the National Archives, the Review may wish to consider the introduction of fees, on a cost-recovery basis, for requests to access materials, noting that fees for an agency to access its own material should be deferred. The National Archives may also look to establishing in-person access centres, for agencies and members of the public to access materials independently, and without an associated cost.

SBS is happy to discuss this submission with the Review panel.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Coonan', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Michael Coonan
Head of Regulatory and Government Affairs

⁴ <http://naa.gov.au/information-management/check-up/>.