

28 June 2019

Mr David Tune AO PSM
Independent Reviewer
c/o Tune Review Secretariat
National Archives of Australia
Queen Victoria Terrace Parkes ACT 2600
review@naa.gov.au

Dear Mr Tune,

Submission: Functional and Efficiency Review of the National Archives of Australia

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment about the role and function of the National Archives of Australia (NAA).

We provide this response as a fellow archival institution and as a member of the Council of Australasian Archives and Records Authorities (CAARA) and Australian Society of Archivists (ASA). Queensland State Archives (QSA) is the custodian of Queensland's public records, we connect Queenslanders with their past by ensuring the significant records of government are available and accessible. We also support government integrity, maintaining the corporate memory of government by overseeing the creation and retention of Queensland's public records for the use of current and future generations.

We make the following comments in reference to the:

- enduring role of NAA in the protection, preservation and use of Commonwealth information
- powers, functions, resources, and legislative and governance frameworks the National Archives needs to effectively and efficiently undertake this role in the digital age

Integrity role of an Archival Institution

An important right of citizens in a free and democratic society is access to public records, and to know these are created, managed, secured, trusted and accessible. The act of making the NAA's collection of authentic and essential government information visible will positively impact the Australian people and our identity as a nation, as well as creating efficiencies within government.

Archival records are unique. Unlike libraries, archival institutions hold the only copy of records documenting the actions and decisions of government, and are a critical source of information for researchers, historians, academics and citizens.

Archives provide a framework for government to create and manage the best evidence of their actions and decision-making. This holds governments to account, promotes trust and transparency, empowers citizens to engage in the democratic process and protects the rights and entitlements of individuals. In their capacity as custodians of the public record, the NAA fulfils a crucial role in preserving records of national significance, and facilitates access to these for the use and benefit of current and future generations.

The reduction in funding and resourcing of the NAA will further erode their ability to regulate recordkeeping and secure Australia's enduring records into the future. Without an appropriate level

of funding, their ability to protect, preserve and use Commonwealth information is also compromised. Records are the lifeblood of government and their preservation and accessibility is critical to Australia's collective memory.

Framework for Digital Age

Today's digital environment presents many challenges in relation to the creation and management of Commonwealth information. The ways in which Commonwealth information is created and managed is rapidly changing, and the requirement to manage and preserve government records, and to make these accessible applies equally to analogue, digitised and born-digital records.

Within six years, unique records such as audio-visual material are likely to be lost forever due to the limited lifespan of these at-risk formats and the associated technological obsolescence. The urgency of addressing the preservation of these at-risk records cannot be understated, and it is therefore critical that the NAA is funded and resourced to ensure this precious audio-visual material is digitised before it is too late.

It is essential that as we transition to a born-digital environment, the Australian community continues to be able to access and use records of government with minimal disruption. The public expects to enjoy the same level of access to born-digital records as they do to analogue records, and the provision of appropriate levels of funding and resourcing is necessary if the NAA is to proactively preserve and manage a collection of born-digital records in a way which will meet these expectations.

As the quantity of born-digital records created and managed by Commonwealth agencies rapidly increases, it is imperative the overall governance of these information assets is unified. NAA, as the custodian and regulator of the Commonwealth's information, is a key contributor to these conversations and initiatives and should be recognised as an insight and foresight authority rather than a hindsight provider. In preparing Australia in its aim to be recognised as an e-Government by 2025, NAA must be part of the ongoing conversation and solution development for the administration of government in the digital environment.

The collection and preservation of the most enduring records of government and the facilitation of its access and use by the Australian public regardless of format or type of technology required is a core function of the NAA and we have a duty to ensure that this mandate can be met not just today but into the future.

If you wish to clarify or seek further information about this submission, please contact my office at Officeofthe.StateArchivist@archives.qld.gov.au.

Regards



Mike Summerell
Executive Director and State Archivist