

## Using our collection

### Our collection

The National Archives collection mainly documents Australian Government activities since Federation in 1901.

Our collection consists of more than 40 million items covering a vast range of subject areas. It reflects the diversity of government activities including immigration, defence, Indigenous people, security and intelligence, and transport.

We also hold some 19th-century records dealing with activities that were transferred from the colonies to the Commonwealth in 1901 or later. They include records on customs, patents, defence, lighthouses, shipping, and postal and telegraphic services.

Most records held by the National Archives were created by the Australian Government and its agencies. We also hold the papers of many individuals who were prominent and closely connected with the government, such as governors-general, prime ministers, ministers, judges and senior public servants.

Most of our records are files of documents, but our collection includes posters, plans, films, sound recordings, videotapes, electronic records and many photographs.

### What records are available

Under the *Archives Act 1983*, most Commonwealth records are available for public access once they enter the open access period. For more information please see *Fact Sheet 10 – Access to records under the Archives Act*. Before we make records available for public access we examine them to identify sensitive information that is not suitable for public release. You will not be able to see information that is still sensitive.

Most records will be made available to you in their original form, unless they are fragile, in which case a copy can usually be provided.

## **Accessing our collection**

### **Visit our research centres**

To view original records, visit the research centre of the office where the records are located. To ensure the safety and preservation of the collection, records are not transferred between research centres.

Our research centres are located in each capital city, where reference staff can help you use our research aids to find the records you seek.

In our research centres, you can use our computers to access our website, online databases, guides and fact sheets, and to view digital copies of some records to help you in your research. You will also find indexes and lists that will help you identify records not listed on our databases.

You can order copies of the records you view. Copying charges apply.

### **Contact the National Reference Service**

If you can't visit a research centre, you can make an inquiry or order copies of records online.

Alternatively, you can write to us at:

National Reference Service  
National Archives of Australia  
PO Box 4924  
KINGSTON ACT 4924  
Australia

### **Explore our website**

We suggest you look at our website before making an inquiry. There you can:

- search for records and photographs using RecordSearch
- submit an inquiry or order copies of records
- view digital copies of some records and photographs
- browse our fact sheets and guides.

### **Our services**

There is no charge to view original records or to use research aids or computers in our research centres. We do charge for copies of records from our collection.

We will help you to identify the records from our collection that will answer your inquiries whether you visit in person or contact our National Reference Service. If your inquiry is complex or requires extensive research, we can identify records of likely relevance which you will need to research in detail. We are unable to undertake extensive research for you.

We will respond to your inquiry free of charge, whether you visit us in person or contact the National Reference Service online or by mail.

If you visit one of our research centres our reference staff will explain our services, introduce you to archival searching, help you use our databases and other research aids, and explain how to view original records or order copies.