

Memorandum of Understanding with South Australian Indigenous people

Removal of Aboriginal children began in South Australia during the 1840s with the boarding of Indigenous children at a school in Adelaide, set up by the South Australian Protector of Aborigines, Matthew Moorhouse, to instruct and 'civilise'. The practice of removal escalated in the twentieth century with thousands of Indigenous children taken away from their families and placed in government, church and mission institutions or with non-Indigenous families. Many of these children often referred to as the 'Stolen Generations' were never to return to their families and the links to their identity and communities were lost.

Aboriginal affairs in South Australia through this period was a state government responsibility and most official records relating to South Australian Indigenous people are held by the state government. References to Indigenous people in Commonwealth government records held by the National Archives are likely to be more scattered (which can make the task of locating information more difficult) and will relate to matters such as:

- employment by government agencies, such as the Commonwealth Railways
- enlistment and service with the Australian defence forces, and
- some issues of welfare and education.

In 1991 the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody recommended that all governments should assist Aboriginal people to access archival records to enable them to re-establish family and community links that were disrupted or broken as a result of past government policies (see recommendation 53). In response to this recommendation, and the 1997 Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission report, Bringing Them Home, the National Archives established a working relationship with the Link-Up program of Nunkuwarrin Yunti of South Australia Inc. and adopted arrangements to assist South Australian Indigenous people to access Commonwealth records. These arrangements are set out in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

The Memorandum of Understanding

The Memorandum of Understanding for records in the open access period by South Australian Indigenous people was signed on 11 September 2002 by the Acting Director-General of the National Archives and the Chairperson of Nunkuwarrin Yunti of South Australia. Similar memoranda relating to records of Northern Territory and Victorian Aboriginal people were signed in 1997 and 2000.

What records are available under the MOU?

The MOU sets out arrangements to assist South Australian Indigenous people, or SA Link-Up program staff working on their behalf, to access Commonwealth records in the open access period held in any office of the National Archives for the purposes of re-establishing family and community links. Sensitive personal information that would normally be exempt from public access under the Archives Act 1983 is available under the MOU to the subject of the record or, where appropriate, to family members. See *Fact Sheet 10 – Access to records under the Archives Act*.

Copies of records accessed under the MOU are provided free of charge.

This MOU does not permit access to National Archives records that are not yet in the open access period or to records of the South Australian government. A separate MOU between State Records SA, the South Australian government archives authority, and Nunkuwarrin Yunti sets out the arrangements for access to state government records.

Applying for access

Indigenous people, or their agents, seeking access to records under the MOU must first contact SA Link-Up staff at Nunkuwarrin Yunti. Before access to records is granted, the MOU requires that a referral letter from SA Link-Up be sent to the National Archives.

National Archives' staff will deal sensitively with Indigenous researchers.

Further information

South Australian Indigenous people seeking access to records under this MOU should contact either of the following:

The Reference Officer

National Archives of Australia SA Office
State Library of South Australia
Corner North Terrace and Kintore Avenue
Adelaide SA 5000
Tel: (08) 9470 7580

Link-Up South Australia
Nunkuwarrin Yunti of South Australia Inc.
182–190 Wakefield Street
ADELAIDE SA 5000
Tel: (08) 8406 1600

Similar MOUs for South Australian Indigenous people have been adopted between Nunkuwarrin Yunti and the Lutheran Church Archives, the South Australian Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, the State Library of South Australia and State Records of South Australia. For further information about the records these memoranda make available, please contact either the SA Link-Up program (above) or one of the following:

The Archivist

The Lutheran Archives

27 Fourth Street
BOWDEN SA 5007
Tel: (08) 8340 4009
Email: lutheran.archives@lca.org.au

The Registrar

Births, Deaths & Marriages Registration Office

4-6 Chesser Street
ADELAIDE SA 5000
Tel: 131 882

Special Programs Officer

State Library of South Australia

Corner North Terrace and Kintore Avenue
ADELAIDE SA 5000
Tel: (08) 7242 6300
Toll free for regional SA: 1800 182 013
Email: slsainfo@sa.gov.au

Aboriginal Access Team

State Records of South Australia

115 Cavan Road
GEPPS CROSS SA 5094
Tel: (08) 8343 6800
Email: staterecords@sa.gov.au

For further information about National Archives holdings relating to Indigenous people see:

- *Fact sheet 112 - Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody*
- *Fact sheet 113 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*
- *Fact sheet 114 - Memorandum of Understanding with Northern Territory Aboriginal people*
- *Fact sheet 175 - Bringing Them Home name index*
- *Fact sheet 205 - Memorandum of Understanding with the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency*