

**Submission  
No 5**

**INQUIRY INTO STATE RECORDS ACT 1998 AND THE  
POLICY PAPER ON ITS REVIEW**

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## **Inquiry into the State Records Act 1998 and the Policy Paper on its review**

Submission

Virginia Macleod (Professional Historian)

31 March 2020

Standing Committee on Social Issues inquiry into and report on the State Records Act 1998(NSW).

Hon Shayne Mallard MLC, (Chair)

*The Policy Paper proposes the merging of the State Archives and Sydney Living Museums to “optimise the delivery of rich, heterogeneous stories about our social, historical and cultural identity to enliven current and future generations”.*

The merging of these two organisations at some levels is appropriate as has already been achieved with shared staff in finance, human resources and information technology. However, the core work, as opposed to the administrative management of State Records is very different in kind to that of Sydney Living Museums.

NSW history certainly embraces the social, environmental, political, ideological, cultural, economic, financial and other spheres. It informs our identity too. But it is not a set of ‘stories.’

If NSW History is really to be fostered and enjoyed it would be more effective to inaugurate a State Historian, as has been the case in South Australia for example.

*It is proposed to have one board, and committees underneath the board with statutory responsibilities.*

It appears that the State Records committee will be independent in its actions concerning disposal and acquisition of records and that Sydney Living Museums will be a committee with less independence. Each will have one representative to the Board. If the aim of this review is to better support NSW history, then it is important to have historians on the Board. History is not mere ‘telling our stories’ but involves an appreciation of access, research, significance, context and interpretation.

It is essential to detail the number of representatives on the Board and the knowledge and skills they are expected to bring to its deliberations.

I remain unconvinced that this merger will foster better appreciation of NSW history, although it seems that the State Records need increased funding and powers to ensure efficient acquisition and management of NSW government records – essential to researching and understanding the state’s history.

Yours sincerely

Virginia Macleod