

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

Organisation: Museums and Galleries of NSW

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Museums & Galleries of NSW

7th April 2020

The Hon Shayne Mallard MLC
Chair, Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Chair,

REVIEW OF THE STATE RECORDS ACT 1998 & HISTORIC HOUSES ACT 1980

Museums & Galleries of NSW (M&G NSW) appreciates the opportunity to submit our support on the proposed policy outcomes that are under consideration as part of the review of the *State Records Act 1998* and *Historic Houses Act 1980*. Overall, we feel that they are practical proposals that will achieve better outcomes for the NSW cultural landscape, if properly implemented.

M&G NSW is an organisation that helps small to medium museums, galleries and Aboriginal cultural centres create exciting experiences for visitors and, through this, thriving local communities across NSW.

We have worked with both Sydney Living Museums (SLM) and the NSW State Archives and Records Authority (SARA) in the past to support regional museums and galleries through our mentoring and internship programs, amongst other things. Over a number of years now SLM has partnered with, and supported, M&G NSW across a range of activities and outreach.

In essence we facilitate connections across the NSW museums and galleries community, as a way of growing capacity, expertise, resourcing, opportunities and engagement and this is at the core of how we have assessed and respond to, the policy proposals at hand.

M&G NSW is supportive of proposed policy outcomes one to three as identified in the policy paper. The common thread between these proposals is a clear view towards increasing public accessibility, use and enjoyment of the records, collections, assets and history of the State.

The options for reform, including the proposal to default records in the open access period to open, and decrease the closed to access period from 30 years to 20 years are in line with the many other jurisdictions that have looked to contemporise their recordkeeping practices.

The SARA collection is an important resource for museums and galleries across the State. The Collection is growing continuously and is regularly accessed by museum staff and others for exhibitions, education content, public programs, research and artistic collaborations. The improvement of access to this Collection will be a positive outcome for the people of NSW, both directly and indirectly, through the value this will bring the cultural sector.

M&G NSW also strongly supports policy outcome four, the proposal to create a single institution with the remit currently vested in SARA and SLM through the *State Records Act 1998* and *Historic Houses Act 1980*. We are aware that this proposal will largely serve to formalise SLM and SARA's current administrative partnership under a joint Executive Director. From the outset of SLM and SARA's partnership in July 2019, we have been alert to the prospect of the increased capacity the joining of these two entities will bring.

Both SLM and SARA bring enormous value and resources to the wider NSW cultural landscape, both through their internal capacity and skill sets, as well as their external outputs. From the perspective of M&G NSW, one of the key areas of potential will be the new institutions' combined capacity to produce and support cultural activation in regional NSW. SARA's exhibition *Captured: Portraits of Crime, 1870 – 1930* and SLM's *Marion Hall Best: Interiors* are both currently touring museums and cultural institutions regionally.

Touring exhibitions such as these add value to the existing capacity of regional institutions that do not always have the internal capacity or resourcing to regularly produce original curatorial content. Through the joining of SARA and SLM's assets and knowhow, we see that the capacity of the new institution will approach the existing expertise and profile of MAAS and other State Cultural Institutions, to provide even more content and support to storytelling throughout NSW.

The inevitable need to rebrand and name the new institution also represents a clear opportunity for growth and the potential to build new audiences, allowing this new entity over time to engage more meaningfully with the people of NSW about their history.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this submission with you further, please do not hesitate to make contact.

Yours sincerely

Michael Rolfe
CEO Museums & Galleries of NSW