

**Supplementary  
Submission  
No 9a**

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

**Name:** Lucinda Hughes Turnbull AO

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Lucy Turnbull AO

8 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**

I am pleased to provide this additional, supplementary submission to the Committee, relating to the inquiry *State Records Act 1998* and the Policy Paper on its review. This should be read in conjunction with the submission made on Monday 6 April.

I am fully supportive of the review and the policy proposals. The creation of a new institution devoted to making history relevant in a contemporary setting is exactly what is needed in this state and the assets under the care of the current Sydney Living Museums and NSW State Archives would make the stories that the proposed institution could tell relevant on a national and international stage.

Below are additional reflections on some of the individual policy outcomes.

**Policy Outcome Two: Records of enduring value to the citizens of NSW are managed, preserved and made accessible**

*Identified option for reform: Public offices will be required to make and implement plans to transfer records of enduring value that are no longer in active business use to the State Archives Collection.*

The proposed new institution is, above all else, a memory institution. Combined, it would hold a vast collection of diverse records, objects, maps, buildings, plans, toys, models, clothing, textiles, modernist interior designs, wallpapers, ephemera and items in many other formats. These items tell stories and can be used to create entry points into history, a history that is complicated, contested and important.

It is essential that the new institution has the power to grow its Archival and built asset collection in order to tell stories of contemporary relevance.

**Policy Outcome Three: Citizens have timely access to records documenting the activities and decisions that shape NSW and the lives of its citizens**

*Identified option for reform: Records in the open access period will be open by default, unless the public office that is responsible for the records makes a 'closed to public access' (CPA) direction. The assessment could be based on a risk assessment, as is the case under the current provisions.*

Access is the best proxy measure for public value. Without it there is no sense in keeping these Collections. Wherever possible, and safe, access should be prioritised.

*Identified option for reform: The open access period will be reduced to 20 years in line with other jurisdictions and citizen expectations. This change could be phased in over a period of time and an implementation approach will be informed by consultation with Public Offices.*

As above, access is extremely important to democracy, to allow discovery of heritage, history, society, culture, justice, practice, ritual and connect us with the lessons of the past. I am fully supportive of this change.

**Policy Outcome Four: A single institution will act as custodian of the documentary and built history of NSW**

*Identified option for reform: A single Executive Agency will be responsible for collecting, managing, preserving and providing public access to government records, objects, buildings and places of historic, social, cultural and architectural interest and/or significance to the people of NSW. This institution will replace the existing Authority and Sydney Living Museums.*

This is a brave proposal, one that has my full support. The asset portfolio of Sydney Living Museums and NSW State Archives, when placed together, would be the envy of most cultural organisations. The potential for storytelling, display and cultural programming is infinite. Archival practice, collection management and conservation would all benefit by the creation of a larger executive agency. At the moment, though, despite every effort by these institutions, their assets are underutilised.

I am very happy to support the policy proposals outlined in this inquiry. Having been involved in many cultural institutions I look forward to the creation of a new institution that can realise the full potential of connecting us with history and helping to revive the historic Macquarie Street to create an historic precinct of world leading quality.

Yours sincerely,

Lucy Turnbull AO