

**Submission  
No 20**

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

**Name:** Anne Henderson AM

**Date Received:** 8 April 2020

---

SUBMISSION TO THE PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY INTO THE STATE RECORDS ACT 1998  
AND THE HISTORIC HOUSES ACT 1980 – ANNE HENDERSON AM

I understand that the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Social Issues has accepted advice from the Hon Don Harwin MLC, Special Minister of State, and Minister for the Public Service and Employee Relations, Aboriginal Affairs, and the Arts has agreed to an inquiry into the State Records Act 1998 and the Historic Houses Act 1980. And that submissions are invited.

I would like therefore to submit some observations.

1. Archives and Records collections hold untold opportunities not only for research and custodianship of national stories and legacies but, globally, also illustrate a variety of ways to manage and present collections and to exploit the personalities and natural advantages of situation and resources in a climate of austerity and financial challenges. While welcoming the merging of The State Archives and Records Authority of NSW and Sydney Living Museums as potentially a step forward for both authorities, I would caution those in charge to note that Sydney Living Museums involves a high level of finance for maintenance of aging physical assets the cost of which should not be permitted to deplete the already strained financial resources of the State Archives where expenditure is less easily demonstrated as essential. I would not want the merger to become one where the Archives is, in any sense, further pushed into secondary attention.

2. In my time as the Chair of the State Archives and Records Authority of NSW (2012-18), it became clear that an audit of departments and their obligations under the State Records Act was needed. In any changes to the Act, there should be not only clear and binding regulations to all departments in regard to the archiving of government records but also an unequivocal process for those obligations to be monitored and ensured.

3. Also in my time as Chair of the State Archives, it was noticeable that a state wide appreciation of the work of the State Archives was lacking. I am sure that with the benefits of a merger with Sydney Living Museums there should be abundant opportunities to facilitate a wider understanding of the work of the Archives by bringing this closer to the general public. However, the 85 linear kilometres of items dating from 1787 with a value of around \$1 billion that make up the State Archive of NSW is not simply a resource for stories. This collection is the legacy of the people of NSW, its connection with its past and the foundation for its future. In a world increasingly digital, there must be a recognition that far greater financial resources will be needed to make this repository accessible to the people it belongs to. I would suggest that an appropriate proportion of funding - perhaps by way of formula - should be written into the new Act to ensure this can be achieved.

Anne Henderson AM  
8 April 2020