

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

**Name:** Name suppressed

**Date Received:** 9 April 2020

---

Partially  
Confidential

## SUBMISSION TO THE REVIEW ON THE STATE RECORDS ACT 1998

I am a professional consulting historian with prolonged and deep experience of using the State Archives. I have been using the archives since 1978 so I have seen numerous changes in how the Archives has been managed and staffed. All of the books and reports I have prepared since that time have incorporated materials from State Archives.

I do not wish to make a detailed submission regarding the review. In many ways the objects of the review are commendable. However, I doubt whether the amalgamation of the State Archives and Records Authority of New South Wales with Sydney Living Museums is warranted. Both organisations have different perspectives and philosophies.

The review notes that the Archives Authority does not have ‘a mandate to deliver programs to activate the collection and lacks a dedicated space in which to tell these stories’ (page 3). That claim shows profound ignorance of what the Archives Authority has been doing in the way of exhibitions at its Kingswood repository as well as online.

The Archives Authority certainly lacks a dedicated space in which to display the collection. Yet it has been remarkably successful in using the limited space at its disposal to promote and display its collection. Page 5 of the review claims that combining the two organisations ‘would optimise the delivery of rich, heterogeneous stories about our social, historical and cultural identity to enliven current and future generations’. This claim is not proven but is simply an assertion of what might happen.

The skills to promote and display the State Archives collection already exist amongst Archives staff but should be enhanced by better funding and additional staffing in order to bring about those outcomes. Even more crucially, enhanced funding and staffing would ensure that much more of the archival collection would be made accessible to the general public. That rather than a concentration on exhibitions should be the core aim rather than reviewing the State Records Act 1998, in order to tell ‘rich, heterogeneous stories about our social, historical and cultural identity’ by combining two cultural organisations under a single administrative umbrella.

Retaining the State Archives and Records Authority of New South Wales as an independent authority with better funding and staffing would be a far better way of achieving the stated aims of the review than combining the State Archives and Records Authority of New South Wales with Sydney Living Museums.