

**Submission
No 30**

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

Organisation: NSW & ACT Association of Family History Societies Inc

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Parliamentary Standing Committee on Social Issues

Submission to Review of State Records Act 1998

The NSW & ACT Association of Family History Societies Inc represents over sixty family history societies (and other organisations concerned with family history). You would be aware the family history is probably the largest non-sporting recreational activity, especially amongst the growing community of retirees. Family history societies play a role in educating family historians in their research practices, especially encouraging the use of original sources wherever possible. The Association assists by representing the societies and coordinating the organisation of an annual conference, to which the State Archives frequently contributes speakers.

I have been on the Association's management committee for a number of years. I am a retired professional archivist (having worked at the National Archives in Canberra, Westpac Banking Corporation in Sydney, and the World Bank in Washington DC), and am a Fellow of the Australian Society of Archivists.

On behalf of the Association, I would like to bring the following points to your attention.

Merging State Archives and Sydney Living Museums as a single institution

While the proposed merger would make it easier to provide opportunities for the delivery of compelling, heterogeneous stories about our social, historical and cultural identity to enrich the lives of current and future generations, it should always be remembered that the history and culture of the State and its people can survive (albeit reduced) without the collections (including buildings) of Sydney Living Museums, but not without the State's archival collections.

Public Access to Archives

The proposal to reduce the period at which archives become available for public access from 30 years to years (as has been done with Commonwealth archives) is most welcome. The proposal to make records in the open access period open by default, i.e. unless subject to a 'closed to public access' (CPA) direction by the responsible public office, is also welcome. However, the ability of public offices to make a CPA direction should be subject to a defined set of conditions (such as those set out for Commonwealth records in Section 33 of the Commonwealth Archives Act).

Yours sincerely

Clive Smith