

**Submission  
No 58**

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

**Organisation:** Sydney Opera House

**Date Received:** 30 April 2020

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**Sydney Opera House submission to the  
inquiry into the *State Records Act 1998* and the Policy Paper on its review**

The Sydney Opera House appreciates the opportunity to provide input into the inquiry into the *State Records Act 1998* (the Act). Entrusted with the care and custodianship of one of the State's greatest cultural assets, the Opera House's mission is twofold:

- To treasure and renew the Opera House for future generations of artists, audiences and visitors;
- To inspire, and strengthen the community, through everything we do.

The Opera House considers there are policy, strategic and practical opportunities from the proposed reforms to the Act, which will deepen the community's understanding of and engagement with our State's cultural heritage and collective identity.

In particular, the Opera House supports:

- **Combining the State Records and Archives Authority and Sydney Living Museums into a single institution to deepen storytelling opportunities and optimise the connections between documentary and built heritage.**

This approach would enable effective and efficient operations through an integrated strategic direction and streamlined administration. It would support the entity to meet the challenges of caring for/conserving buildings, objects and archives and enhancing the programming and interpretation of the State's records for the people of NSW.

Importantly, the Opera House considers there would be significant opportunities to deepen collaboration, partnership and storytelling with this entity and the broader group of NSW Cultural Institutions.

- **Changes in the records management framework, acknowledging the value of effective record keeping in our understanding and interpretation of our cultural assets and heritage.**

As Australia matures as a nation, there is a growing public interest in stories that speak of the heritage that has shaped our identity. The Opera House, as a performing arts centre and State, National and World Heritage listed site, is committed to telling these stories online and onsite. The effective and lasting management of Opera House (and other State) records is critical to future generations understanding and interpreting the role and significance of our past as a means to addressing the future.

The Opera House considers the proposed changes to the Act will support this important work. In particular, the Opera House welcomes the focus on digital technologies in records management, and sees significant opportunities to leverage its existing programming and engagement with local, regional, national and international audiences to expand access to important online archives and content.

For example, in 2019 the Opera House publically exhibited the original stage curtains in the Joan Sutherland Theatre and Drama Theatre, John Coburn's large-scale tapestries, *Curtain of the Sun* and the *Curtain of the Moon*. This was accompanied by two onsite interpretative exhibitions, and a range of digital content, including videos, articles, social media posts and Google Arts & Culture (GAC) exhibits. The GAC exhibits will remain online permanently, ensuring free public access to this extensive archival material for years to come. This type of project provides the community with a richer, deeper experience of the meaning and significance of the place.

**For more information, please contact:**

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