



The Friends of South Australia's Archives Inc Newsletter

#78

August 2021

News from the National Archives

Tune Review

At the March meeting of the National Archives of Australia (NAA) South Australian Consultative Forum, the main item on the agenda was the outcome of the Tune Review. This Review had been authorised in April 2019 and was released in March 2021 with 20 recommendations. There had been over 100 submissions to the Tune Review, with the main themes being: time taken for researchers to get access to records; lack of or cost of digitisation; and the lack of description on records.

Nick Gleghorn, Director of the South Australian State Office of the NAA, summarised the main recommendations of the Tune Review report, but emphasised that there had been no government response at that time. The Tune Review emphasised the important role of archives and recommended significant changes which would require substantial funding. One of the recommendations of the Tune Review was for the *Archives Act 1983* to be updated to reflect the changes in technology which have occurred over the last four decades. Another recommendation was that the NAA and its state branches need greater authority to proactively ensure that government agencies manage their records appropriately. Of particular significance are the 'sheer and growing volume of government digital records' which represent a 'major risk for managing government archives'. Nick Gleghorn informed the March meeting of the SA Consultative Forum that by the next meeting he would have more information on how the Tune Review recommendations would be addressed and what the government response might be.

Relocation of South Australia's NAA Archival Material

The next SA Consultative Forum meeting was to have been held in August, but was brought forward to 14 July 2021. Nick Gleghorn explained that this was to provide the NAA's response to the Tune Review and to address the discussions regarding NAA funding which had recently appeared in the media (see page 2). Of particular pertinence to those of us with an interest in South Australia's archival holdings was the proposal that the NAA records currently held at the Collinswood repository in Adelaide will be relocated to Canberra. The NAA lease on the Collinswood repository expires in October 2021, and to minimise property leases as part of cost-saving measures, the NAA has decided to not renew this lease. The NAA's South Australian collection will almost entirely be transferred to a storage facility in Canberra, where a centralised digitisation hub is to be established. Centralised digitisation on an industrial scale was presented as an efficiency measure for the NAA. The meeting was assured that the NAA South Australian State branch and its staff would be maintained, with a focus on reference enquiries, public engagement, and outreach.

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Those attending the meeting expressed grave concern at the proposed removal of the State's NAA archival material to Canberra. Participants requested that material be digitised before the move, but NAA representatives emphasised the efficiencies of centralised digitisation on an industrial scale. Discussions turned to record description prior to relocation, and the fear that South Australian material would be neglected as records from other states were progressively relocated to Canberra. Those attending the meeting were assured that the digitisation of South Australian resources would be a priority as soon as a digitisation Hub was established in Sandford Street, Canberra.

In response to this announcement, a letter to David Fricker, Director General, National Archives of Australia, was prepared by the History Council of South Australia and the Friends of South Australia's Archives, and was co-signed by representatives of Genealogy SA, Professional Historians (SA), and South Australia's Working Party for ADB. A copy of this letter, and the reply from David Fricker, are included in this newsletter. If you would like to examine the report of the Tune Review, an overview of the review is available through the NAA website: <www.naa.gov.au/about-us/tune-review>, and the full Tune Review report is available here: <www.ag.gov.au/rights-and-protections/publications/tune-review>.

NAA Funding

The Tune Review recommended that the NAA be allocated \$67.7 million as part of a 7-year plan, with these funds specifically allocated to at-risk collection items such as AV material. The underlying issues relating to funding the NAA has been raised as a matter for serious public concern. A concise summary of the situation has been provided by the Royal Historical Society of Victoria <www.historyvictoria.org.au/the-national-archives-of-australia-struggles-to-protect-our-heritage/>. An 'Open Letter to the Prime Minister', signed by supporters of the NAA is available here: <<https://historycouncilsa.org.au/app/uploads/2021/06/Open-Letter.pdf>>. The issue of ongoing funding has received attention in the media, such as Gideon Haigh's article in *The Weekend Australian* on 12 June 2021, '[Funding threat exposes nation's memory to dementia](#)', and Judith Brett's contribution to *The Conversation* on 16 June 2021, '[In neglecting the National Archives, the Morrison government turns its back on the future](#)'.

In response to the Tune Review, FSAA President, Jack Cross and FSAA Secretary, Andrew Peake, composed a letter which was sent to twenty-two South Australian Members of Parliament on 25 June 2021. A copy of this letter is provided on page 3. On 1 July 2021, Attorney General Michaelia Cash announced that the NAA will receive \$67.7 million in government funding, but that these funds are to address four measures:

1. Digitisation of at-risk records in the collection
2. Consolidation of storage and the establishment of digital hub at Mitchell repository in Canberra.
3. Development of information management policy and agency capability with focus on addressing declassification backlog
4. Preservation and security of collection with emphasis on cyber security

Letters of reply were received by the Friends of South Australia's Archives from three Members of Parliament: James Stevens MP, Federal Member for Sturt; and South Australia Senators David Fawcett and Marrielle Smith. The Friend's also received phone calls from the offices of South Australian Senators Simon Birmingham and Steve Georganas. The Members of Parliament acknowledged the import role of archives in 'protecting and preserving government records' crucial to the maintenance of Australia's history. The South Australian MPs were able to refer to the Attorney General's announcement from 1 July 2021 and emphasised the issues to be addressed by this funding allocation. It needs to be acknowledged that Government response to the Tune Review has not yet been received, and that this allocation does not address the ongoing financial sustainability of the NAA.

FSA Letter to South Australian Members of Parliament

The Friends of South Australia's Archives Inc.

14 Tudor Street
Dulwich SA 5065

25 June 2021

To SA Senators and MHRs for SA

National Archives of Australia

We are writing as President and Secretary of the Friends of South Australia's Archives Inc. (FSSA).

FSSA was formed in 1996, its aim being to:

1. Encourage the preservation of historical records,
2. Assist the keepers of public and private archives in SA, and
3. Represent the concerns of users of archives.

Our membership includes archivists, historians and interested members of the general public. The organisation thus brings together the custodians and users of historical records.

We wish to raise with you the parlous state of funding through the National Budget of the National Archives of Australia.

The Friends are following up on an Open Letter to the Prime Minister on the 10th June, signed by over 150 authors, historians and public identities. The Open Letter was followed up by a feature article by Gideon Haigh in the *Weekend Australian* of 12-13 June, 'Funding threat to the memory of our nation'. The National Archives has been the first port of call for current day Australians seeking to find out about the service record of their family members in the First and more recently Second World War. The same applies to descendants of post-war immigrants. The latter records in particular are spread out amongst the various state branches of the NAA, making them readily accessible to local families.

We welcome the comprehensive review of the function and efficiency of the archives conducted by Mr. David Tune and endorse his incisive analysis of the challenges now facing NAA. He shows beyond doubt that large parts of the collection, including fragile and irreplaceable film and paper records, are in imminent danger of disintegration and urgently require investment in conservation and preservation work.

Successive cuts in the form of 'efficiency dividends' have seriously welcomed the National Archives' capacity to undertake this essential work. Even the routine work of retrieving and clearing records for researchers has been compromised to the point that researchers can no longer undertake projects based on the archives with the confidence that the records will become available within any time frame.

The National Archives is one of Australia's premier cultural institutions. It has always enjoyed the support of governments of both persuasions. In 2011 its reputation as an international leader in digital record keeper and preservation (e.g. First World War service records) was recognized by UNESCO with the prestigious Memory of the World Prize. Mr. Tune helpfully identified the needed works and cost offsets that will allow the archives to 'stay contemporary in the digital age'.

The Friends were therefore very disappointed, that in a budget that increased the funding of other national institutions, and made very large investments in the expansion of one of them, the Australian War Memorial, no allocation, even of interim funding, was made for the National Archives of Australia.

Closer to home, the Friends have been disturbed to discover that there is a move, once again, to close the South Australian branch (and possibly most other state branches), and centralise records to NSW and Canberra. The Friends lobbied the Federal Government in 2001 against downsizing the SA Branch, and the removal of significant records to interstate repositories. At that time, for example, SA bankruptcy records went to Perth (where's the logic in this?), and World War One pay files went to Canberra. More recently in 2009-10, the responsible minister, moved to close the SA, Tasmania and NT Branches. After a concerted public campaign that unpopular and short-sighted proposal was abandoned.

On Federation, SA handed over to the Commonwealth all its colonial records, in those areas taken over by the Federal Government. This invaluable archival resource must remain readily accessible in the place where it was created.

According the Friends call upon you to express our strong support for : -

- interim funding in order that essential conservation work as recommended by the Tune Review proceed, and.
- Ensure that the National Archives of Australia continues to have a physical presence in this state, in order that all South Australians can readily access their cultural heritage.

Yours sincerely,

Jack Cross AM
President FSSA

Andrew Peake OAM
Secretary FSSA

Letter to Mr David Fricker, Director General of NAA

History Council of South Australia Inc.

GPO Box 680G
Halifax Street
Adelaide SA 5000

Friends of South Australia's Archives

C/- 14 Tudor Street
Dulwich SA 5065

27 July 2021

Director General
National Archives of Australia
PO 4925
Kingston ACT 2604

Dear Mr Fricker

The attached letter has been prepared by the History Council of South Australia and the Friends of South Australia's Archives, representatives of whom were present at the Consultative Forum. It has been co-signed by the Presidents or representatives of Genealogy SA, Professional Historians SA and Chair, SA Working Party for ADB, the pre-eminent historical societies in South Australia. Signatures are rather messy, as they have had to be signed, scanned and forwarded, but they are all genuine, prepared while South Australia has been in COVID-19 state lock-down.

We would greatly appreciate your response to our concerns and suggestions.

Yours faithfully

A G Peake OAM
Secretary
Friends of South Australia's Archives

21 July 2021

Mr David Fricker
Director General, National Archives of Australia
PO Box 4924 Kingston ACT 2604

Dear Mr Fricker,

Proposed out-of-state transfer of South Australian collections

A meeting of the NAA's South Australian Consultative Forum on Wednesday 14 July was informed of the proposed imminent closure of the NAA's Adelaide repository at Collingswood and the transfer of almost all the documents which it currently houses to an as yet undetermined site in the ACT or NSW.

The current proposal seems reminiscent of the failed attempt at interstate relocation of SA records in 2008-9, opposed in part because an earlier transfer of holdings had not been properly documented, hence significantly reduced public access. However, we also learnt that it is now the NAA's intention to accord high priority to the digitisation of these collections, so eventually making them accessible for consultation anywhere, while also maintaining a NAA State Office in South Australia.

Although there may be grounds to question the role which a State Office could fulfil when it has very few physical records in its care, the concept of providing digital access to all SA archival material currently held by NAA is very attractive. At the same time, the organizations of archivists, genealogists and historians which we represent are apposed in principle to any NAA records leaving this State until they are both itemised and digitised.

We understand that it may be more efficient to conduct much of the digital conversion process at the NAA facility in Canberra, which is currently being readied for operation. If so, we would suggest that a formal commitment from NAA to ensure all documents transferred from SA are itemised and digitised within 12 months of their removal would help to overcome the opposition which the current proposal is likely to encounter from our respective memberships, their interstate counterparts, and the concerned general public.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Skye Krichauff, President, History Council of SA

Ms Sue Lear, President, Genealogy SA

Dr Jack Cross AM, President, Friends of SA Archives

Dr Caroline Adams, President, Professional Historians SA

Dr Catherine Kevin, SA Working Party for ADB

Reply from Mr David Fricker, Director General of NAA



NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF AUSTRALIA

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

Our reference: Number R675412021

6/8/2021

Andrew G Peake, OAM
Secretary
Friends of the SA Archives
Via email agpeake@gmail.com>

Dear Mr Peake

Thank you for your correspondence of 27 July 2021 regarding changes to the National Archives' South Australian operations.

I can confirm these changes include the relocation of the records currently located in the ageing Collinswood Repository to the recently refurbished high standard repository located in Mitchell in the ACT. This change also includes proactive digitisation of significant and high use records in the South Australian collection.

As you will be aware, the Australian Government recently announced \$67.7m in funding to enable the digitisation of the most at-risk records in the collection, ensuring they are preserved and accessible for future generations of Australians. Furthermore, the funding has provided the National Archives with the capability to upscale its Digital Archive, accelerate the declassification of closed government records, and make more of its collection available to all Australians through digital service delivery channels.

The National Archives has considered the most efficient and effective means of digitising records from the South Australian collection and this will, as you say, be best undertaken through our soon to be completed digitisation hub. This new facility will be co-located with the repository holding the South Australian records in the ACT.

The South Australian state office staff are currently working with the South Australian Consultative Forum members to identify records for priority digitisation.

I anticipate the digitisation hub will commence operations in October of this year, subject to the outcome of procurement processes.

I recognise the importance of providing access to the records currently in the South Australian collection so hand in hand with this proactive digitisation is a new arrangement for free access to records to be provided digitally in the National Archives' South Australian research centre. This will be an extension of our current digitisation on demand service.

Whilst it is not practical or feasible to pro-actively digitise the entire South Australian collection, the new funding allocated by the Government will enable the provision of free digitisation on demand services, making the material more discoverable and easily accessible to all South Australians, and more broadly across Australia.

I also note that the National Archives will continue to have a physical presence in South Australia, providing a full range of services to the public to assist in the identification, retrieval and access to records, while maintaining its active schedule of public engagement programs.

Thank you for your interest in the operations of the National Archives and your colleagues continued support for our activities in South Australia.

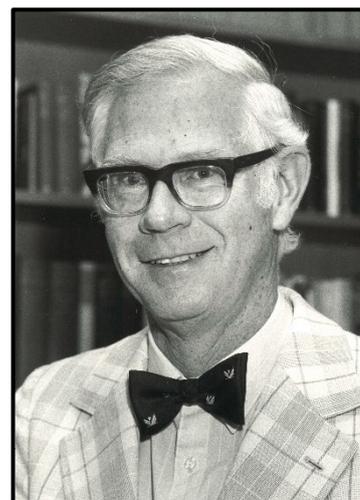
Kind regards,
David Fricker

Obituary

Peter Anthony Howell

25 Dec 1938 – 5 Mar 2021

Peter Howell was born on Christmas Day, 1938, at the La Trobe Hospital. He grew up in Tasmania where he initially studied medicine, but when he couldn't stomach the smell of formaldehyde to preserve cadavers, he transferred to history. He graduated with a BA (Hons) (1962) and MA (1966) by thesis entitled, 'The Boothby Case'. He won a scholarship to Cambridge University where he gained a PhD by thesis entitled, 'The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, 1833-1867'. In 1973 he also gained a Licentiate of Music (1963) and was a competent player of the piano and organ.



He was appointed lecturer in history at Flinders University in 1968, senior lecturer in history in 1973, promoted to University Reader in 1993, appointed acting head and then Head of History Discipline 1988-90. He retired as an Associate Professor in 1999. Some of his literary output includes: *The Office of Governor of South Australia* (1995), *South Australia's contribution to the making of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia* (1995) *South Australia and Federation* (2002), *South Australia's Foundation: Select Documents* (with Brian Dickey) (1986)

He joined the SA Working Party of the Australian Dictionary of Biography in 1974 and remained a member until this year. He became chair of the working party in 1998, and section editor for South Australia. That year he also became a member of the ADB Editorial Board. He retained all these roles until 2018. He authored 41 ADB articles and had four published in the most recent volume 19. For his exemplary service to the ADB he was awarded the prestigious ADB medal in 2017.

Peter was a foundation member of the Historical Society of SA, Councillor 1974-78, president in 1979, and a regular contributor to its annual Journal. He was a member of the Jubilee 150 Board for the Sesquicentenary of SA in 1986 and a member of the SA Council of the Bicentennial Authority from 1981 (he was the only historian on both of these bodies) and the SA Constitutional Advisory Council 1995. At the end of his life, he was also on the Committee of the Friends of South Australia's Archives.

At the funeral service he was described as a man of many parts and many interests, a 'renaissance man', with three pillars - his faith, his family and history.

AG Peake

Archives Amplified 2021 Conference



The Archives Amplified 2021 Conference of the Australian Society of Archivists will be held from 14 to 17 September 2021 online and at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre on Grey Street in South Brisbane on the traditional lands of the Turrbal and Yuggera people. The themes of the Archives Amplified 2021 Conference are 'Connect, Challenge, Reimagine', and participants are asked, 'How do we 'amplify' archives in a disrupted world?'. For details about the conference, visit [2021 Archives Amplified Conference](https://www.archivists.org.au/conference/conference) <www.archivists.org.au/conference/conference> #ArchivesAmplified.

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Newsletter Contributions

Contributions to the Newsletter are most welcome. The Newsletter Editor can be contacted through Heidi Ing, email: heidi.ing@flinders.edu.au. It is acknowledged that this is the first newsletter of the Friends of South Australia's Archives to be released in 2021. The editor apologises for this lapse. Unfortunately, an ongoing illness and death in the immediate family led to this neglect of duty.

The FSAA and the editor do not hold themselves responsible for statements made or opinions expressed by authors of the papers published in this newsletter. No article or item may be reproduced without written approval.



George Cockburn Henderson (1870-1944), Professor of History, Adelaide University (1902-1923) was largely responsible for the establishment of South Australia's first archival office in 1920.