

The Friends of South Australia's Archives Inc Newsletter

#79

December 2021



Secretarial Report

This Annual Report has been prepared by the Friends' Secretary, rather than President, Emeritus Professor Jack Cross. Unfortunately, Jack was admitted to hospital about a month ago and is now in respite care. While the initial reason for his admission to hospital was resolved, other health issues have emerged leading to alternative residential care.

As we all know 2020-21 has been a year over-shadowed by the COVID-19 pandemic, with uncertainty with lock-downs and problems with travelling both within the state and regularly interstate. However, on the positive side, we have not had to cancel any meetings due to lock-downs, although it has not been possible to hold an annual visit. The Committee met on four occasions, September (2020), February, April, and June (2021).

Access to Section 42 Packets Under the Real Property Act

Our primary pre-occupation has been access to Section 42 packets created under the Real Property Act (1858). Under this legislation, packets of property documents used to justify a new title under the Torrens Title System, are embargoed except to current owners of the land, or with their express permission. While this provision may well have been justified at the time, these often pre-1858 documents are now historic and should be available for research, without the need for permission from current owners. A letter was written to the Attorney General, to which she replied as follows,

While applications to bring land under the provisions of the Real Property Act 1886 (the RPA) generally date back to the 19th century, the Registrar General has continued to receive applications in this regard (albeit in reduced numbers) since that time. I agree that providing access to the subject records, particularly the earliest of them would be to the public benefit if made available to persons carrying out historical research for public purposes. However, consideration must also be given to the privacy of the more recent applications. ... Your suggestion has been forwarded to the Registrar-General for consideration when the RPA is next reviewed.

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The Committee intends to seek an audience with the Registrar-General, to see whether a compromise could be considered, e.g., access to material (packets) older than a hundred years old.

Relocation of South Australia's NAA Records

Our second major issue has been the records held by the South Australian Branch of the National Archives of Australia and their removal to Canberra, leaving an office in Adelaide but virtually no records! The Friends wrote to all South Australian members of the Federal Parliament, both Senators and House of Representatives. The letter went out on 25 June 2021, protesting about the parlous funding of the National Archives and closure of the South Australian repository of the NAA. However, a week later the Federal Government announced funding of \$67.7 million. This took the wind out of our sails and the second issue, namely removal of records from the SA Branch, did not receive much notice. We received half a dozen replies, however the closure of the SA Branch repository was a fait accompli. All that the South Australian history community could do was lobby for the description and itemization of South Australian material and digital access to the material once it had gone to Canberra.

The Friends continue to produce an informative Newsletter and I want to acknowledge the contribution of Heidi Ing in editing the Newsletter. I also wish to acknowledge the commitment of my fellow committee members, Sandra Kearney, Heidi Ing, Wilf Prest, and Jack Cross who has chaired the Committee for many years. During the year, Emeritus Professor Peter Howell passed away. An obituary for Peter appeared in the Friend's Newsletter and his contribution to history in South Australia was also recognized with an obituary in the Adelaide Advertiser. Archivist Ian Sutherland has joined the Committee.

Andrew Peake,
Secretary, Friends of South Australia's Archives.

FSAA Annual General Meeting 2021

The Annual General Meeting of The Friends of South Australia's Archives was held on Wednesday, 28th October 2020 at 6pm in the Hurtle Room of the Box Factory Community Centre.

Present for the meeting were Andrew Peake, Roger Andre, Margrette Kleinig, Lee Amoroso, Peter Crush, Bernard O'Neil, Sandra Kearney, Wilfrid Prest



Apologies were received from Margaret Birtley, Frances Bedford MP, Heidi Ing, Yianni Cartledge, Robin Radford, Michael Treloar, and Jack Cross.

Minutes of the previous AGM had been circulated via email and were accepted. In the absence of the President, who was in poor health, the Secretary Andrew Peake presented a Secretarial Report for the year 2020–2021. The Friends' Treasurer, Sandra Kearney, reported on the financial year (as presented on page 3).

Election of Office Bearers

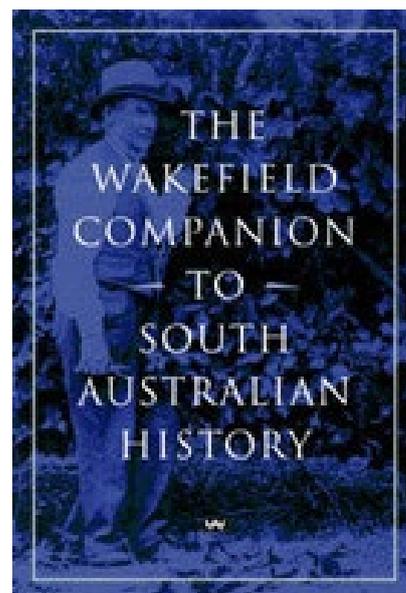
Andrew Peake was nominated as President by Wilfrid Prest and elected by acclamation. Heidi Ing was nominated and elected as Secretary, but as she was not present to accept the nomination, final acceptance will wait until the next meeting of the Committee. Sandra Kearney indicated her willingness to continue in the amalgamated role of both Membership Officer and Treasurer and was accordingly elected. Following the last AGM Andrew Peake was elected to the position of Public Officer and duly registered with the Department of Business and Consumer Affairs, and so will continue in this office. Graham Jaunay was elected to continue in his role as Auditor; Wilfrid Prest and Ian Sutherland were re-elected to the Committee; and Heidi Ing was re-elected to continue as newsletter editor.

FSAA Fellowship

At the AGM it was recommended that the Friends of South Australia's Archives should sponsor two Fellowships of \$250 each per annum to assist history/archives students with their research in South Australian archives. This motion was accepted and a \$500 per annum fund will be established to support the use of South Australian archival resources.

AGM Annual Address

The 2021 AGM closed at 6.40 pm and was followed by an address by Emeritus Professor Wilfrid Prest AM and Bernard O'Neil on the topic, 'The Wakefield Companion to South Australian History: past, present—future?' The presentation was enjoyed with wine, fruit juice, and cheeses.



Financial Statement 2021

Statement of Income and Expenditure for Year Ended 30 June 2021

Income

Subscriptions 2020–2021	615.00
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Expenditure

Subscription to History Council of SA	30.00
Hire of Meeting Rooms	85.00
Postage	<u>66.00</u>
	<u>181.00</u>

Profit for year

2020 balance carried forward	4,016.99	<u>434.00</u>
Unpresented cheques	66.00	

2021 balance

4,516.99

Graham Jaunay

Hon Auditor

24 August 2021

Sandra Kearney

Treasurer

24 August 2021

Relocation of South Australia's NAA Records

As outlined in our last newsletter, the report of the Tune Review of the National Archives of Australia was submitted to the Attorney-General in January 2020 and released to the public in March 2021. Information on the Tune Review report is available through the National Archive of Australia <www.naa.gov.au/about-us/tune-review>. This report contains 20 recommendations, with a high priority placed on the challenges of managing digital records. As an initial response to this report, in June 2021 the Government announced an allocation of \$67.7 million in additional funding. These funds were to be used to undertake the urgent preservation of at-risk records; to consolidate storage of NAA records in Canberra; to establish a 'digitisation hub' in Canberra; to develop the information management policies of government agencies; and to update and expand cyber security measures.

Closure of State Repositories

In July 2021 the South Australia NAA Consultative Forum was informed that as the lease on South Australia's Collinswood repository was going to expire in October 2021, South Australia would be the first state to have its NAA archival holdings relocated to Canberra. As reported in our last newsletter, this announcement was met with alarm. Of particular concern was the potential lack of access which would result in the relocation of South Australian materials in late 2021, prior to the creation of Canberra's planned digitisation hub. Of additional concern was the relocation of Tasmanian records in early 2022, which could potentially cause an excessive backlog of prioritised materials waiting to be digitised.

Prioritising the Description of Material

As the removal of South Australia's NAA holdings was presented as *fait accompli*, the attention of the South Australian NAA Consultative Forum turned to record description prior to relocation. An adequate level of description was acknowledged as crucial to assist in the identification and accessibility of these records. Members of the Consultative Forum requested a commitment that all items would be described prior to the move. Nick Gleghorn, State Manager of the NAA South Australian branch, stated that 87% of the South Australian NAA material was described when the relocation was announced. At the November meeting of the Consultative Forum, Nick Gleghorn reported that the description of 97% of records would be completed prior to the relocation scheduled to commence on 30 November 2021. Records yet to be described would be retained in South Australia until description was complete. It has been acknowledged that local knowledge is vital to describe photographs and the South Australia photographic collection would not be relocated until description was complete. As an 'at-risk format', the digitisation of photographs would be a high priority. Nick Gleghorn acknowledged that the description provided by the NAA is generally limited to the file title rather than the file contents. It is thought that discoverability of records would be improved through digitisation, as the people, places and organisations named within a file could then be indexed by volunteers or as third-party projects.

Relocation of South Australia's NAA Records

The first movement of South Australian NAA material was completed on 30 September 2021, prior to the end of the Collinswood lease in October 2021. The second move commenced on 30 November 2021, with South Australia's NAA Research Centre closed from 22 November to 14 December to allow staff to focus on the relocation of materials. Records to be prioritised for proactively digitisation have been identified, but it is unfortunate that South Australia's NAA collection has been moved prior to the creation of Canberra's digitisation hub, as this material will now be inaccessible in the interim. Once digitised and provided online through *RecordSearch* <<https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au>>, records will be returned to storage. The Consultative Forum has been assured that there will be no destruction of material post-digitisation.

NAA's Digitisation Hub in Canberra

The industrial-scale digitisation hub will be housed in a building on Sandford Street, Mitcham in Canberra. On 29 November the NAA released a media statement announcing that [Micro Image](http://www.microimage.com.au) <www.microimage.com.au> had been selected as the third-party service provider. It is hoped that digitisation of material at the Sandford Street hub will commence in January 2022, with identified South Australian material prioritised for digitisation. As Tasmanian records are scheduled to arrive in Canberra in early 2022, this material will be digitised in parallel with South Australian records. The leases on NAA repositories in Queensland and Victoria are also due to expire in the next few years, so Canberra's digitisation hub is set to be inundated with material.

NAA South Australian Office

The staff at the South Australian branch of the NAA will be retained and available to provide face-to-face support to assist people to access records, and will also be involved in the description of records. There will be an increase focus of public outreach. A small collection of NAA records will be retained in South Australia (200 metres), consisting of material relating to the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody; records required to respond to enquiries from LinkUp SA <<https://nunku.org.au/our-services/social-emotional/link-up/>>; photographs and other materials which require description; as well as the most requested South Australian series D4881: Alien Registration Cards.

Digitisation on Demand

In response to the relocation and centralisation of NAA records, there will be an increased commitment to free digitisation on demand. This policy is still being developed, but at this stage the NAA have communicated that paper files up to 100 pages ordered through *RecordSearch* <<https://recordsearch.naa.gov.au>> will be digitised and made available free of charge. There may be a charge for records greater than 100 pages and items which are not in a standard format (such as plans or bound volumes). Further information of digitisation on demand and associated costs and conditions will be provided when the NAA releases its official policy.

Links of Interest

Below are links for those interested in responses to the Tune Review, consolidation of NAA records in Canberra, the relocation of South Australian archival material, and the creation of an industrial-scale digitisation hub.

'NAA's death by a thousand cuts', *IDM: Information & Data Manager*, 26 March 2021
<<https://idm.net.au/article/0013350-naa-s-death-thousand-cuts>>

'Press Release: Government Response to the Tune Review', Attorney-General's Department, 19 August 2021
<<https://ministers.ag.gov.au/media-centre/government-response-tune-review-19-08-2021>>

'Australian Government's Response to the Functional and Efficiency Review of the National Archives of Australia', Attorney-General's Department, 19 August 2021
<www.ag.gov.au/rights-and-protections/publications/australian-government-response-tune-review>

'Government Responds to Tune Review', *IDM: Information & Data Manager*, 20 August 2021
<<https://idm.net.au/article/0013578-government-responds-tune-review>>

'Defend the Past, Protect the Future Program', National Archives of Australia, <www.naa.gov.au/about-us/our-organisation/accountability-and-reporting/defend-past-protect-future-program>

'New digitisation hub for National Archives of Australia', National Archives of Australia, 29 November 2021,
<www.naa.gov.au/about-us/media-and-publications/media-releases/new-digitisation-hub-national-archives-australia>

'Micro Image joins in NAA \$A67M Digitisation Push', *IDM: Information & Data Manager*, 3 December 2021,
<<https://idm.net.au/article/0013726-micro-image-joins-naa-a67m-digitisation-push>>



ASA statement on the move of South Australian cultural heritage to Canberra

The following statement has been taken from the Australian Society of Archivists website, [<www.archivists.org.au/about-us/statements/asa-statement-on-the-move-of-south-australian-cultural-heritage-to-canberra#>](http://www.archivists.org.au/about-us/statements/asa-statement-on-the-move-of-south-australian-cultural-heritage-to-canberra#)

The Australian Society of Archivists (ASA) is Australia's peak professional body for archivists and recordkeepers. The ASA is concerned about the latest removal of South Australian cultural heritage, through the relocation of archival material held at the National Archives of Australia in Adelaide to Canberra.

We call on the Commonwealth Government to provide funding to the National Archives of Australia for priority item listing of all South Australian records and a commitment to ongoing and free digitisation on demand services, to enable equitable access to South Australian records by South Australians. Additionally, we request a comprehensive investigation into options for returning South Australian-related archives to South Australia, or the return of specific records created by the State of South Australia.

South Australians have already seen the impacts of the loss of heritage before, with the removal of records previously to Canberra, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney. At that time, it was determined that these records now being moved represented South Australia's 'heartland' records and that it was important they remain in South Australia. These vital records include:

Records created by the colony of South Australia prior to Federation including:

- records of Torrens Island Quarantine Station
- records of meteorological observations at Adelaide Observatory
- maps and documents relating to Fort Largs and Fort Glanville
- patents, trademarks and design copyrights
- post office records

Records created by the State of South Australia after federation, where the function passed to the Commonwealth including:

- logbooks of Cape Borda and Cape du Couedic lighthouses
- marine crew and shipping records

Records created by State based Commonwealth agencies including:

- State Offices of the Department of Immigration, Defence, Australian Federal Police.

South Australia's colonial records from the 1840s were transferred to Commonwealth control at the time of Federation on the understanding that they would remain in the State. Previous records transfers kept these records out of scope due to the recognition of their importance to South Australia and South Australians. This is now being disregarded, with the promise of digitisation on demand services.

When records were removed from South Australia in 2000, the community was assured that they would be accessible via full itemisation, listing and digitisation. Many of these records remain unlisted more than 20 years on. Unlisted items cannot be requested for digitisation, and thus remain inaccessible to people in South Australia.

The impacts of the move of these cultural materials on South Australians include:

- reduced access to the original records
- increased costs to access cultural materials about their State, either to travel interstate to do research, or the cost of obtaining digital copies
- loss of cultural heritage materials relating to unique South Australia's places, people and events and which are part of South Australia's history and identity.

Section 63 of the Commonwealth Archives Act states that, "the convenience of persons who are likely to require access to the material; the desirability of keeping related material in the same place; and the appropriateness of keeping in a State or Territory material that relates in particular to that State or Territory or to places in that State or Territory" are all to be considered regarding the location of archival materials.

By removing the National Archives of Australia's South Australian collection, it removes the opportunity to get a full history and understanding of South Australia, in South Australia. Free digitisation on demand services can only be considered comparable if all materials are fully described and listed, so South Australians can search for records about their heritage, see a complete view of all records available, and then request records of interest to be digitised.

If the items must be removed due to resourcing limitations, the ASA calls on the Government to commit to funding and listing all South Australian records held by the National Archives of Australia which are not located in the State, so the records are able to be identified by South Australians for research, copying and digitisation, before they are removed.

We also call on the Government to investigate options for retaining the records in South Australia, either by:

- adequately funding the storage of all South Australian related archives by National Archives of Australia in Adelaide, returning records held in Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne; or
- returning the specific records created by the State Government of South Australia (or the colonial government prior to Federation) to Adelaide for local access by South Australians, either in the custody of National Archives of Australia or potentially in the custody of State Records of South Australia (subject to agreement).

Dated: 18 October 2021

Compiled by members of the Australian Society of Archivists Council, Advocacy Committee, and the South Australian Branch.

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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.

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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.