

# Territory Records Advisory Council Minutes

MEETING No.4 of 2011-12

4 June 2012

Canberra Museum and Gallery  
London Circuit, Canberra City

## Present

TRAC: Steve Stuckey (Chair), Alyssa Blackburn, Anne Buttsworth, David Headon, David Wardle (Director)

Visitors: Andrew Whale (Treasury Directorate), Mick Chisnall and Amanda Harris (nominated Councillors)

TRO: Elizabeth Estbergs (Reference Archivist), Wayne Finlaison (Thesaurus Manager), Lynda Weller (Agency Records Analyst), Rohan Clark (Minutes), Mark Dawson (ArchivesACT from 12.30)

Visitors (from 12:30): Former Council members Judith Baskin, Andrew Kefford, Sigrid McCausland, George Nichols, June Penny, Veronica Pumpa and other visitors Ted Ling, Anthony Polinelli and Dani Wickman

Meeting opened: 12:10pm

## Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**Apologies** Rebecca Stubbs

## Minutes of previous meetings

**Resolution Number 1 of Meeting No. 4 2011-12:** Council approved the Minutes of Meeting No.3 2011-12.

## Agenda Item 1. Report on ArchivesACT

Council noted the report from the Reference Archivist on ArchivesACT. Anne Buttsworth thanked Elizabeth for her assistance with the Australian Women's Archive Project.

## Agenda Item 2. Report on Agency Records Management

Council noted the report on agency records management. The Chair noted the number of meetings with ACT Health and commended the TRO in establishing close liaison while new arrangements and a new Records Management Program were being established following the amendments to the *Territory Records Act 2002*.

## Agenda Item 3. Standard for Records Management No.1 – Records Management Programs

The Director outlined changes to the Standard, Guideline and Model Records Management Program since the last meeting of Council. The Standard No.1 had minor revisions to reflect new administrative approaches of government.

The revised Guideline No.1 had been altered in response to agency needs and administrative changes of Government. In 2002 when the Guideline was being developed, agencies wished to reflect the specific cultures of their agency whereas now the emphasis was on a single, unified Public Service introduced following the Hawke Review of February 2011. It is anticipated that Directorates will benefit from the template provided by a Model Records Management Program, which is contained in the revised Guideline No.1. Council reiterated that the Model Program was not prescriptive, but was presented as guidance and assistance for agencies.

The amendments to the Guideline reflect recent administrative changes to the Act, the need to acknowledge the impact of the Hawke Review, the Digital Recordkeeping Pathway Report, the Chief Minister's Open Government Statement and recognition of both the security classification of records and the management of sensitive records. Advice is also included on when Programs need to be revised and submitted to both the Principal Officer and the Director of Territory Records.

The changes arise from comments from Council members and from the many agencies that have reviewed the documents. The Director emphasised the widespread consultation that had been undertaken with agencies, and the considerable input agencies had provided. He explained that the Model Program was in the early stages of development and would be a dynamic and emerging document for some time; Council could expect to see further evolutions of it.

Council members endorsed the concept of a flexible template that made the task easier for agency Records Managers while encouraging movement towards consistency where appropriate.

**Resolution Number 2 of Meeting No. 4 2011-12:** Council endorsed the revised Territory Records Standard No.1 – Records Management Programs.

**Agenda Item 4.** Guideline for Records Management No.1 – Records Management Programs

**Resolution Number 3 of Meeting No. 4 2011-12:** Council endorsed the revised Territory Records Guideline No.1 – Records Management Programs.

**Agenda Item 5.** Model Records Management Program

Council noted that the Model Records Management Program formed part of Guideline No.1 but considered that it would be regarded by agencies as a separate document in day-to-day operations. Accordingly Council provided specific endorsement of the Model Program.

**Resolution Number 4 of Meeting No. 4 2011-12:** Council endorsed the revised Territory Records Model Records Management Program

At this point in proceedings, around 12:30pm, the Chair invited visitors to join Council. The Chair welcomed various groups of visitors – past and prospective Council members including the former Chair, George Nichols and members of the Public Service who have been or are now involved with the work of the TRO.

The Chair thanked all visitors for the interest that their attendance showed in the continuing management of Territory records. Ten years of implementation and experience with the Act was well worth noting and celebrating the achievements over the decade.

**Agenda Item 6.** Tenth anniversary of the *Territory Records Act 2002* – The first ten years of the *Territory Records Act 2002*

The Director introduced a document summarising the highlights of the first ten years of the Act. He outlined the position of the ACTPS in 2002, its present situation, and the exciting challenges of the Act's second decade in meeting the demands of open government and accountability. Following comments from members, the summary paper is expected to be made available online.

The Chair noted that it was good to see the achievements of the first ten years, and to recognise the challenges that would have to be faced in coming years. Digital recordkeeping across the ACTPS would be a major focus.

**Agenda Item 7.** Tenth anniversary of the *Territory Records Act 2002* – Guide to ACT records. Presentation by Dr Ted Ling

In introducing Dr Ted Ling, the Chair circulated the National Archives of Australia's Research Guide *Commonwealth Government Records about the Northern Territory* that had been written by Dr Ling. The TRO envisages a similar publication relating to ACT records which would be released as part of Canberra's Centenary celebrations and has contracted Dr Ling to undertake part of the work. The Guide to ACT records would be published in conjunction with the NAA and be in a format similar to the other State and Territory guides published by the NAA. With the proposed ACT Guide, the NAA would utilise Dr Ling to prepare the section relating to those records dealing with the national capital focus of ACT records, while the TRO will work with Dr Ling on ACT records from the Territorial point of view.

Dr Ling explained that the NT guide had been based on records in the custody of either the NT Government or the NAA. The proposal for ACT was to produce a single guide in two parts:

- A. Canberra as a national capital based mainly on NAA records, and
- B. Canberra as a regional centre responsible for State and municipal functions, based mainly on ACT Government records.

He expects to have a draft manuscript completed by March 2013 with a view to publication in the second half of 2013. He explained that it was impossible to list all records. In being selective, he sought to point researchers in the right direction for their records while creating a guide based on a narrative that is interesting in its own right.

Council discussed the challenges for researchers crossing jurisdictional boundaries and how useful such a guide will be. Council also discussed making the final manuscript web-enabled to assist users.

**Agenda Item 8.** Tenth anniversary of the *Territory Records Act 2002* – Digitisation of Yarralumla Nursery Records

The importance of records of early tree plantings in Canberra was recognised by the ACT Monaro and Riverina Branch of the Australian Garden History Society which received a Heritage Grant to digitise early records in the custody of the Yarralumla Nursery. Mark Dawson of ArchivesACT is working on preparing these records to be accessed through the ArchivesACT website. It is anticipated that this new service will be launched by the Chief Minister later in the year.

Council's discussion broadened to other records-related projects for Canberra's 2013 Centenary.

David Headon updated Council on the examination of records that had been held by the Planning Institute of Australia. One document identified was an original from Walter and Marion Mahony Griffin and it has now been transferred into the custody of the NAA.

Discussion turned to publicity available for other projects such as the “Big Issues, Big Talk” Centenary project consolidating a variety of conferences and lecture series. Other records, archives, genealogy and artist conferences were discussed and the contacts from Council members noted.

**Agenda Item 9.** TRO Updates for Council information – Release of records on Canberra Day 2012

Council noted that this was the second year that the public release of Territory records had occurred on Canberra Day. The 2012 release had the added significance that this was the first time in Australia that Executive documents, including Cabinet papers, had been released during the term of a sitting Government. The Chair said that the event had once again been a success and he thanked former Council member, Andrew Kefford, for his considerable work in the Cabinet Office to allow this release to occur smoothly.

**Agenda Item 10.** TRO Updates for Council information – Consolidated list of *Territory Record Act 2002* Section 28 declarations

The Chair said that Council had always considered its role to include providing advice to the Director on matters of public access, a role which was enacted in 2010. One aspect of that advice relates to restrictions on the release of records. In August 2011 Council inquired about S.28 Declarations, which restrict access to records over 20 years old, recognising that there is a balance required between protecting privacy and security and providing access to the Territory’s documentary heritage. Discussion continued at the following two Council meetings about ensuring an appropriate balance and not releasing information inappropriately. Council saw merit in being able to show that no records are being hidden or restricted without there being a legitimate reason.

The Director talked to the TRO exemption register that had been distributed, saying that there had been widespread consultation with agencies to ensure that information about restrictions was being appropriately released. It was expected to become a public document with a link on the ArchivesACT website, subject to incorporating final comments from Council.

Mick Chisnall raised the possibility of also placing a link to the exemption register on the ACT’s open government website, to which Council concurred. Council recognised that the sensitivity of records decreases over time, and commended TRO’s recognition of the need for a periodic review of S.28 Declarations.

**Agenda Item 11.** TRO Updates for Council information – Recruitment of Director of Territory Records (verbal)

The Director reported that the recruitment process is underway for a replacement Director on the retirement of the incumbent.

**Agenda Item 12.** TRO Updates for Council information – Appointment of new members to Council (verbal)

The Director reported that the Public Accounts Committee has raised no objection to the appointment of Mr Mick Chisnall, Ms Amanda Harris and Mr Nick Swain to the Territory

Records Advisory Council. The Minister will now appoint them as Council members and it is expected that their membership will be confirmed before the next Council meeting.

**Agenda Item 13.** TRO Updates for Council information – In Living Memory exhibition

The Reference Archivist introduced everyone present to an exhibition titled “In Living Memory – surviving photographs from the records of the NSW Aborigines Welfare board, 1919-1966”, which will be on display in the Civic Library from 3 – 28 July 2012. This exhibition was originally displayed in The Rocks in Sydney and is provided with the assistance of State Records NSW. The exhibition will be of interest to the indigenous community of the ACT, Wreck Bay and wider NSW as well as the general public.

The Chair said that the exhibition was an excellent example of:

- a. the role of the Council, TRO and ArchivesACT in raising understanding of the importance of the preservation of records,
- b. the co-operation that occurs between archive authorities in Australia, and
- c. ArchivesACT putting into the public arena evidence of what they do.

The Director paid tribute to the work of Councillors Rebecca Stubbs and Jill Caldwell in assisting with arranging for the exhibition to be able to travel to Canberra, and he urged Council members and visitors to visit the exhibition if possible.

**Other Business**

The Chair noted two momentous events of this day. First, the ten years of records legislation in ACT has demonstrated to agencies that goods records management is not a threat to their operations, but rather facilitates their work and allows them to undertake their functions with greater confidence than they could otherwise have. The ten years have seen several positive reviews of the work of the TRO and ultimately saw a strengthening of the Act. The Act, Standards and Guidelines have all been reviewed by external, independent experts and given strong endorsement. Further, TRO has prepared to meet the ongoing challenges of digital records management with a Digital Recordkeeping Pathway report by another independent expert, and the report had been tabled in the Assembly.

Secondly, the Chair noted that this is the last of David Wardle’s 38 Council meetings. He has shown himself to be professional, persistent and persuasive. He is highly respected by professional colleagues and those within government agencies.

In its meetings with Ministers, Council has stressed the importance of comprehensive coverage by the Records Act, of digital records management, and of adequate, centralised archival storage of paper and digital records. The ACT remains the only Australian jurisdiction with no repository, and the matter of the preservation of digital records will become increasingly important.

The Chair said that whoever replaces David Wardle will find all three of these tasks to be considerable challenges requiring continued application of the skills that David brought to the task. He thanked David very much on behalf of everyone present.

David responded briefly and to the point: “Great challenges, great Council, great colleagues. Thank you all very much.”

**Next meetings**

17 August 2012

23 November 2012

Meeting closed: 1:45pm

Minutes confirmed on: 17/08/2012 \_\_\_\_\_ Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Steve Stuckey (Chair)