

# Territory Records Advisory Council Minutes

MEETING No.2 of 2012-13

23 November 2012

Murrumbidgee Room  
Level 5, 40 Allara Street, Civic

## Present

TRAC: Steve Stuckey (Chair), Alyssa Blackburn, Anne Buttsworth, Michael Chisnall, Amanda Harris, David Headon, Nick Swain, Dani Wickman (Director).

TRO: Rohan Clark (Minutes)

Visitor: Andrew Whale (General Manager)

Meeting opened: 12:35 pm

## Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially Ms Wickman to her inaugural Council meeting as Director of Territory Records. He also welcomed Ms Blackburn by speaker phone.

## Agenda Item 1. – Agenda and apologies

There were no additions to the agenda. Rebecca Stubbs' apologies were accepted.

## Agenda Item 2. – Minutes of previous meetings and business arising

An amendment was made to the minutes:

- Agenda Item 1: Nick Swain is president of the Kingston/Barton Residents Association, but is not president of the Canberra Historical Society.

**Resolution Number 1 of Meeting No. 2 2012-13:** Council approved the Minutes of Meeting No.1 2012-13 subject to the above amendment.

The Director noted several items of business arising from the minutes that are still being investigated and will be brought to a later meeting of Council:

- Agenda Item 4: The Records Disposal Schedule (RDS) for Legal Aid. Council expressed interest in seeing the final version when it becomes available.
- Agenda Item 4: The Australian Digital Records Initiative (ADRI).
- Agenda Items 6 and 7: The Digital Pathways Report. The Chair noted the importance of digital records managements and said that his observation from the recent International Council of Archives Congress in Brisbane was that Australia as a country is well placed to address this task. The Director emphasised the importance of the government-endorsed Digital Pathways Report in guiding further advances of digital recordkeeping in the ACT, and would report to a future Council meeting.
- Child Welfare Records Finding Aids would be dealt with shortly under Agenda Item 3.

## Agenda Item 3. – TRO Updates for Council information – Director's update

Royal Commission into institutional child sex abuse

Following from the previous agenda item, the Director opened discussion of the implications for

Government recordkeeping of the proposed Royal Commission into institutional child sex abuse. Although awaiting the formal Terms of Reference for the Commission and instructions from the Government, consideration is being given to disposal freeze on related records that would otherwise be eligible for destruction. The mechanism for doing this is being investigated, and agency Records Managers have been alerted to the possibility of such a freeze.

Council recognised that the scope of the Commission could be extremely broad, and noted that the “Stolen Generations” Inquiry had frozen “any records relating to” the subject. This could impact on every agency to a varying extent, which won’t become at all clear until after the Terms of Reference have been established. Andrew Whale said that it was likely that the contribution of the ACT Government would be coordinated by Justice and Community Safety. At this stage, it is simply being suggested to agencies that they do not destroy any records that may be related, including ATSI records. The Chair noted that, depending on the scope of the Commission, it could be a huge drain on resources spread across a large part of the ACTPS, even though the emphasis of the inquiry would probably not be on Government institutions.

Council asked to be kept up to date with records management implications of the Commission.

#### Administrative arrangements

The Director reported that new administrative arrangements had come into place following the ACT election. TRO would continue to be part of Andrew Whale’s Branch, which had become part of a new Commerce and Works Directorate under Megan Smithies as D-G.

#### TRO Planning Day

Council was represented by four members at a recent TRO Planning Day. Work plans are being developed that will provide Andrew Whale, Jill Divorty (head of Shared Services) and Megan Smithies, with an overview of the TRO’s tasks.

An important decision of the Planning Day was to further the transition from TRO’s role of providing assistance to agencies to meet their legislated obligations, to a role of ensuring that agencies are compliant. After 10 years of the Act, agencies are now in a position to meet what is demanded of them as the necessary guidelines and assistance has been provided. The Director’s role in monitoring compliance will receive greater emphasis.

In considering an allocation of TRO resources to enable furtherance of an emphasis on compliance, Council discussed the need to plan for further self-help by users of TRO services, including both agencies and members of the public. The need to reduce the reliance on knowledge held by perhaps one person in TRO, such as knowledge about locating material in archives, adds to pressure for creating self-help guides. Child Welfare Records Finding Aids are an example. Users’ needs and experiences would be instrumental in developing such guides. Self help guides and associated resource implications will be further considered by Council in later meetings.

#### **Agenda Item 4. – TRO Updates for Council information – Report on ArchivesACT**

The Director reported that the Yarralumla Nursery records have been added to the ACT Heritage Register.

Council noted the report from ArchivesACT.

The Chair asked members to consider whether the ArchivesACT report in its present format was providing Council with the most useful possible information. The statistics that are presented are required to be collected for CAARA. Council should consider what information is most useful to provide both support and direction for ACT archives. Several Council members mentioned the

importance of the Find of the Month, not so much because of what was found, but because it was such an important part of establishing the identity of ArchivesACT in the community's mind.

Council discussed other promotional opportunities, such as collaborating with Ancestry.com to both have additional material digitised and to raise the profile of ArchivesACT. The promotion and branding of Archives ACT would be considered further at later meetings.

**Agenda Item 5. – TRO Updates for Council information – Report on Agency Records Management**

Amanda Harris offered assistance to TRO with connecting TRIM web services with agency business systems.

Council commented favourable on the Report on Agency Records Management as the consolidation of TRO's activity by agency was more meaningful. The Chair expressed that hope that future reports would reflect the change of emphasis in TRO's work programs toward compliance. The Director will consider suitable means to capture that changed emphasis.

**Agenda Item 6. – TRO Updates for Council information – Report on the International Council of Archives (ICA) Congress, Brisbane August 2012**

The ICA falls under the umbrella of the UN. The Chair, who was MC of the ICA Congress, was able to provide a comprehensive overview of the Congress. He expressed regret that his duties prevented him from attending some of the interesting concurrent sessions. Amanda Harris said it was the best records conference she had ever attended.

This was the first time the four-yearly ICA Congress has been held in the southern hemisphere. The Chair said that Australia has participated in recent developments in archival theory and technical solutions. The issues facing archivists across the world at present are fundamentally digital in nature.

The Director said that TRO's priorities were consistent with the thrust of the findings from the ICA Congress, with digital recordkeeping providing a major focus, and self-help and self-service allowing wider and quicker access to material. This is consistent also with the policy stance of the ACT Government of openness of all government information. There was discussion of the tension between privacy and access to information, which received noticeable attention at the Congress.

All Council members who attended the Congress agreed that it was a very professional and high quality conference, which presented Australian archives in a very positive light.

**Other Business**

Dave Headon had to leave at 1:50pm. Before departing, he drew Council's attention to Volume 1 of the Centenary Program, which continues to be available in printed form at CMAG and the Civic Library, as well as online. Volume 2 is expected to be released just after Canberra Day on 11 March 2013. The first of the major exhibitions of the Centenary celebrations opens on 14 January 2013. Dave will update Council members at future meetings.

**Agenda Item 7. – Records Advice No. 71 – Free Text Titling**

The Director asked for comments on this latest Records Advice. Records Advices do not require the agreement of Council, but TRO appreciates feedback from as many eyes as possible.

Council commended the short, clear nature of Records Advices, and discussed the likely readership for this Advice. For non-records-manager readers, it could perhaps be clearer with more of a narrative explanation of what was intended. For instance, there is an assumption that

the reader knows that there are no fully free-text titles, and that what is being discussed in this Records Advice is what to put in the free-text portion of a title. For such readers, more practical guidance may be required.

The Director expressed appreciation of the comments and will re-draft the Advice.

Council discussed the usefulness of maintaining an agreed list of acronyms, using existing AKA software, to ensure clarity in all aspects of titling. Amanda Harris and Dani Wickman will discuss further.

**Next meetings**

21 February 2013

Meeting closed: 2:05 pm

Minutes confirmed on: / /2013 \_\_\_\_\_ Steve Stuckey (Chair)