



## **ACT ARCHIVES PROJECT**

### **ISSUES AND OPTIONS PAPER**

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I am pleased to release the ACT Archives Project Issues and Options Paper.

This document is part of the process initiated by the Government following the commitment made at the 1998 election to undertake an inquiry and feasibility study into the establishment of an ACT Archives.

We are seeking the advice of the community in relation to the wide range of issues that need to be considered in relation to the creation, management, access and preservation of the records of the ACT Government. I urge all people interested in these important issues to respond to this document. The management of information held by Government is important in a democracy, and broad community input is required to ensure we get the best possible policies and practices for our Territory.

Brendan Smyth  
Minister for Urban Services

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In February 1998, the ACT Government made an election commitment to 'undertake an inquiry and feasibility study into the establishment of an ACT Archives for the protection of historical documents and objects with some key archives able to be displayed at the Canberra Museum and Gallery'.

The ACT Archives Project which was established to manage the process of honouring the Government's election commitment, undertook a sample of 25 interviews within the ACT Government. Issues were analysed such as current records management strategies, records management issues affecting the agency, perceived risks, archiving strategies and stakeholders of the agency's records. Many issues were identified from this sample although the constant themes were the need for:

- an ACT Government-wide approach to records management
- education and training for records management practitioners
- a strategy for dealing with electronic records
- access by the public to the records of government.

The inquiry and feasibility study into the establishment of an ACT Archives, acknowledges the heritage value of the records under government control and looks at how best to access the records of the past and ensure that current records are created, preserved and made accessible for future generations. This Issues and Options Paper seeks public input into the development of the Government's records management and archiving strategies and to contribute to the process of establishing an ACT Archives.

The goal in developing and implementing an ACT Government archives policy is to bring together a unified set of policies applicable to all areas of government and dealing with all classes of records. It will ensure that members of the public and officers of the government understand their rights and responsibilities in relation to those records.

Current issues for the ACT Government in the development of its records management and archives policy are considered in this document together with questions posed to encourage a wide range of responses from both professional and community respondents. Issues addressed include:

- Customer service: successful records management is a key component of providing a high level of Customer Service.
- Bringing Them Home – Report (ACT Government Response): a commitment to implement a number of Access to Records initiatives.
- Cabinet documents: the length of time before these will be released for public access.

- Use by the public of ACT Government records: ease of access to appropriate records of government by members of the public.
- Australian Standard 4390 – Records Management: use of recognised national standards that are available to assist and support the implementation of a strategy for efficient and accurate records management.
- Management and retention of ACT Government records: different categories of records are of use for different periods with only those records of longer term value needing to be kept for a longer term.
- Custody and storage of ACT Government records: physical storage of paper and electronic records is key to both their long term preservation and public access.
- Security and preservation of ACT Government records: long term security and preservation of documents is essential if future access is to be guaranteed.
- Evidential value of ACT records: records are required as evidence of the actions and activities of government. Occasions arise when it becomes necessary to present Government records as evidence in court proceedings. It is important therefore to ensure that their accuracy is not open to question at some future date in judicial proceedings.
- Use of an ACT Government thesaurus: a thesaurus provides a consistent list of terms and headings used for the titling and indexing of records to enable ready access to those records across the whole-of-government.
- Archives legislation: the ACT does not have specific archives legislation to establish the management of records, or to provide a level of guarantee of its record keeping activities.
- Electronic records: throughout the ACT Government electronic records are created and stored to various standards. A regime where their future access and preservation can be guaranteed is required.
- Training staff in records management and archives: Competent well-trained staff are the key to successful records management.
- Relationship with the National Archives of Australia and the national archives community is considered.

## **INTRODUCTION**

This Issues and Options Paper has been released to solicit responses from members of the ACT community who wish to contribute to the process of establishing an ACT Archives. The key focus of the ACT Archives will be to preserve the records of government and administration of the Australian Capital Territory.

In February 1998, the ACT Government made an election commitment to 'undertake an inquiry and feasibility study into the establishment of an ACT Archives for the protection of historical documents and objects with some key archives able to be displayed at the Canberra Museum and Gallery'. Urban Services already has responsibility for the ACT Government Registry, the Government and Assembly Library, ACT Heritage, the ACT Library Service and the ACT Heritage Library, so it was considered appropriate for Urban Services to commence work on this project.

The residents of the Australian Capital Territory have a substantial history to call their own, with more than three-quarters of a century since the naming of Canberra and a decade of self-government. This history can now be recalled and researched because of the diligence of the record makers of the past. The inquiry and feasibility study into the establishment of an ACT Archives, acknowledges the heritage value of the records under government control and looks at how best to access the records of the past and ensure that current records are created, preserved and made accessible for future generations. There is a wealth of material for researchers, and material of both visual and historic impact that could be available for display at the Canberra Museum and Gallery and other venues in the ACT and surrounding areas.

## **ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ACT ARCHIVES PROJECT**

The ACT Archives Project has been established within the Information Planning and Services Branch of Urban Services to manage the process of honouring the Government's election commitment. The first step was to establish the current situation with records management and archiving practices across the ACT Government. A sample of 25 interviews was held with stakeholders of the Project analysing topics such as current records management strategies, records management issues affecting the agency, perceived risks, archiving strategies and stakeholders of the agency's records. Many issues were identified from this sample although the constant themes were the need for:

- an ACT Government-wide approach to records management
- education and training for records management practitioners
- a strategy for dealing with electronic records
- access by the public to the records of government.

This Issues and Options Paper is the next stage in the process, which seeks public input into the development of the Government's records management and archiving strategies. This involvement will ensure that the Government policy in this area meets the needs of the public who wish to access the records as well as officers of the ACT Government who create the records. The issues outlined are current in the records management and archives fields and will have application in the ACT environment. Public debate on how these issues are resolved will contribute to the best possible strategies being adopted for the ACT.

**Responses are invited from individuals and organisations to any of the issues raised. Submissions can address the specific questions posed or any other issues that relate to the establishment of an ACT Archives. This paper has been prepared for the purposes of discussion only and should not be taken as representing the views of the Government. Information on how to respond is located at the end of this document.**

## **GOAL OF AN ACT GOVERNMENT ARCHIVES POLICY**

The goal in developing and implementing an act Government archives policy is to bring together a unified set of policies applicable to all areas of government and dealing with all classes of records so that members of the public and officers of the government understand their rights and responsibilities in relation to those records.

The creation, management, access and preservation of the records of the activities of government is fundamental to the organisation of a democratic society.

An ACT Government archives policy aims to inspire confidence in the community in the ability and commitment of the Government to create accurate records of its transactions, manage its records so that the information can be retrieved, and ensure that the records are preserved for access by citizens at a later date.

## **RECORDS MANAGEMENT IN THE ACT GOVERNMENT**

The printed records of the ACT were managed as part of the Commonwealth's records management regime prior to self-government of the Australian Capital Territory in 1989. The records continued to be managed by the Australian Archives with services agreed in a Memorandum of Understanding until 1994 when the majority of ACT records were transferred from the Australian Archives to other facilities. While the Memorandum of Understanding still exists, it no longer supports an active working relationship between the ACT Government and the National Archives of Australia.

The ACT Government Registry is the largest records management agency with responsibility for ACT Government Records. It manages the paper-based records for the Department of Urban Services, Chief Minister's Department, Department of Justice and Community Safety and the Department of Health and Community Care. The Department of Education and Community Services, the Canberra Hospital, and specialist service providers such as the Building Plumbing and Electrical Control and the ACT Land Information Centre have their own repository arrangements. The Government Registry also works with private contractors who manage the long term storage of many ACT Government Records.

With the current form of dispersed records management, an ACT Archives policy will assist the Government in gaining an overall view and knowledge of the management of their records. The Public Sector Management Standards have recently been revised to address some of the issues in relation to the management and preservation of Government records but these do not extend to monitoring or audit provisions. An ACT Government co-ordinated approach to records management and archiving is one of the issues to be considered by the ACT Archives Project.

An ACT Archives policy will assist with the provision of a co-ordinated program of records management training and support for ACT Government staff. A co-ordinated training program would ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibilities to create accurate records for the activities for which they will be held accountable. An outcome of this inquiry is to provide confidence in the ability of the ACT Government to provide an auditable trail of activities and to guarantee the future preservation of records for public access.

Electronic records throughout the ACT Government are presently created and stored to various standards. An ACT Archives policy will assist in establishing a regime where their future access and preservation can be guaranteed. Email, as a specific form of electronic record, is regarded as being particularly vulnerable.

There is existing legislation in the ACT that defines rights to access to records by members of the public. The *ACT Freedom of Information Act 1989*, the *Commonwealth Privacy Act 1998* and the *ACT Health Records (Privacy and Access) Act 1997*, amongst others, all relate to the creation and access to records. A more comprehensive and integrated approach to records management of current records or archiving of longer term records as a result of an ACT Archives policy will complement rather than replace existing legislation.



## ISSUES FOR THE ACT GOVERNMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITS RECORDS MANAGEMENT AND ARCHIVES POLICY

### Customer service

Agencies of the ACT Government are committed to a continuous process of improving their level of service delivery. Many of these agencies see their records management as being a key component of providing a high level of Customer Service.

Those agencies where high quality records management is an integral part of the operations of their area see that records management assists them in achieving the vision of their organisation, whereas areas without good record keeping practices can be hindered in achieving their vision.

The creation of a culture where all officers are both confident and competent in records management as an integral part of their duties and responsibilities, is important to the Government in the provision of its services. Ideally officers should have access to the Government's record keeping system as well as its operational systems at their desktop to ensure that they are aware of the existence of previous actions and decisions that may be relevant to their current responsibilities.

*How can efficient records management be used to enhance the customer service focus of the ACT Government in the delivery of quality services?*

### **Bringing Them Home – Report (ACT Government Response)**

In responding to the Bringing Them Home: National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families Report, the ACT Government has stated that, among other commitments, it will implement the following Access to Records initiatives:

- strengthen the Public Sector Management Standards to ensure survival of records relating to Indigenous individuals, families or communities and include access to ACT held records free of charge for Indigenous people seeking to trace links with families and communities
- extend the Adoption Information Service, which is already the ACT contact point for Indigenous peoples seeking to trace links with their families, to become the point of contact for Records Taskforces from the States and the Northern Territory
- request increased access to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission's (ATSIC) Link-Up Service as part of the Commonwealth's increased funding for a nationwide family link-up network
- review ACT records management including the need for legislation and any additional facilities.

*How should the ACT Government now proceed to meet these commitments?*

### **Cabinet documents**

The documents of Cabinet are a specific type of documentation that carries with it a high level of confidentiality and access restriction. Following the Commonwealth convention these are currently closed to public access for a period of thirty years. At the Commonwealth level this period was recently confirmed in the Australian Law Reform Commission's review of the Commonwealth's Archives legislation - Australia's federal record: A review of Archives Act 1983, however there is no obligation on the ACT to follow this period of closed access. Indeed, it has been argued that a shorter period could be appropriate for the ACT.

*What length of time should Cabinet documents be secured before release to members of the public?*

### **Use by the public of ACT Government records**

Every effort should be made to facilitate access to appropriate records of government by members of the public. Once records can be made freely available, accurate finding tools, professional staff and conducive research facilities will need to be provided. The finding tools established when the records were created and in current use, need to be maintained and where necessary augmented. Staff with the experience of how the records were used for official purposes will be required to assist the public to identify the appropriate documents. Secure reading room facilities with reasonable hours of access in close proximity to the records storage will be required.

There are a number of ways public access to records could be achieved. The Government could provide dedicated facilities, share facilities with another ACT Government agency with similar aims, such as the ACT Heritage Library or contract the service to another body with existing facilities, such as the National Archives of Australia.

While the basic service of access to records should remain free, there could be some services that would be provided on a cost recovery basis.

*How should the ACT Government meet the demands of use of Government records by members of the public?*

*What services should be provided on a cost recovery basis?*

### **Australian Standard 4390 – Records Management**

There are a number of standards recognised nationally that are available to assist and support the implementation of a strategy for efficient and accurate records management. The Australian Standard 4390 on Records

Management was prepared in conjunction with government agencies and professional associations from the records management and archives disciplines and has now been adopted widely.

“A systematic approach to records management within any organization is vital, to protect and preserve the information contained in that organization’s records as required. The regulation of records management practices and procedures ensures that uniform protection is given to all records and that information can be more efficiently and effectively retrieved, using standard forms of identification and retrieval procedures. Organizations create and maintain records as evidence of business activities and transactions. Inadequate records and recordkeeping can contribute to, or even be instrumental in, accountability failures. ... There are substantial benefits to be gained from the incorporation of records management into the strategic direction of any organisation.” (AS4390.1)

The Foreword to this Standard states that:

“Records management is the discipline and organizational function of managing records to meet operational business needs, accountability requirements and community expectations. Records management plays many roles within an organization and in the organization’s relationships with the world. Thus records management is concerned with the following:

- (a) Managing the records continuum, from the design of a recordkeeping system to the end of the records’ existence.
- (b) Providing a service to meet the needs, and protect the interests, of the organization and its clients.
- (c) Capturing complete, accurate, reliable and useable documentation of organizational activity to meet legal, evidential and accountability requirements.
- (d) Managing records as an asset and information resource, rather than as a liability.
- (e) Promoting efficiency and economy, both in the management of records and in organizational activity as a whole, through sound recordkeeping practices. (AS4390)

*Should the ACT records be managed according to this Standard?*

*Should parts of the Standard not be applied in the ACT?*

*Are there better ways to manage the records of a government with both State and Local Government responsibilities?*

### **Management and retention of ACT Government records**

In removing records from the Australian Archives in 1994, the ACT Government made a decision that permanent storage of the majority of created records was the most cost effective solution for the long term management of its records. The implications of this decision are that all files placed in the care of the ACT Government Registry will be stored and preserved for future access on a long term basis. It was considered that the increasing storage costs outweighed the staff costs involved with assessing the future relevance of the records. This decision should now be reviewed to assess if in fact all records created will be required to be archived for the longer term. Differing categories of records are of use for different periods and the majority are of relatively short term value and can be disposed of

when of no further value in the administrative process. Only those records of longer term value need to be kept for a longer term.

For guidance with alternate strategies, AS 4390 includes a section on Appraisal and Disposal of records as an element of records management:

- “Appraisal is an analytical approach which determines –
- (a) which records should be captured into recordkeeping systems; and
  - (b) how long records should be maintained.
- Successful implementation of appraisal ensures that –
- (i) requirements to create records for each business activity are identified;
  - (ii) risks for non-compliance with recordkeeping requirements are defined;
  - (iii) adequate records are captured in recordkeeping systems;
  - (iv) required records are retained;
  - (v) records required over time are migrated between recordkeeping systems;
  - (vi) records not required by each business activity are deleted or destroyed; and
  - (vii) transfer of custody or ownership of records between organizations, where appropriate, is documented. (AS 4390.5)
- Disposal authorities follow as one of the outcomes of the appraisal process.

*Should the ACT Government maintain its permanent storage approach to the archiving of records?*

*Should the ACT Government adopt an approach to records management with Appraisal and Disposal strategies so that only those records of long term value are preserved?*

### **Custody and storage of ACT Government records**

‘Custody’ refers to the control of the records that have long term value and are no longer required for current administrative purposes. It is common for custody to be provided at a centralised location; however, it is also possible for records to be under archival custody but still housed by the creating agency. This is referred to as distributed custody. The custody approach to records of whatever format, will be influential in deciding on the preferred options for long term records storage. The Australian Law Reform Commission noted that:

“In most government archival regimes the generality of records of archival value pass into the custody, or at least the effective control, of the relevant archival authority either at a specific age or when they cease to be regularly required for current administrative purposes. In some jurisdictions this process is sanctioned by legislation, while in others it is a matter of administrative practice (ALRC AFR13.1)

“Archival institutions will continue to play a crucial role in the storage of paper records... However, the rapid development of electronic recordkeeping systems has profound implications for the traditional concept of archival custody. Given the complex and rapidly developing technologies for managing electronic records, there is a fundamental question whether such records can best retain their integrity and functionality by remaining part of the systems in which they were created (an arrangement generally known as ‘distributed custody’), or whether they should be transferred to ‘archival’ electronic systems operated by archival authorities.” (ALRC AFR12.25)

The physical storage of paper and electronic records is key to both their long term preservation and public access. Storage can be in government owned facilities or commercial facilities. Whichever option is preferred, building standards need to be such that the security and preservation of the records is not compromised.

Decisions will need to be made on whether the Government is more likely to achieve its objectives of efficient records management if it opts for a centralised or decentralised model for the custody and storage of its records. If each department or agency is to make its own arrangements following a distributed custody model, agreed standards would need to be met and monitored.

*Should a model of distributed or non-distributed custody be adopted for paper records of the ACT Government?*

*Should a model of distributed or non-distributed custody be adopted for electronic records of the ACT Government?*

*Should the ACT Government establish a central storage facility to house government records in a secure environment on a long term basis?*

### **Security and preservation of ACT Government records**

The long term security and preservation of documents is essential if future access is to be guaranteed. Issues raised are not only the condition of the records but also the preservation of their evidential value.

Files and documents are likely to have been well used and the paper could be of long term doubtful quality. For bulky records where retrieval and access could be difficult, imaging could be a cost-effective option. With electronic records, preservation of the access paths is essential as is the construction of metadata as part of any new electronic record keeping system to be implemented.

Disaster planning and back-up for all phases of the record keeping process needs to be an integral part of any records management or archives strategy. Officers need reliable access to records to fulfil their daily responsibilities and members of the public need confidence in the commitment to long term preservation of records for which they may require access in the future.

*What strategies should the ACT Government adopt to ensure the long term security and preservation of its records?*

*Is imaging considered an acceptable alternative to the paper preservation of records?*

*What level of back-up of systems is considered necessary to ensure continued access to the records of government?*

### **Evidential value of ACT Government records**

Records are required as evidence of the actions and activities of government. Occasions arise when it becomes necessary to present Government records as evidence in court proceedings. It is important therefore that this possibility be kept in mind when preparing or storing documents in order to ensure that their accuracy or provenance is not open to question at some future date in judicial proceedings. The Australian Standard again provides guidance.

“Organizations must develop strategies for ensuring that full and accurate records are made and captured into recordkeeping systems and, thus, that there is adequate evidence to document their business activities. These strategies must be developed and implemented consciously and systematically. Recordkeeping is the making and maintaining of complete, accurate and reliable evidence of business transactions in the form of recorded information. It is a critical function that is performed through the collective action of employees and systems throughout all organizations”. (AS 4390.3)

The cost to an agency of not keeping full and accurate records can be extremely high either in financial terms or in wasted or lost time.

*What strategies should be adopted by the ACT Government to ensure that records are kept so that there is adequate evidential documentation of government activities?*

### **Use of an ACT Government thesaurus**

A thesaurus provides a consistent list of terms and headings used for the titling and indexing of records to enable ready access to those records across the whole-of-government. The use of a functionally based thesaurus assists with not only the understanding and retrieval of the records, but also their transfer and appraisal.

An observation from the sample survey has been that when agencies within an organisation move departments, there has been considerable retrospective effort necessary to enable records to be incorporated into the records management regime of the receiving organisation. The adoption of an ACT Government-wide thesaurus and file management system would save considerable intellectual and manual effort whenever departmental reorganisations occur.

The Archives Authority of New South Wales developed the Keyword AAA Thesaurus as part of a whole-of-government records management strategy. Many other governments have now adopted this thesaurus for their records management programmes. The adoption of a thesaurus such as this still allows the addition of specialised terms for say education or health purposes but establishes a whole-of-government approach to the control of the file management structure.

*Should the ACT Government adopt a common thesaurus?*

*If the ACT Government is to adopt a common thesaurus should it be purely of an ACT nature or based on an already existing thesaurus?*

### **Archives legislation**

The ACT does not have specific archives legislation to establish the management of records that need to be preserved, or to provide a level of guarantee of its record keeping activities for members of the public. *The Public Sector Management Act 1994* provides the legislative framework for the ACT Public Service. The Public Sector Management Standards operate under the Act and provide the legal basis for personnel and administrative actions which have no source of authority elsewhere. The Act and Standards apply to all Australian Capital Territory Public Service officers and employees, whether located in agencies or in the authorities staffed under the Act. The current records management authority is based on the Public Sector Management Standards: Standard 6: Administration and Training, Part 1: Managing ACTPS Records.

Whether or not the Australian Standard is adopted or legislation is developed, major contemporary issues in records management must be addressed such as: the creation, management, access and storage of electronic records, the issue of archives as evidence and public access to government records. Archives authorities throughout Australia and internationally are dealing with these issues in many different ways and provide a number of models for the ACT to evaluate.

The Commonwealth, most States and the Northern Territory are at various stages of reviewing their records management strategies and the legislation under which their Archives operate. Extensive government, industry and public consultation has taken place to develop contemporary legislation to deal with the issues surrounding management, access, storage and preservation of both paper and electronic records.

The Australian Law Reform Commission has recently published its review of the Commonwealth's Archives legislation - [Australia's federal record: A review of Archives Act 1983](#). The Commission noted that some States have been developing new archival legislation, reflecting a generally perceived need to align the legislation more closely with new technologies, administrative structures and community expectations. It further noted that in two States additional pressure for new legislation has come from major inquiries into government administration, which have concluded that adequate record keeping is a vital part of an efficient and accountable administration.

The Commission in looking at the approach taken by different States to their legislation noted:

There is a substantial similarity between many of the major provisions. These generally include:

- an obligation for the archival authority to issue recordkeeping standards and for agencies to comply with them
- conferment on the archival authority of a right to inspect records in the custody of agencies
- a mandatory requirement for the archival authority to authorise the disposal of records
- empowerment of the archives authority to take action to recover official records which have passed into private hands
- conferment on the archival authority of an entitlement to custody of older records or to authorise some other arrangement for their custody, and
- conferment of a right of access to older records (the age at which they reach the open access period varies), with appeals against denials of access being handled through the Freedom of Information regimes. (ALRC AFR2.10)

The interrelationship between any Archives Act and other legislative requirements for managing and accessing information such as found in the *ACT Freedom of Information Act 1989*, and the *Commonwealth Privacy Act 1998*, needs to be considered. Issues such as consistency and common language and cross referencing would have to be addressed. The possibility of a general 'Government Information Act' may be worth pursuing.

On the other hand it should be noted that a small jurisdiction such as the ACT faces particular issues of cost effectiveness and efficient use of scarce resources. An elaborate legislative regime may be neither necessary nor appropriate.

If a legislative approach to archives and records management is proposed it would not negate in any way existing prescribed requirements contained in other legislation such as the *ACT Health Records (Privacy and Access) Act 1997*.

*Should the ACT enact specific legislation as the way of managing its records and archives?*

*Can the discipline and accountability of managing government records be achieved in ways other than by a legislative approach?*

### **Electronic records**

The ACT Government through its Information Technology service provider, InTACT, is establishing standard desktop applications and standards for data transmission throughout all areas of the ACT Government. The potential now exists for documents to be created, managed, accessed and preserved totally in electronic format. While electronic records are now created in all areas of the ACT Government, many of these are printed out and placed on standard files in the normal course of business. Those that are not could easily be lost. A new approach to electronic record keeping would be able to address many of these issues.



Policies on the archiving of electronic documents being developed in other jurisdictions are favouring the retention of electronic documents with their creating agency for the whole of their life to ensure that they are migrated from platform to platform as upgrades and changes in technology occur over the years.

The Australian Council of Archives has produced a Statement of a Common Position on Electronic Recordkeeping: Corporate Memory in the Electronic Age. The statement was prepared to help organisations:

"Establish policy, standards and practical strategies for electronic recordkeeping... Electronic records need to provide the same degree of evidence of business activity and the same level of accountability, and be able to function as social resources in the same way, as paper records, for the immediate and future needs of organisations, individuals and society. ...The organisations that have endorsed this statement have committed themselves to working towards the vision that: *By the year 2000 all Australian organisations will follow guidelines and standards for the management of electronic records which are based on common principles, concepts and criteria*".

The AS 4390.3 in reviewing electronic records states that:

"An electronic document becomes an electronic record when it takes part in a business transaction, and is kept to provide evidence of that transaction. To function as a record, however, it must be captured into an electronic recordkeeping system and must incorporate relevant structural and contextual information, as well as content. To be used effectively to manage electronic documents as records, electronic document management systems must incorporate recordkeeping functionality and support the requirements for making and capturing records. (8.4.2) Storage media and related technologies and practices for maintaining electronic records should be specified, designed, operated and maintained so that the evidential elements of the records cannot be altered. (8.7.2) Electronic records should be created and captured into recordkeeping systems in formats that will enable them to be, or at least make it more likely that they will be, available and useable for as long as they are required; i.e. electronic records should be created and maintained in formats that will carry them intact across successive hardware and software platforms". (8.7.3)

Email as a specific form of electronic document needs to be integrated into the mainstream of records management. The full tests of both preservation and evidential value also need to be applied to this format for the conveyance of information.

*How should the ACT Government approach the management of its electronic records?*

*How should Email be integrated into any proposed electronic record keeping system?*

*Should creating agencies have permanent responsibility for their electronic records or should they be moved to archival storage elsewhere?*

**Training staff in records management and archives**

Competent well-trained staff are the key to successful records management. The training of staff in records management is required at two levels – those staff with primary responsibility for records management in their organisation, and all ACT Government employees who need to provide an accurate record of their daily activities.

The Australian National Training Authority's, Records and Archives Competency Standards sets out the skills required for staff working in the records management and archives fields. These Standards have been developed in conjunction with the Australian Standard on Records Management.

“A compliant organisation shall establish a program of records management training. Programs for training in recordkeeping and records management should address the roles and responsibilities of all employees in making records during their work and in capturing those records into recordkeeping systems.” (AS 4390.2.8)

*How should the ACT Government structure its training responsibilities to meet the needs of staff at all levels who deal with records as part of their daily activities?*

### **Outsourcing of services in the records management and archives field**

Records management and archiving is a complex process made up of a series of inter-related procedures. Parts of this process need to be performed within government but other parts of the process could equally well be carried out by the private sector. Once standards have been set and the evidential value of the records protected, it will be possible to establish views on what parts of the process must be performed by officers of the ACT Government, and what parts of the process could be provided by commercial organisations with expertise in the field.

*What models should be adopted by the ACT Government for the provision of record keeping and archives services?*

### **Relationship with the National Archives of Australia and the national archives community**

The current Memorandum of Understanding between the ACT Government and the National Archives of Australia no longer provides a satisfactory basis for the management of, and access to, records for which there is a common interest. The electronic finding tools essential for access to the pre-1994 ACT records are part of the public databases of the National Archives of Australia and the majority of these records are now stored by the ACT Government with a commercial contractor.

There are national bodies with an interest in archives – the Australian Council of Archives and the Council of Federal, State and Territory Archives. The ACT is at present not represented on these bodies.

*What relationship is appropriate for the ACT Government to establish with the National Archives of Australia for the management and access to records of a common interest?*

*Should the ACT Government seek membership of national bodies with an interest in archives?*

## **OPTIONS FOR RECORDS AND ARCHIVES MANAGEMENT IN THE ACT**

Following receipt of comments and submissions from members of the public, the ACT Archives Project will develop policy proposals for consideration by the ACT Government. There are any number of options that could be developed; however, three possibilities have been set out below as examples on which people may care to provide further comment.

### **Possible scenarios for future records management and archives administration.**

1. The establishment of a small unit within government to provide an education and audit role.

This unit would advise agencies on the development of standards and policies appropriate to their business requirements and assist them in monitoring these standards as well as providing training for staff on the issues of records management, public access and archiving of records.

2. The management of a mixed centralised/decentralised model with control administered through the establishment of standards, a common thesaurus and a whole of government electronic record keeping system.

A specialised records management/archives unit would develop Government-wide policies and standards and develop proposals for the management of electronic documents. It would co-ordinate the provision of storage facilities and set standards for public access to the archived records of government.

3. A fully managed centrally controlled record keeping system and an independent archives authority established by legislation.

This option would see the establishment of a records management system common to all government departments and agencies, and an archives building where all records that had been appraised as having longer term value would be housed when no longer required by the creating agency. This archives repository would have public records consultation and research facilities.

## REFERENCES

Australian Capital Territory Government, Bringing Them Home: National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families: ACT Government Response. Canberra, Australian Capital Territory Government, 1998.

Australian Council of Archives, Corporate Memory in the Electronic Age: Statement of a Common Position on Electronic Recordkeeping. Melbourne, Australian Council of Archives, 1996.

Australian Law Reform Commission, Australia's federal record: A review of Archives Act 1983. Canberra, AGPS, 1998.

Australian National Training Authority, Records and Archives Competency Standards. Melbourne, National Finance Industry Training Advisory Body Ltd. 1997.

Standards Association of Australia, Australian Standard – Records Management (AS 4390 - 1996). Sydney, Standards Association of Australia, 1996.

## RESPONDING TO THIS ISSUES AND OPTIONS PAPER

Responses are invited from individuals and organisations to any of the issues raised. Submissions can address the specific questions posed or any other issues that relate to the establishment of an ACT Archives. You are welcome to contact the ACT Archives Project Officer, David Wardle on 02 6207 0194 to discuss the Issues and Options Paper or to seek advice on your submission. Advice can also be provided on gaining access to the various documents referred to in this paper.

Copies of this Paper are also available on the Internet via the ACT Government Home Page at: [www.act.gov.au](http://www.act.gov.au).

Written submissions can be posted or received electronically. If preferred, verbal submissions can be accepted. Submissions should be received by the 18 June 1999.