

Director of Territory Records

TERRITORY RECORDS OFFICE 2013-14

The Territory Records Office is the archives authority and recordkeeping regulator for the ACT Government. It is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the *Territory Records Act 2002*. The main purposes of the Act are to:

- encourage open and accountable government by ensuring that Territory records are made, managed and, if appropriate, preserved in accessible form;
- support the management and operation of Territory agencies;
- preserve Territory records for the benefit of present and future generations; and
- ensure that public access to records is consistent with the principles of the *Freedom of Information Act 1989*.

The Territory Records Office provides policy leadership to the ACT Public Service on better practice records management. It develops mandatory recordkeeping standards for use by all agencies, oversees a records appraisal and disposal regime and assists members of the public to have access to ACT government archives. The Territory Records Act enables the Director of Territory Records to encourage consistency in records management between agencies, examine the operation and compliance of agencies' records management programs and to give assistance and advice on records management.

The Act also creates the Territory Records Advisory Council, which provides advice to the Director on records management issues, particularly in relation to access to and disposal of records, and on the protection of records about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage. The Territory Records Advisory Council met four times during 2013–14. Membership of the Council during the year was:

- Mr Steve Stuckey (Chair to May 2014);
- Ms Anne Buttsworth (Deputy Chair October 2013 to May 2014, Chair from May 2014);
- Mr Michael Piggott (Deputy Chair from May 2014);
- Professor Chris Aulich (from May 2014)
- Ms Alyssa Blackburn;
- Mr Michael Chisnall;
- Ms Amanda Harris;
- Dr David Headon (to May 2014);
- Ms Rebecca Stubbs (to May 2014);
- Mr Nick Swain;
- Ms Danielle Wickman.

The Council's meeting agenda includes regular reports on public access, relations with government agencies and the consideration of records disposal schedules. The Director also keeps the Council informed and seeks its advice on significant initiatives of the Office. During 2013–14 the Council considered and advised on matters such as a marketing and promotions strategy for ArchivesACT (the public access point for ACT government archives), approaches to appraising the value of older government records, and the changing relationship between the Territory Records Office and ACT government agencies.

The Council continues to support the Office's efforts to advocate for whole of government approaches to digital recordkeeping, and considers that the Territory Records Office's greatest priority should be to facilitate and encourage

appropriate management of digital records. Council commented on the Territory Records Office's draft Digital Recordkeeping Policy for the ACTPS in 2012-13 and was pleased to hear of its endorsement by the Strategic Board's Government ICT and Business Systems Committee. Council also takes seriously its role to advise the Director on issues of public access. The marketing and promotions strategy identifies a number of priority activities for reaching the public, which the Council supports, such as continuing to enhance the accessibility of ACT government archives through the ArchivesACT website. The Council has also taken a long-standing interest in securing centralised storage and management of the ACT archival collection, and remains committed to the pursuit of a dedicated archives repository for the ACT Government as a long-term goal. Such a facility would enhance the security, preservation and public accessibility of the ACT's most significant government archives.

During the year the appointments of three longstanding Council members expired. The Territory Records Office and the Council are grateful for the service and advice of historian Dr David Headon and indigenous archivist Ms Rebecca Stubbs, who were first appointed to the Council in 2007. The Council has also benefited greatly from the leadership of Mr Steve Stuckey, who had served as a member of Council since 2005 and as Chair since 2007.

OVERVIEW AND HIGHLIGHTS FOR 2013–2014.

The ACT government has in place a robust, coherent legislative framework for delivering strong records management outcomes. The Territory Records Office's standards, first developed in 2002 and periodically reviewed since that time, have always been principles-based and technology neutral. The standards, tools and advice developed by the Office provide a solid basis for guiding the management of ACT government records.

The Territory Records Office is now positioned to use that strong foundation as a basis for modernising ACT government recordkeeping and assisting agencies to move into a digital records environment. The 2013-14 year has been a time of planning, research and preparation that positions the Territory Records Office to take leadership of the transition to whole of government digital recordkeeping for the ACT public service. The Office also continued its contribution to the Centenary of Canberra, and developed a strategic approach to its public access responsibilities.

DIGITAL RECORDKEEPING POLICY FOR THE ACTPS

To assist the ACTPS to deliver authoritative and reliable systems that support open government in the digital environment, the Territory Records Office has developed a draft digital recordkeeping policy for the ACT Public Service. The policy makes a clear statement that ACT government agencies should be moving towards digital solutions to their recordkeeping needs, and that they should do this in a whole of government framework. The draft policy provides a single, clear and succinct statement of the ACTPS direction for digital recordkeeping.

The Territory Records Advisory Council considered and supported the draft policy at its May 2013 meeting. The policy was subsequently endorsed by the Government ICT and Business Systems Committee, and will be presented to the ACT public service's governing Strategic Board for final approval. The policy is supported by a digital recordkeeping framework which illustrates how existing and future recordkeeping can be supported in a whole of government digital approach.

The TRO has consulted on the policy with records managers and others through its Records and Information Management Community of Practice. The draft was also shared with members of the Australasian Digital Recordkeeping Initiative (ADRI). ADRI is a collaboration between all ten national, state and territory government record institutions in Australia and New Zealand, and works towards a common approach to digital recordkeeping across its member governments.

ONE ACTPS DIGITAL RECORDS CAPABILITY FEASIBILITY STUDY

One of the Office's most significant tasks during 2013–14 has been to prepare for the commencement of the One ACTPS Digital Records Capability feasibility study, which will examine the most effective approach to digital recordkeeping for the ACT public service. The Territory Records Office is leading this project for the ACT government. During 2013–14 our work primarily involved defining the scope of the project and its outputs, ready for delivery in 2014–15.

RECORDKEEPING LEADERSHIP

Since the passing of the Territory Records Act in 2002 the Territory Records Office has taken a facilitative approach to its role, working closely with records managers across the ACT public service to help agencies to meet the new compliance requirements introduced by the Act. This year, the Territory Records Office undertook a consultation process across government to establish agencies' needs for recordkeeping advice, tools and support.

While agencies identified some areas where the Territory Records Office might provide additional or improved assistance, they overwhelmingly supported a transition to a more strategic and regulatory stance from the Office. The Territory Records Office will use the consultation report to set its work plan priorities for 2014–15 and to inform its consideration of a new regulatory approach.

The Territory Records Office has during the year continued to develop recordkeeping advice products and tools that help agencies to comply with the Territory Records Act. Many of these have had a particular focus on a future transition to digital recordkeeping. The Office has released a new tool which can help agencies to determine whether their specialist business systems are capable of keeping digital records that meet Territory Records Office standards. We have also commenced a project to develop a common approach to metadata in the many recordkeeping systems currently in use in ACT government agencies. Both of these projects will contribute to a future whole of government recordkeeping regime by encouraging a standard approach to the identification and management of digital records and the systems they reside in.

RECORDS STORAGE AND DISPOSAL

While the future of recordkeeping in the ACT is digital, there remains a large quantity of paper records that must be appropriately stored and managed. Many of these will have ongoing significance to the Canberra community and need careful handling to ensure they remain preserved and accessible for future generations.

At present ACT government agencies make individual arrangements for the storage of their records, including with commercial records storage providers. In keeping with the One ACT Public Service philosophy, the Territory Records Office has been working with agencies, with internal storage provider Records Services, and with Shared Services Procurement to identify common service standards and requirements for commercial records storage and related services. Shared Services Procurement facilitated an information session for industry on the ACT's expectations and requirements, and we expect that a tender for contracts for whole of government records storage solutions will be released during 2014–15.

The TRO has also been examining its processes for monitoring the authorised disposal of records that are no longer required by the government or the community. The project, which will continue into 2014–15, will examine whether our current systems are the most efficient and effective approach to helping agencies to ensure that they have proper authorisation for the disposal of ACT government records.

CENTENARY OF CANBERRA

The Territory Records Office, through ArchivesACT, provides an important service to the public, helping members of the community to have access to ACT government archives. Prior to self-government in 1989, records relating to the administration of the ACT were created and managed by the Commonwealth. As a result, government records about the history of Canberra may be held either by the ACT Government or by the National Archives of Australia. To help researchers interested in Canberra's historical records, and to celebrate the Centenary of Canberra in 2013, the Territory Records Office joined with the National Archives to publish a guide to the collections of both governments relating to the ACT.

The guide, written by historian and archivist Ted Ling, provides an engaging 'potted history' of the ACT. It is also a valuable resource for those who would like to understand the breadth and depth of records available documenting the history of Canberra. The guide was launched by journalist and author Paul Daley on 16 October 2013 at the Albert Hall. It is available as a free download on the ArchivesACT website at www.archives.act.gov.au, and hard copies are for sale at the Canberra Museum and Gallery.

INCREASING PUBLIC ACCESS

During the year the Territory Records Office finalised a marketing and promotions strategy that guides our decisions about which activities will best help us to achieve our goal of helping Canberrans to get the best possible value from their archives. Some of the key tasks we have pursued during the year are:

- working with our colleagues in other state and territory archives to explore the acquisition of an online archival database;
- continuing our programme of indexing, scanning and uploading material to the ArchivesACT website; and
- continuing to highlight ACT archives to the community through our website and our 'Find of the Month'.

The Centenary of World War I will be a significant period for historians and archivists around Australia and the world. During 2013–14 the TRO commenced a project that will highlight the relevance of ACT government records to these commemorations, and this work will continue into 2014–15.

Danielle Wickman

Director

Territory Records Office

Ph: (02) 6207 0194

dani.wickman@act.gov.au