



Australian Society of Archivists Media Release

Tuesday 23 February 2010

Archives Matter!

The Australian Society of Archivists (ASA) is the professional association for archivists in Australia. The National President, Jackie Bettington, said today "We applaud the announcement today that the National Archives of Australia (NAA) will be retaining a presence in Darwin, Adelaide and Hobart. This has come as a result of significant pressure from the public, archivists, politicians (of all political persuasions), academics, journalists and historians. This is a real reminder to all governments across Australia that Archives do indeed matter".

"Today can be viewed as a celebration of the passion of South Australian's for their history and for the original records that document that history" added Kylie Percival, South Australian Branch State Convenor.

"I'm a bit overwhelmed by the dedication of my fellow Tasmanians," said David Bloomfield, Tasmanian Branch State Convenor, "It makes me feel rather proud that our history and our heritage remain so valued within our community".

Ms Bettington went on to say "Territorians too can feel pleased by the NAA retaining a presence in Darwin, however, all of us interested in preserving, maintaining and using the records created by government should not feel too complacent about this decision. The reality is that government archives across Australia are under-resourced and the ASA hopes that any co-location projects planned with like-minded research institutions is actually one of mutual benefit and doesn't end up representing a cost-cutting exercise for both organisations.

Digitising records continues to be offered up by politicians and resource-allocators across the country as the great panacea for access to archival material. The reality is that it remains an expensive and time-consuming exercise. If government archives do not make the investment in employing professional archivists who are skilled in making the linkages between the past, present and future, to provide entry points into the billions of government records held across the country, the records quite frankly may as well be on the moon.

Government archives also have a responsibility beyond the records held currently in their collections. They need to be working with the records creators to ensure that the evidence of current and future government actions, decisions and projects will exist for posterity. In the current climate of cost-cutting, we cannot guarantee that will continue to happen. For example, government re-structuring in the Northern Territory has resulted in the marginalisation of the NT Archives Service (NTAS) from current government recordkeeping activities and the loss of the position of Director, NTAS. This could happen elsewhere in Australia under the rationale of the Global Financial Crisis.

Having said that, let me congratulate and thank all those passionate advocates for archives, stay passionate and articulating that for all of Australia, Archives Matter!"

For more information contact:

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The ASA website is at www.archivists.org.au