



ALIA submission in response to the Tune Review of the National Archives of Australia

June 2019

1. About us

The Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) is the professional organisation and peak body for the Australian library and information services sector.

On behalf of our 5,000 personal and institutional members, we provide the national voice of the profession in the development, promotion and delivery of quality library and information services to the nation, through leadership, advocacy and mutual support. We represent school, public, academic, research, corporate, law, health, government, National, State and Territory libraries and the people who staff them.

Libraries have had a long involvement with archives. Our institutions provide complementary services and our professionals have complementary skills, knowledge and experience in preserving and making accessible Australia's documentary heritage.

2. Changing remit of archives

International Archives Week, 3-9 June 2019, took as its theme "Designing the Archives in the 21st Century – putting people at the centre of what we do." This audience-based, human-centred approach reflects the changes that have been brought about through the development of digital collections in archives around the world.

Citizens in developed nations are experiencing a new level of access to archives collections online; they are gaining confidence and skills in their ability to source information, and their level of expectation of government agencies and cultural institutions is growing exponentially with regard to making digital content freely available.

While the terms of reference for the Functional and Efficiency Review of the National Archives of Australia (NAA) speak specifically to the role of NAA as the keeper of government records for government use, it is also important to recognise the strong public interest in increased access to NAA materials, whether for informal uses such as family histories or formal social research projects.

3. National Archives of Australia

We can be proud of the achievements of NAA, which is acknowledged as a world class institution, providing leadership in the sector nationally, regionally and internationally.

In addition to caring for Australian Government records, NAA has kept up an active schedule of exhibitions, education and public programming, experimenting with new forms of public engagement and audience participation.

NAA has developed and implemented the Digital Continuity 2020 policy to promote good information governance across government. It has upheld its role as an essential part of the humanities research infrastructure. It has participated in information management sector initiatives and worked in partnership with GLAM (galleries, libraries, archives and museums) organisations to promote digital access to collections.

All this activity has taken place despite the enormous pressure on funding which the NAA bears, in common with other national cultural institutions, and the overwhelming need for major investment in digital transformation over and above the normal operating budget.

4. Considerations

Within its report, we ask the Tune Review panel to comment on the broader role of NAA, in relation to audience engagement, in the context of the information management and GLAM sectors, and with reference to the changing role of archives in the developed nations.

We also ask the panel to consider the impact of an injection of funding specifically for digital transformation, making priority records accessible to users online in a reasonable timeframe, and meeting the 2025 deadline for AV materials which may not otherwise survive in a usable condition.

ALIA contact:

Sue McKerracher, CEO, Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA)