

RECORDS TERRITORY

NORTHERN TERRITORY ARCHIVES SERVICE NEWSLETTER

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EDITORIAL

The aphorism "Out with the old, in with the new" is a not untropical remark at this time of the year. It is also to be heard between times, where the object at which it is directed may be office equipment or a record system.

In these competitive and image conscious times it has a deceptively simple and attractive ring of realism, with tones of hard pragmatism, acceptance of the seemingly inevitable and a touch of optimism as a counterpoint.

Great as the saying may be to welcome the times ahead, in records territory it should sound a note of caution. Pause, appraise and then resolve on action. By all means move on to the future but be sure that we don't lose the best from the past.

To all our clients and readers, a Happy New Year!

Don Brech

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ARCHIVES HEADS AT ALICE SPRINGS

The heads of Australia's government archives met at Alice Springs in December. The former State and Territory Archives Group (STAG), renamed the Council of Federal, State and Territory Archives (COFSTA) last year, holds meetings around Australia. This was the first meeting held away from the Eastern States. Another Territory first!



COFSTA meeting, L-R: John Cross, Greg Coleman, George Nichols, Denis Connor, Ian Pearce, (back to camera) Euan Miller and Ross Gibb

COFSTA members attending were **John Cross** (NSW), **Ross Gibb** (Vic), **Lee McGregor** (Qld), **Ian Pearce**, convenor (Tas), **Euan Miller** (SA), **George Nichols** (Cw) and **Greg Coleman** (NT). **Denis Connor**, Executive Secretary, from Australian Archives, ACT was also present. *(continued on page 2)*

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The Council ensures regular contact between the archives and provides a forum for discussion and consultation on archives and records issues that affect all jurisdictions.

Among the subjects dealt with at the meeting in Alice Springs were descriptive standards, the recovery of estrays, joint guides, evidence legislation and electronic records.

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REVIEW OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT IN NT GOVERNMENT

The recent review undertaken by NTAS of records management activities in the NT Government revealed some interesting statistics. A 60% return rate was received from the 332 agencies surveyed. Statistics were received from all major record-creating departments, regional offices and police stations, and averages taken from community health centres and schools which generally represented low returns.

There are at least 215 full-time records management personnel in the NT Public Service and the equivalent of 87 full-time personnel whose duties partly comprise records management activities. Over 300 personnel represents a significant sector which it is agreed requires a greater level of recognition and improved levels of standards and career structuring.

Interesting statistics also emerged about the quantity of records being created by Government agencies. Agencies currently create approximately 3000 shelf metres of records annually. This is the equivalent of about 15,000 standard archives boxes or 15 million documents. Records currently held by government agencies total approximately 25,000 shelf metres, the equivalent of 125,000 standard archives boxes or 125 million documents.

The findings of this review and various strategic proposals will be presented to Cabinet shortly as an initiative to improve the quality and efficiency of records management throughout the NT Government.

Greg Coleman
Principal Archivist

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APPRAISAL AND DISPOSAL BROCHURE

As part of the strategic planning exercise carried out by the Northern Territory Archives Service in the last six months, a brochure has been completed which explains the appraisal process to members of the NT public service and members of the public.

*Appraisal
and
Disposal
of
Public
Records*



NORTHERN TERRITORY ARCHIVES SERVICE

Appraisal and Disposal

Appraisal is the process which distinguishes those records of long term historical and evidential value from those which have limited use. This process is the basis for the decisions relating to the records which are stored at the Northern

Territory Archives Service. Records which are considered to be of long term or archival value, need to be stored in conditions which will ensure that they survive as long as possible. Records which may be destroyed at some stage have different storage requirements.

This brochure explains the benefits of appraisal to agencies in government, in particular, and what is involved in the process. One of the most useful benefits of the appraisal process, is the ability to destroy records where their usefulness is considered to have expired. The destruction of temporary value records at the end of their relevance, allows agency resources to be used more efficiently. The identification of archival records in an agency, ensures that these records are adequately stored and their importance appreciated by those using them regularly.

Linda Bell
Archivist (Records Services)

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RECENT ACCESSIONS

The following records were recently processed:

GOVERNMENT RECORDS

Department of Education,
Correspondence and confidential
correspondence files, 1986-1990

**Office of the Director of Public
Prosecutions,** Prosecution files,
1988-1989

**Northern Territory University,
Education Faculty,** Oral history
interviews on the history of education
in the Northern Territory, 1993

NON-GOVERNMENT RECORDS

**Australian Library and Information
Association, Northern Territory
Branch, Special Libraries' Section,**
Minutes, agenda papers and
correspondence, 1980-1991

The Environment Centre, Newspaper
cuttings and press releases about
environmental issues, 1977-1985

Jan Wositsky, Oral history interviews
with Bill Harney Jnr, 1993

Angelika Hertzog, Oral history
interviews on the history of the Scouts
and Guides in Tennant Creek, 1992

Edge Wise, Oral history interviews on
the successful education experiences of
Aboriginal people in the Northern
Territory, 1993

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DISPOSAL SCHEDULES - OFF AND RUNNING

As you will gather from this and previous issues of *Records Territory*, the Northern Territory Archives Service is giving high priority to records disposal. A key element in this program is the development of general disposal schedules for records common to more than one agency.

A general disposal schedule for school records was issued in August last year and workshops to assist school staff in its use are being held around the Territory.

In December, the workshop was taken 'down the Track' to Tennant Creek and Alice Springs and obtained a positive reception from those that attended. Further workshops are planned for the Darwin and Katherine regions in February.

Planning and survey work is now underway for two further general disposal schedules for local government and financial records.

MICROFILMING OF GOVERNMENT RESIDENT'S RECORDS

Early last year, the Northern Territory Archives Service proposed a project involving the microfilming of the Government Resident's Inwards Correspondence, 1870-1911. These records are some of the earliest surviving documents relating to the administration of the Northern Territory. A microfilming project was undertaken in 1986 to protect the original documents from damage through handling. The original documents were then withheld from access for research use and the microfilm copy made available.

Unfortunately, this microfilm did not meet the strict guidelines for archival microfilm and it was agreed that it was necessary to re-film these records.

Negotiations were begun in 1992 to undertake this project, ensuring that the requirements for archival microfilm were met.

To ensure that these documents are properly filmed, preparation work involving the repair, organising and checking of these documents has been under way for several months. These records are very fragile and have required repairs so that the documents can be handled for filming with less risk of

damage. The documents are checked to ensure that they are in order and heading sheets prepared to identify each bundle. At this stage 2,600 documents have been repaired, and the first group of documents sent to be microfilmed.

Merlinda Jarvier from the Conservation Commission has spent six weeks full-time repairing these documents. **Maureen Wilkins** has been closely involved in the project, completing a substantial amount of work on the documents when time permits.

Unfortunately, with the transfer of Merlinda back to the Conservation Commission in mid-December, preparation work will slow down until arrangements can be made for another full-time officer to carry out this work.

Rest assured that these essential and irreplaceable records of the early history of the Northern Territory will be protected for the use of this and future generations.

Linda Bell

Archivist (Records Services)

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ORAL HISTORY ROUNDUP

1993 ended with a burst of activity for the Oral History Unit. Among other work, two significant collections of interview tapes were lodged in the collection. One was from a group of researchers working on a book of stories from successful Aboriginal tertiary education graduates, for the NT Department of Education; the other was the result of ongoing research by **Dr Tony Austin** of NT University on the Croker Island Mission. Although these tapes came from non-Archives interviewers, they are being donated for use by the general research community, together with transcripts that will be



Merlinda Jarvier preparing documents for microfilming

compiled by the busy transcription service. By the end of 1993 the Unit had lodged just on four million words of transcript over the last five years, all proof-read and content-listed. Over 600 hours of tape recorded interviews were lodged in the same period.

The Oral History Unit's big news for 1994 is that there will be a seminar/workshop held in Darwin on Friday and Saturday April 8 and 9. A half-day seminar entitled *What is Oral History?* will be held on the Friday afternoon, and an all-day series of workshops will take place on the Saturday.

Ronda Jamieson, who heads the Battye Library's prestigious oral history program in Perth, and **Francis Good**, who heads the Oral History Unit at NT Archives, will present reports on their programs, and three or four Territory researchers will discuss their oral history interview work. Ronda will also report on her Churchill Fellowship study tour of oral history projects in the United Kingdom and North America. The seminar will provide open discussions on problems, strategies, issues and methodology arising from these reports.

The workshops sessions will include: how to interview; studies of transcription methods and alternatives; recording equipment and emerging technologies; interactive sessions on interview structures for beginners; and group participation in evaluation and discussion of techniques revealed by transcription examples from the NT Archives collection.

A registration fee of \$20 (\$15 concession for unwaged students and others) will cover lunch and refreshments, and the venue will be at Mirambeena Resort, Cavenagh Street. If you would like to be on the mailing list for the brochure and registration form, please write to Francis Good, or phone him on (089) 47 0756.

Francis Good
Archivist (Oral Records)

ABORIGINAL RESEARCH WORKSHOP

The workshop, held jointly by the Australian Archives NT Regional Office and the NT Archives Service on 5 November, attracted good support from 25 participants from the Darwin region. These included representatives from ATSIC, the Office of Aboriginal Development, Batchelor College and the North Australia Aboriginal Legal Aid Service.



Workshop in session at Australian Archive NT Regional Office

Gary Lee, a research worker at NT University, undertook the role of workshop leader and facilitator.

Staff of the Australian Archives and NT Archives Service gave an overview of their institutions, access arrangements and the processes of archival research.

The second major session was a lively and extensive discussion of the requirement for and use of archival records by Aboriginal researchers. Despite occasional forays into philosophical issues, participants are reported to have gained useful and practical insights into the nature of archival research.

The success of the workshop will undoubtedly encourage further events of this kind to be held elsewhere in the Territory.

WRITERS' PICNIC

On Wednesday 6 October 1993, NTAS, in conjunction with the NT Regional Office of Australian Archives, assembled a display at the Writers' Picnic held at Freds Pass Reserve, just south of Darwin.

The picnic, which has now become an annual event, was arranged by the Palmerston and Rural Resource Centre, and focused on the theme "Keeping History Alive". The aim of the exercise was to move school groups between various information points around the reserve and for them to later write about what they had learnt.

Some of the information points featured old artefacts, implements and displays while others featured 'senior' Territorians talking about the old days. An ex-NTAS staff member, **Christine Cox**, was among the 'seniors' and talked about living in remote parts of the Territory with her husband, Harry, in the 1960s.

The Archives display featured old photographs and papers with an introductory talk to the kids about what archives is all about. A few give-aways and an archivist dress-up session seemed to be appreciated by the school groups which passed through. The picnic represented another successful cooperative effort between NTAS and Australian Archives.

Greg Coleman
Principal Archivist

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NT HISTORY AWARDS

At the time of issue of this newsletter, most of the 14 NT History Awards for 1993 are yet to be acquitted.

Janet Dickinson's work on Evacuees from Darwin during World War II has been acquitted, and Janet is working towards eventual publication. **Max Cartwright** has also reported substantial progress with his manuscript about the history of the south-western regions of Central Australia.

Final manuscripts have also been submitted by **Ed Stokes** and **Suzanne Parry**. Ed Stokes received the major Award in 1986 and is now awaiting publication of his work about John McDouall Stuart's 1860-1862 expeditions *Across the Centre*. Suzanne Parry was a joint receiver of the major Award in 1991 and has completed her work on the role of Health and Medical Services in the settlement of the NT, 1911-1939.

Applications for the 1994 History Awards will be requested through the media in early March for allocation in July 1994. For any further information please contact the Principal Archivist or call in at NTAS and collect a leaflet about the Awards.

Greg Coleman
Principal Archivist

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RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

Recent research projects using the Archives have included:

- * World War II evacuees (**Janet Dickinson**, Darwin)
- * History of Kulaluk (**Samantha Wells**, NARU)
- * Established ethnic groups in Darwin, 1911-1993 (PhD thesis, **Christine Karlsen**, NTU)

RECORDS MANAGEMENT - FROM THE ARCHIVES

The records reproduced here provide an early lesson in file control - keep the originals, send copies!

No. 48
V.  R.
SOUTH AUSTRALIA
—(a)—
NORTHERN TERRITORY.
—(b)—
Government Resident's Office,
Received 19 May 1885
From Min. of Education
SUBJECT:

*N.T. dockets filed
in Adelaide Office
cannot be returned.*

*Mr. Whitelaw
In future copy
all documents, and
retain originals here.
19/5/85 *[Signature]**

Dockets were prepared as cover sheets for letters and other documents received in the Government Resident's Office before being passed to the Government Resident for minuting with instructions.

Docket No 48 has been noted "N.T. dockets filed in Adelaide Office cannot be returned" and minuted by the Government Resident "Mr Whitelaw. In future copy all documents and retain originals here."

Mr Whitelaw (probably Edgar H Whitelaw, later Inspector of Stock), was Secretary to the Government Resident and responsible for administration and record keeping in the Government Resident's Office. The Government Resident was John Langdon Parsons who held the office from 1884 to 1890.

South Australia.

Office of the Minister of Justice and Education.

Adelaide 19th 5th 1885

*374
35*

Sir,
In reply to your letter dated 10th Ultimo asking that all N.T. dockets may be returned for filing, I have the honor to inform you that the dockets are required in this Office.
All letters and minutes (except more formal ones) should be copied in the N.T. —
I have the honor to be
Yours Obedient Servant
R C Baker
Min of Justice & Education.
The Hon. J. C. Parsons,
Govt. Resident,
Port Darwin.

The despatch from the Minister of Justice and Education reads "In reply to your letter dated 10th Ultimo asking that all N.T. dockets may be returned for filing, I have the honor to inform you that the dockets are required in this Office. All letters and minutes (except more formal ones) should be copied in the N.T."

In accordance with office practice at that time, the cross reference to previous correspondence, in this case the letter sent by the Government Resident of the Northern Territory on 10 March 1885, was entered in the right hand margin.

The letter was signed, but not written, by the Hon R C Baker, MLC, Minister responsible for the administration of the Northern Territory of South Australia. Then, as now, routine official letters were prepared by clerks for the Minister's signature.

Although addressed to Port Darwin, a frequently used alternative, the official name of the town was Palmerston. The name was changed to Darwin on 3 March 1911.

Source note: Northern Territory Archives Service; Government Resident's Office; NTRS 790, Inwards Correspondence, 1870-1911; Docket No 48, 19 May 1885.

ARCHIVES DISPLAY

Our current display is titled *When the war came to Darwin*.

Using photographs and extracts from oral history interviews, the display highlights the main themes on World War II represented in the extensive holdings of the Oral History Collection and resulting particularly from the 1992 **Frontline Oral History Project**.

Most aspects of the Territory's war years are covered in some way by many of the interviews recorded since the Collection, now held at the Archives, began in 1979. The **Frontline Oral History Project** added to these and was one of many activities mounted in response to the NT Government's official commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the first Japanese air raid on Darwin, which occurred on 19 February 1942.

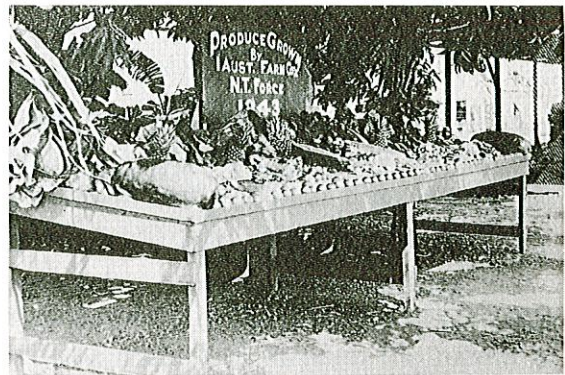
When the war came to Darwin focuses mainly on the experiences of survivors of the bombing and of the service men and women who came to Darwin for the duration of the War.



Troops arrive in Darwin by train

The display is made up of 8 panels covering the following topics:

- * Getting there - by road, rail and ship from 'down south'
- * First impressions - Darwin in the late 30s and early 40s
- * Living the life - living conditions, accommodation, health and welfare and entertainment
- * Organisation and leadership - training and preparation or, more specifically, the lack of it
- * Under fire - bombings and casualties
- * Image and reality - the 'down south' view of Darwin at war versus the reality.



Fresh rations from Adelaide River

Six of the panels were sent to Sydney in September 1993 to illustrate **Francis Good's** paper at the biennial national conference of the Oral History Association of Australia. Two more panels have since been constructed.

These are now to be seen, together with a selection of original records, in the foyer at the Archives in McMinn Street, Darwin.

Jenni Wright
Archivist (Information Services)

NT ARCHIVES SERVICE

An agency of the Conservation Commission of the NT.

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