

RECORDS TERRITORY

NORTHERN TERRITORY ARCHIVES SERVICE NEWSLETTER

No.17

JUNE 1998

RECORDS MANAGEMENT

UP AND RUNNING

In March, Cabinet approved the implementation of some key recommendations of the records management strategy which was completed for the NT Public Sector in 1997.

A Whole-of-Government records management framework was approved, and funding was provided to implement consistent records management standards, policies and software in all agencies.

The NTAS was authorised as the area of government responsible for records management and provided with new recurrent funding for staff to provide records policy, guidelines and standards for the NT Public Sector and to maintain a service-wide records management system.

Capital funding has now been identified in the 1998/99 budget to select and implement a records management system for all NT Government agencies.

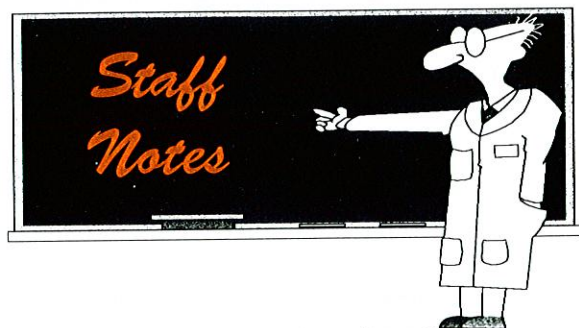
Reporting structures have been put in place and agency representatives nominated to take part in the implementation process. Aside from getting some early policy work done, the current significant task is to get the specifications for a records management system finalised.

The projects have been titled *Recordsconnect*. Over the coming months, significant effort will be directed to promoting records management across the NT Public Sector, and to preparing personnel for their responsibilities as records managers.



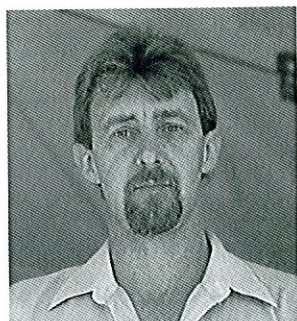
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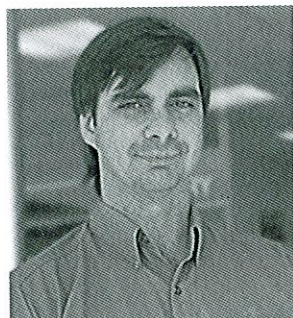


Ann Marshall has recently resigned from her position as administration officer at the NTAS. We wish Ann all the best as she heads off to encounter more exciting things in Europe and beyond.

We welcome Glen Mitchell who has taken up the position of Administration Officer.



A few other new faces have also arrived at the NTAS lately:



Max O'Brien has brought his artistic flair to the NTAS on a temporary basis to develop the NTAS web sites and to help with some promotional projects.

Jeanette Collins has taken up the position of project officer to deliver the whole-of-government records management system contract.



Celina Hodge has also commenced working with the NTAS to provide support to Jeanette Collins with the records management system contract.

ORAL HISTORY

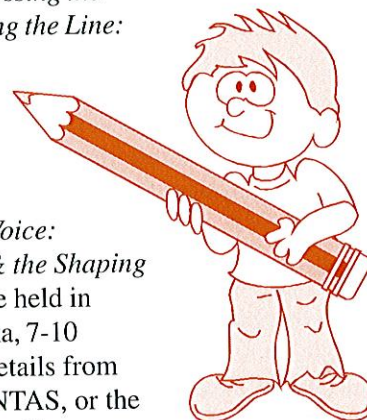
CONFERENCE NOTES

Former NTAS staff member **Sue Harlow**, now with the N.T. Museum, will present a paper on oral history in the museum context at a mini-conference of the South Australian Branch of the Oral History Association of Australia (OHAA) in Adelaide on 20 June 1998, using tape extracts from her own work and the NTAS collections.

The newly-formed NT Society of Editors will visit the NTAS Search Room and Oral History Unit on 17 July 1998 to look at our operations and discuss issues of interest to publication editors. To register, contact Marian Devitt at the NT Writers Centre, phone/fax 8941 2651.

The Queensland Branch of the OHAA will present a conference, with Museums Australia, in Townsville 21-25 September 1998, called *Two: Up in the Tropics*. Details from Secretariat, 17 Kepler Street, Wulguru, NQ 4811 (email: thuringowa-library@ultra.net.au).

The U.S.A. equivalent of the OHAA, the Oral History Association (OHA), holds its next annual meeting (conference) in Buffalo, NY, on 15-18 October 1998: *Crossing the Boundary, Crossing the Line: Oral History on the Border*. The call for papers has been issued for next year's meeting, *Giving Voice: Oral Historians & the Shaping of Narrative*, to be held in Anchorage, Alaska, 7-10 October 1999. Details from Francis Good at NTAS, or the OHA web-site: <http://www.baylor.edu/~OHA>.



The NTAS would like to thank the following organisations and companies for their assistance in the records salvage operations from the Katherine and Daly River floods:

**QUF Industries (Pauls Coca Cola),
Carrier, NT News,
National Archives, Darwin Cold Stores,
NT Freight Service**

7 INFORMATION ABOUT RECORDSCONNECT

Agency personnel wishing to know more about the records management projects (known as *Recordsconnect*) are advised to contact their representatives on the Records Management Advisory Group. You can also call Greg Coleman at the NTAS for more information. Greg can also advise who your agency representative is. For information about the records management system selection process, please call Jeanette Collins at the NTAS.

A List server has been set up for NT Government personnel wishing to participate in discussion about the recordsconnect projects. Please check the NT Government Intranet for details of how to subscribe or contact Greg Coleman at the NTAS.

A RCHIVES IN ALICE SPRINGS

Many of our clients, particularly those in Alice Springs, will be aware that investigations have taken place into the establishment of an Archives office in Alice Springs. Unfortunately, financial circumstances have made such a proposition not viable in the coming year.

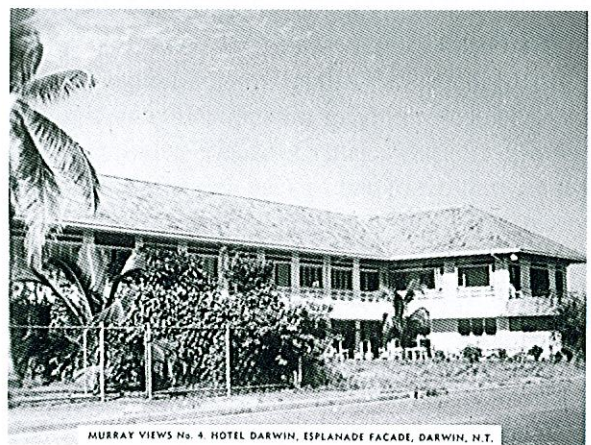
We understand the reluctance of Centralians to deposit their valuable archival items and collections at our Darwin facility. While it is not possible to establish an operating archives in Alice Springs for now, the NTAS is looking at ways of at least providing some secure storage in Alice Springs as an interim measure in preventing further loss. While there would be virtually no access to the material, at least it would be safe. We will keep those interested informed of progress in this regard.

7 HE ARCHIVES RELOCATE

Our physical moves may be over but the NTAS has recently been administratively relocated within the Department of Transport & Works. Following recent departmental restructures, we farewelled the Asset Services Division to join Arthur Boland's merry Corporate Support & Business Services Division. A note of thanks is extended to David Rolland, former Assistant Secretary Asset Services, for his support during our term with his division.

R ECENT ACQUISITIONS

The NTAS has recently acquired a collection of black and white photographs of post WWII from Pax Nichols. Pax served as a Captain in the RAAF in Darwin during 1947. These photographs were taken and collected during her time in Darwin.



PROTOCOLS FOR ABORIGINAL ACCESS

In October last year, the Territory Government issued the *Protocol for Access to Northern Territory Government Records by Aboriginal People Researching their Families*. The Protocol is designed to assist Aboriginal people affected by past policies of family separation to access government records in search of family information.

The Protocol establishes the NTAS as the first point of contact for Territory Government 'Stolen Generations' research.

The Aboriginal Advisory Group was established to oversee and monitor the Protocol and its use. Administered by the NTAS, the Group has now met three times. Aside from establishing its terms of reference, the main issues under consideration have been in relation to accessing the records of specific Territory Government agencies.

The representatives on the Aboriginal Advisory Group are as follows:

TERRITORY GOVERNMENT -

Greg Coleman & Andrew Pitt (NTAS).

STOLEN GENERATIONS COMBINED REFERENCE GROUPS

Colleen Davidson, I vacancy.

KARU ASSOCIATION (LINK-UP)

Rosie Baird & Marian Hayes.

CENTRAL AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL CHILD CARE AGENCY -

Allen Furber, Wendy O'Brien.

SCHOOL RECORDS DISPOSAL SCHEDULE

We are very pleased to advise that the *General Disposal Schedule for School Records and Storage Procedural Guidelines* has recently been issued. Arrangements will be made shortly for the distribution of the Schedule and Guidelines throughout the NT Department of Education. There will also be some associated training.



HISTORY AWARDS

The NT History Awards attracted 30 applications this year. At the time of writing the NT History Awards Committee is making its recommendations for the Awards to the Minister for Transport & Works. It is expected that the Minister will announce the 1998 NT History Awards very soon.

On past Award recipients, we congratulate Peter Elder who was recently awarded a PhD from the NT University. Peter received an Award to assist with his research about Territory Administrator, Charles Abbott. The title of this work is *Charles Lydiard Aubrey Abbott: Countryman or Colonial Governor?*





ARCHIVES OUTREACH

The way that information is brought out in oral history interviews depends on many variables, such as, for example, the purposes and style of interviewing. One important factor is that a life history approach may yield an interview quite different to others which focus only on a particular event or theme, usually limiting discussion about the wider background of respondents.

Any large collection of oral records, such as the one held in the Northern Territory Archives, is enhanced where there is a balance sought between the general and the particular in interview content. Usually, interviews commissioned or recorded by Archives follow a one-off approach, where all of interviewees' life experiences in the Northern Territory may be the potential canvas: many events can be covered, but not always in the same way as other interviews which touch on some of the same events, and often not as thoroughly as interviews dealing exclusively with closely defined themes.

Within the NTAS collection of over 2,000 recorded hours there are some exceptions to this generalisation among the many oral history interviews recorded by Archives: for example, those which deal with the experience of Cyclone Tracy, the first bombing raids on Darwin, and some interviews with pastoralists. Groups of interviews on these three topics follow many similar lines of inquiry and offer much interesting comparison and contrast.

Furthermore, for some years Archives has been working closely, for mutual benefit, with private and community-based projects where oral testimony is an integral and often major part of research on focussed topics. A number of projects, by arrangement, have used Archives' equipment to record interviews concentrating exclusively on the project objectives; and have then been provided by Archives with full verbatim transcripts of interviews for use in the work for which they were collected, be it a thesis or published book.

This has enabled Archives not only to assist private researchers, but is also a way of offering support to community bodies, whether in Darwin or anywhere else around the Territory, including very remote localities. As a return on this investment of scarce resources, Archives has been able to broaden its

holdings of oral records compiled by the Oral History Unit, by lodging many such groups of interviews on defined lines of inquiry that have been recorded by external projects: not only are the research projects assisted, but the material they generate, often including photos and other records, will be permanently preserved in Archives and available for the whole research community.

This interactive approach in collection policy has also enabled the sharing of accumulated experience on interview processes, and protocols have been established which assist research projects to follow best oral history practice and ethical standards, particularly in ensuring protection of interviewees' rights and proper documentation.

One community project which Archives is assisting in this way was featured at *Crossing Borders*, the Oral History Association of Australia's highly acclaimed national conference in Alice Springs last year (see last issue of *Records Territory*), when Jane Bathgate and Joanna Barrkman told us about a Pine Creek local history project, and displayed some beautiful community-made banners.

More recently, Lori Martin and the Katherine Region of Writers (KROW) began work on a project that will eventually see publication of a book on the experience of the incredible floods that devastated Katherine in January this year. Volunteers have already collected a substantial number of interview recordings, and these will be supplemented by others recorded by Archives for the project. KROW is very busy also collecting accounts written specifically for the project by flood victims, as well as other published accounts, documents and photos.

Archives will transcribe the interviews, and whilst edited versions will contribute to the KROW publication, the full records will also be lodged in our oral history collections for general research. As a record of the experience of a major Territory disaster, they will form a rich background to written sources on the same subject, and also will offer many different, yet comparable kinds of insight, not just on the details of this particular story, but also, for those who care to explore, on the personality and character of Northern Territory people in their response to adversity.

Francis Good



REMOTE DISASTERS:

KATHERINE AND DALY RIVER RECOVERY

Most archivists and records managers will deal with a disaster of some proportions in their career. Whether it's a leaking tap or roof, or a major flood, the principles for recovering records are essentially the same.

The NT Archives role in the Katherine and Daly River floods included providing community advice; tracking down damaged government records; coordinating transport and salvage of records; and drying records for small

The two factors which proved to be the most challenging aspects of the Katherine and Daly River floods were the *remoteness of the locations* and the *scale of the disasters*.

Katherine and the Daly River (Nauiyu Nambiyu) Community are each located approximately three hours driving time from Darwin (the closest city) but not located in close proximity to each other. Only one suburb in Katherine escaped the flood water and all of Daly River community went underwater.

In both cases the decision was made to remove any damaged records to Darwin for either immediate freezing or salvage. Refrigerated transport stopped the mould growth while the freezing of the records allowed time to prepare recovery areas and staff.

Identifying damaged records required considerable investigation as many agencies had evacuated their offices to set up essential services and most staff were occupied with other duties and out of contact. Damaged records were located at peoples homes, storage facilities and commercial storage companies.

Approximately 1200 boxes of records from 10 agencies were salvaged. We were very pleased with the success rate of our salvage efforts. This can be related to the outstanding commitment of records managers and their staff. Agencies such as the Department of Housing and Local Government, and NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services dealt quickly with their damaged records and had them returned to their Katherine offices within a short period. Many agencies took advantage of commercial records salvage services (Moisture Control Services) which were temporarily located in Darwin for a month.

I was overwhelmed with the willingness of people to assist in a disaster. Services in Darwin were stretched yet many companies such as



*Daly River (Nauiyu Nambiyu) Council Archives room
17/2/98*

organizations such as Daly River Community Council. In disasters the scale of Katherine and Daly River, where an entire community is affected, one of the last things people will be concerned with are their records.



QUF Industries and Carrier provided assistance for free or additional services with a great generosity of spirit.

There are many lessons to be learnt from these disasters.

- Being prepared is the key.
- Disaster plans need to be updated and kept handy.
- Investigate before you decidewhether the records are too far gone to salvage.
- Think laterally, and don't be afraid to ask for help.



*Frozen records deposited at Palm Court and drying records
25/2/98*

Linda Bell. Archivist (Records Services)

MY HEART IS BREAKING EXHIBITION

The NTAS recently hosted the touring exhibition *My Heart Is Breaking: an exhibition about the Aboriginal People of Victoria from the official records*.

While the exhibition related specifically to the Victorian experience, it generated much Territory interest as the local experiences of the 'Stolen Generations' were similar. At the Territory launch of the exhibition on 9th April, Harold Thomas, Chairman of the Combined Stolen Generations Reference Groups, and Ralph Day, a Territorian who grew up in the region featured in the exhibition, spoke about family associations and similarities of experience between the Territory and Victoria.

The exhibition is a joint initiative of the Public Record Office of Victoria and the Koori Heritage Trust, in association with the National Archives of Australia and the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust.



The Combined Northern Territory Stolen Generations Reference Groups and the Northern Territory Archives Service invite you to the launch of

My Heart is Breaking

an exhibition about the Aboriginal People of Victoria from the official records

Harold Thomas, Chairman of the Combined Stolen Generations Reference Groups, will launch the exhibition:
Thursday 9 April 1998 at 5.00pm
at the Northern Territory Archives Service,
2nd floor, 25 Cavenagh Street, Darwin
RSVP 8 March 1998, telephone 8924 7655

The Exhibition will remain open to the public weekdays
between 8.00am and 4.00pm until Friday 10 April

My Heart is Breaking is a joint initiative of the Public Record Office of Victoria and the Koori Heritage Trust, in association with the National Archives of Australia and the Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust.

VISIONS OF AUSTRALIA
A FILM BY GUY SPENCER
Produced by GUY SPENCER

ARTS VICTORIA
A FILM BY GUY SPENCER
Produced by GUY SPENCER

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R E C O R D S S T O R A G E

The specifications document for a period contract for records storage and disposal services for NT Government agencies is currently being prepared. The Document has been distributed to all agencies for comment shortly. It is anticipated that tenders will be called in the next couple of months.

N T A S

R E S T R U C T U R E

The recently approved records management initiatives for the NT Public Sector are providing the NTAS with the opportunity to review its own operating structure.

A new section will be established which is responsible for records policy and disposal. Two newly approved positions will occupy this section. This will allow other resources within the NTAS to be re-focused to the collection and preservation of the Territory Government and community archives, an area which has been somewhat neglected due to changing priorities. Further resources will also be re-focused to improve the provision of information to the community.

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