

# Overview 2006-07

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# Our charter, direction and services

## Our charter – who we are, why we exist

### Who we are

The State Records Authority of New South Wales (State Records) is the NSW Government's archives and records management authority. We manage the NSW State archives collection and we set the rules and provide guidance on the management of official records. Our off-budget Government Records Repository (GRR) provides records storage services to the public sector.

State Records is a part of the Office of NSW Procurement within the NSW Department of Commerce.

We administer the State Records Act.

### Legislation and functions

We are a statutory body constituted by the *State Records Act 1998* to:

- develop and promote efficient and effective methods, procedures and systems for the creation, storage, management, disposal, preservation and use of State records
- provide for the storage, preservation, management and provision of access to any records in our possession
- advise on and foster the preservation of the archival resources of the State, whether public or private
- document and describe State archives in their functional and administrative context, and
- such other functions as are conferred or imposed on the Authority by or under this Act or any other law.

### >1821

Colonial Secretary and Registrar of the Records appointed

### >1879

Keeper of Archives position proposed but not established

### >1887

Archivist appointed to transcribe records for *History of New South Wales from the Records*

### >1910

Trustees of Public Library prepare report on neglect of government records

### >1911

Departments advised to transfer historical records to the Mitchell Library

### >1953

Archives Department established within Public Library of NSW

### >1955

Government Records Repository established

### >1960

Archive Act 1960 passed

### >1961

Archives Authority of NSW and Archives Office established

### >1976

Records Management Office established

### >1998

State Records Act 1998 passed

### >1999

State Records Authority and its Board established

### Exhibition *In Living Memory*



## Our direction – where we are heading, how we work

### Vision

That people and Government in NSW have ready access to records which illuminate history, enrich the life of the community and support good and accountable government.



View from McMahons Point. From NRS12685  
Sydney Harbour Bridge Photographs  
Digital ID: 12685\_a007\_a00704\_8730000056r

### Aims

- Ensure that the business of the NSW public sector is properly documented and that official records are managed efficiently and effectively to support frontline service delivery, good governance and accountability.
- Develop, document, preserve and make available the State archives collection as a cultural and information resource in order to enrich the people and communities of NSW.

### Values

- the highest possible professional standards
- our customers and their needs in our decision-making and business directions
- integrity and accountability in our dealings with stakeholders, customers and the records
- innovation, creativity and openness to ideas in our work
- respect for our customers and their diverse backgrounds and interests, and respect for each other.

## Our services – what we do, clients and stakeholders

### What we do

- Set records and archives strategy for the NSW Government and broader public sector.
- Regulate, guide and promote recordkeeping across the public sector (includes setting and monitoring standards, identifying records to be kept as State archives, authorising disposal of records, training records management practitioners).
- Store non-current records for the public sector, and provide file retrieval and secure records destruction services.
- Document, store and preserve the State archives collection (includes accessioning records, cataloguing, producing guides to the collection, conservation, digitisation).
- Support regional repositories and community access points through grants and training.
- Provide reference services and promote the collection and its use (includes operating reading rooms, online access, enquiry and copying services, exhibitions, publications, talks and tours).

>The people of NSW  
>Communities with particular needs, including the Indigenous community, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and people in regional NSW  
>researchers around Australia and the world  
>Australian governments  
>Australian and New Zealand public records authorities  
>governments and private companies around the world

>central agencies  
>departments, agencies, and statutory bodies  
>Ministers' offices  
>State owned corporations  
>local councils  
>the public health system  
>the universities  
>the Governor  
>the Houses of Parliament  
>courts and tribunals



## Director's review

At the start of the 2006–07 year, the review of State Records by the Council on the Cost and Quality of Government (CCQG), as reported in our previous annual report, had just been completed, but the results had not yet been approved by the Government. We were still in the 'strategic limbo' to which I referred in last year's report.

By the end of 2006–07 we were well advanced in implementing the sector-wide strategic recommendations resulting from the review. We report on this progress in a number of places in this annual report.

Budget Committee of Cabinet approved the findings and recommendations from the review on 28 August 2006.

We had sought an independent review because of issues hindering our ability to carry out our statutory mission. While the review examined State Records' own performance — notably finding State Records to be an 'efficient and prudently run organisation' — the major focus of the review became the management of records across the NSW public sector.

The CCQG review examined significant issues in two main areas: (1) digital recordkeeping and archiving and (2) the retention and disposal of records.

The need to secure Government support for a digital archives solution — to enable State Records to preserve and provide access to 'born-digital' records as State archives over multiple generations of technological change — had been one of the catalysts for our seeking the review. The Government's decision to approve the review recommendation to establish such a digital archive (subject to a satisfactory business case) is profoundly important for the future of our mission as the State's archives institution.

The Government also approved important recommendations about improving government-wide digital records and information strategy and ensuring that agencies' systems comply with digital recordkeeping requirements.

The CCQG review highlighted the failure of many agencies to determine systematically how long the different classes of records that they

generate need to be retained, and the consequent impact for Government in terms of the cost of unnecessary storage and the risks associated with illegal or unmanaged destruction of records. This includes the risk of destruction of records that should be identified and kept as State archives.

The Government approved review recommendations requiring those agencies to develop comprehensive retention and disposal authorities over the next three years, and tasking State Records with managing a sector-wide program to reduce the Government's records storage costs and risks. Already there is significant progress in this area: in June 2007 47 per cent of agencies had comprehensive retention and disposal authority coverage, compared with 36 per cent at the time of the review.

To enhance State Records' whole-of-government role, the review recommended a move from the Arts to the Commerce portfolio, with the formal transfer to the Department of Commerce taking place on 1 November 2006. This has already produced a number of benefits. The move does not diminish our public role as the State's archives institution, nor does it affect our status as the government body responsible for the *State Records Act 1998*.

When it approved the review recommendations, the Budget Committee of Cabinet also asked the Department of Commerce to undertake a business review of the operations of our off-budget records storage arm, the Government Records Repository (GRR). The GRR is a major part of State Records' business mix and the results of this review will likely have a significant strategic impact. As at June 2007, this review was still in progress.

Whilst the CCQG review and the key strategies resulting from it dominated much of our efforts in 2006–07, we achieved many other worthwhile things, which are described elsewhere in this annual report and a few of which I want to highlight here.

Despite the inevitable uncertainties of the current business review, staff in the GRR continued to provide high quality services to the NSW public sector with great commitment and

efficiency. The GRR exceeded its targets for the year in terms of financial performance, meeting clients' growing demand for services and service quality.

Our online services continued to grow in popularity. Orders placed online for copies of archives grew by 77 per cent during 2006–07. Reference enquiries received and answered by email grew by 55 per cent, representing 87 per cent of all written enquiries received. Only two years ago (2004–05), we were still receiving more reference enquiries by 'snail mail' than email.

This trend was even more marked with our online catalogue to the State archives collection, *Archives Investigator*, and the related *Photo Investigator*. Monthly visits (unique user sessions) to the Archives/Photo Investigator 'domain' of our website grew from 2,963 in June 2006 to 22,749 in June 2007, increasing by 668 per cent!

This extraordinary result reflects growth in content accessible from these sources. Our catalogue consolidation project has seen the number of 'record series' descriptions (the primary level of archival cataloguing) available through *Archives Investigator* grow from 1,617 to 11,286 over the last two years, making it a far more useful tool for supporting research using archives. The number of archival photographs that can be searched and viewed online grew by 28 per cent during 2006–07, while the *Photo Investigator* search page became our most popular web page after the home page.

We reached two significant milestones in the more detailed online cataloguing of the collection during 2006–07. The number of individual record items (files, volumes, etc.) listed in *Archives Investigator* passed the 200,000 mark, while the number of index entries (mostly people's names) searchable online passed 800,000.

We should not lose sight of the fact, though, that the bulk of the State archives collection does not appear in our online catalogue at this detailed level. Most of it, at best, is catalogued in various hard copy lists and guides prepared over many decades. We estimate that there are

about eight million individual record items in the collection, so we have a long way to go to make it fully discoverable online.

Archives are used for many purposes. Since 2005, State Records has been a partner in the Aboriginal Trust Fund Repayment Scheme, an important social justice initiative of the NSW Government. It is an evidence-based scheme, with the records of the former Aborigines Welfare Board in the State archives collection representing the primary official source of documentary evidence.

Our main contribution to the Scheme has been in the verification of claims by finding and checking relevant records. In 2006–07, to make this process more efficient, we started, and mostly completed, a project to index a major group of correspondence, resulting in over 29,000 index entries. A second, larger project to index the remaining records of the Board is expected to take place in 2007–08. These projects will bring immediate benefits for the operation of the Scheme and its aim of repaying money owed to Indigenous people before too much more time passes. The projects will also make the records far more useable as a primary source for future research.

Our major exhibition for 2006–07 showed another way in which some of these same records can connect the community with the story of the interaction of Indigenous people and the State. *In Living Memory — Surviving Photographs from the Records of the NSW Aborigines Welfare Board, from 1919 to 1966* has elicited an extraordinary range of responses in people who have seen it. It has been our most successful exhibition so far, in terms of visitor numbers, media interest and — hardest to quantify — emotional impact. *In Living Memory* has been so successful that we have extended it into 2007–08, so there is still time to see it.



DAVID ROBERTS  
Director



## Message from the Chairperson

It gives me great pleasure to write my first annual report message as Chair of the Board.

I would like to begin by paying tribute to my predecessor Dr Shirley Fitzgerald who provided invaluable support and leadership to State Records and its Board between 2001 and 2006. In addition, I would like to thank the Director, David Roberts, and the Associate Director, Alan Ventress, for their assistance in preparing me for my role as Chair. I feel honoured by the appointment, particularly as it represents the culmination of a longstanding relationship, which commenced in 1983 when I first attended the Sydney Records Centre in The Rocks to undertake research for my honours thesis in history.

State Records plays a critical role for our society and for our government as the keeper of our official documentary heritage. Through its preservation of documents and photographs it enables us to learn not only about the past but also from it. Broad community access to our records also helps to enhance understandings of how the past becomes the present, which helps to sustain our sense of identity. To achieve such ends it is, of course, essential for our archives to be managed efficiently. The review of State Records by the NSW Government's Council on the Cost and Quality of Government and the efforts made to implement the recommendations contained in its report provide the basis for efficient management and quality service delivery.

Perhaps the most important outcome of this review process has been the transfer of State Records from the Arts to the Commerce portfolio on 1 November 2006. This change provides a means for promoting a whole-of-Government orientation to the preservation and administration of our government records. Although there are many benefits that will flow from this change, in my view the greatest value will be in the increased potential for closer ties between State Records and other government organisations, as well as for increased support for the retention and management of government digital archives. Further details about these developments can be found elsewhere in this report. However, the key point is that greater efficiency and connectedness will

strengthen the position of State Records and so assist it to meet the challenges of the future.

As a user of State records I am personally very pleased by the increased accessibility offered by online catalogues and enquiry services. The growth of visits to the online catalogues from 2,963 in 2006 to 22,749 in 2007 cogently demonstrates just how popular this type of access is to members of the broader community who are engaged in research on our State's history and its inhabitants.

State Records makes connections with the community in other significant ways. Its program of publications and exhibitions contributes to our knowledge about aspects of our past that have long been buried or marginalised. The *In Living Memory* exhibition of surviving photographs from the records of the NSW Aborigines Welfare Board, from 1919 to 1966 is a notable case in point. Not only has it attracted extensive interest from a wide range of visitors and the media, it has also offered a way of connecting Indigenous members of the community to their own past.

Achievements of this nature owe an immense debt to the people who work for State Records as both employees and volunteers. I would like to congratulate the staff and management for the diligence and professionalism that ensures high quality service and I wish them all the best for facing the inevitable challenges that accompany organisational change. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the volunteers whose involvement enhances community access to our archival collections.

I have already acknowledged the work and dedication of my predecessor over her two terms as Chair. I would also like to acknowledge and thank the Hon. John Aquilina, MP who completed his term on the Board at the end of 2006, Peter Loxton who served on the Board from 2003 and who performed the role of Deputy Chair in 2006 until his resignation on 1 November, and Michael Coutts-Trotter who replaced him from 1 November 2006 and who tendered his resignation on 11 July 2007.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my appreciation to my colleagues on the Board, the Hon. Don Harwin, MLC, Justice

Patricia Bergin, Stephen Davies, John O’Hearn, Peter Carr and Darreia Turley — who became Deputy Chair in February 2007 — for their service to the Government and people of NSW. I look forward to working with them in maintaining high standards in the retention and disposal of our government records.



ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR LUCY TAKSA, PhD  
Chairperson of the Board



Circular Quay circa 1935. From NRS9856  
Maritime Services Board Glass Negative  
Digital ID: 9856\_a017\_a017000148

# Performance summary

## Efficient retention of public sector records

### Goals and objectives

- Improve records retention policy coverage across the public sector to achieve 67% coverage.
- Store non-current records efficiently on behalf of the public sector, and with minimal impact on the environment.
- Improve records retention policy coverage across the public sector.

In 2006-07 we sought to increase the net growth of non-current records in our storage facilities by 5%, with a target of 32,000 linear metres of files accessioned (taken into custody).

### Achievements

We estimate that 72% of public offices have comprehensive functional records retention policies. We further estimate that 47% of NSW government agencies (which make up an estimated 52% of the pool of public offices) have comprehensive retention policies in place. This compares favourably to the initial baseline figure of 36% which was used during the 2005-06 Council on the Cost and Quality of Government performance review of State Records. This result is largely due to our strategy to achieve comprehensive disposal coverage of NSW Government agencies by retention and disposal policies (also known as disposal authorities). We approved 19 functional policies and 1 general policy submitted by public offices. In addition 5 general policies were developed by State Records.

We accessioned 32,500 linear metres of non-current records into the Government Records Repository, bringing the total holdings to 373,000 metres. Net growth in holdings was just over 25,000 linear metres, which was higher than anticipated despite the large quantities of records destroyed, transferred or permanently recalled. During the year the GRR took its 2,000,000 individual box of records into storage.

We performed 321,216 file retrieval operations at the request of clients, which is slightly higher than we estimated. Efficiency in file retrieval and other operations continues to be boosted by the roll-out of further enhancements to our electronic inventory system, RS-SQL. In total,

528,250 different activities were managed through RS-SQL during the year.

### Outlook

Over the next year State Records will be implementing the *Strategy to achieve comprehensive disposal coverage of NSW Government agencies by retention and disposal authorities* (by 2009/2010). This strategy supports and builds on key decisions made in 2006 by the Budget Committee of Cabinet on the basis of the recommendations of the Performance Review of State Records by the Council on the Cost and Quality of Government. We expect this strategy, which runs for three years, to impact on State Records resources and priorities as we assist agencies working towards developing and implementing disposal policies. We also expect that there will be additional demands to transfer State archives to our care. However, overall it is expected that improvements in disposal policy coverage across agencies will result in more efficient management and cost effective storage of records.

The issue of two revised general records retention policies covering imaged records and administrative records during the year may have a big impact on the future retention of public sector records. The *Imaged records* general retention policy permits public offices to destroy records that have been imaged, subject to certain exclusions and conditions. This will enable the systematic digitisation of hardcopy records (for example paper correspondence) and will potentially reduce the physical storage needs of some public offices.

We expect that demand for our records storage and associated services will continue to be strong in the coming year. A similar growth in holdings is anticipated. Increasing awareness of records management may start to impact on our holdings growth as more non-current records are destroyed or transferred into the State archives collection.

## Quality recordkeeping across the public sector

### Goals and objectives

- Increase awareness, commitment and skills of CEOs and public sector officials in the creation and management of official records.
- Encourage public offices to put in place effective records management programs, systems and practices.
- Implement our *Chief executive strategy*, providing information to new CEOs on records management obligations.
- Implement our *Better skills strategy*, providing records management training to public officials.
- Implement our *Digital records and information management strategy*, to help public offices to make and keep authentic and accessible digital records.

In 2006-07 we sought improvements in public sector recordkeeping and records management systems and practices. We continued to implement our *Chief executives strategy*, providing information to new CEOs on records management obligations. We also continued our *Better skills strategy*, providing records management training to public officials. We also continued to implement improvements in digital recordkeeping in the public sector through the development of our *Digital records and information strategy*.

### Achievements

As we became aware of new public sector CEOs we sent them information about recordkeeping obligations and assistance available. During 2006-07 twenty information packs were sent to new CEOs.

We offered 38 courses attended by 463 public officials in our annual records management training program. This was achieved in partnership with private sector training providers. A further 435 NSW public officials attended presentations on recordkeeping and records management, including forums and briefings on particular products.

We worked closely with others on digital recordkeeping and archiving strategy and tools. This included the development by State Records of a key resource for the coalition of Australian and New Zealand Government

archives, the Australasian Digital Recordkeeping Initiative (ADRI), the *Model plan for an Archival Authority Implementing Digital Recordkeeping and Archiving*. We also worked closely with the Department of Commerce's Government Chief Information Office (GCIO) on the information management and back office application consolidation projects under *People First*, the NSW Government ICT plan.

### Outlook

We will continue to work on raising the awareness and commitment of CEOs to improving official recordkeeping and increasing the skills of public sector officials in the creation and management of official records.

Projects under State Records' *Digital records and information management strategy* and the NSW Government's *People First* ICT plan will continue in 2007-08, with a focus on close collaboration with GCIO on procurement strategy for records and information management tools and on assembling the necessary resources to implement a whole of government digital archiving solution.

Sensitive public sector information appropriately protected

**Goals and objectives**

State Records aims to encourage public offices to make access directions (decisions about public access) for all records over 30 years old.

In 2006-07 we continued to seek improvement in the coverage of public offices by comprehensive access directions.

**Achievements**

There was a continued substantial increase in access directions made by public offices, with coverage reaching 34% of public offices.

**Outlook**

We will continue to face challenges in encouraging public offices to make access directions for all their records over 30 years old. With the success of the strategy for local councils we will be developing similar strategies that target individual public offices and promoting general model directions for particular functions across government.

People and Government use and benefit from the State archives collection

**Goals and objectives**

- Catalogue, document and preserve the State archives collection (in all formats and multiple locations).
- Provide community and government access to the collection through a variety of channels.
- Promote awareness of, and educate people about, the State archives collection so that it is used and valued.
- Improve protection of State archives held by public offices.
- Prepare ourselves to preserve and make available born-digital State archives.
- Catalogue 30,000 record items and increase the number of catalogued record items discoverable online to 204,000.
- Improve online services.

**Achievements**

We worked closely with Lands, Mineral Resources and the Sydney Opera House to accession (transfer into our custody) significant archives. Modest targets for cataloguing record items were met (31,218 items were catalogued, bringing the total record items discoverable through our online catalogue to 205,460).

We continued to implement our Archives in the Bush grants program, distributing \$99,094 in six grants to regional repositories to document and preserve regional State archives.

Services provided through our website were enhanced including resources developed for key stakeholders such as the Indigenous community. Our online ordering and payment service for copies of State archives continued to prove very popular. We added 149,106 names to online indexes, another popular service.

Public outreach events which we ran or participated in were attended by 4,065 people. The *In Living Memory* exhibition has been State Records' most successful exhibition. It has been welcomed and supported by Aboriginal communities throughout NSW. The exhibition has been extended until 30 June 2008. In addition, the exhibition and associated catalogue were together Highly Commended at two Award ceremonies in 2007: the Energy Australia National Trust Heritage Awards (Interpretation & Presentation category), and

the Department of Commerce Indigenous Achievement Award.

"*The Convict Records of Australia*", the convict records in our collection, along with those held by the Archives Office of Tasmania and the State Records Office of Western Australia, have been inscribed on the UNESCO Memory of the World Register.

A number of key projects under our *Digital records and information management strategy* were commenced in 2006-07. State Records led a project for the coalition of Australian and New Zealand Government archives, the Australasian Digital Recordkeeping Initiative (ADRI) to develop a *Model plan for an Archival Authority Implementing Digital Recordkeeping and Archiving*. An exposure draft of a policy on the preservation of digital records was issued across government and preliminary investigations were carried out into the development of a business case for a whole of government digital archiving solution.

### Outlook

Under State Records' *Digital records and information management strategy* and the NSW Government's *People First* ICT plan we will be proceeding with a business case for a whole of government digital archiving solution, with the aim of commencing design and piloting in 2008-09.

We will continue to focus on accessioning and cataloguing substantial quantities of paper-based State archives which we expect to be transferred in coming years. We hope to be able to achieve similar cataloguing results from our volunteer program.

Digitisation and indexing of important Aborigines Welfare Board files will continue to be a priority for the first half of 2007-08. Our long term project to catalogue and copy the heavily used, but uncopied colonial secretary's correspondence 1826-1856 will continue with limited resources.

As a result of increased public demand, we expect that our online services will continue to grow. We will also continue to provide services through our two reading rooms and other traditional service channels.

### Indicators, targets and results

Indicator	Result 2006-07	Target
Metres of non-current records in storage	373,737	370,000
Metres of non-current records accessioned	32,470	32,000
No. of file retrieval operations	321,216	310,000
Percent of public offices with comprehensive records retention policies	72%	67%
No. of records retention policies approved	25	40
No. of participants in records management program events	898	650
Percent of public offices with comprehensive access directions	34%	16%
Metres of standard format records in archival custody	58,516	59,167
Metres of records transferred to archival custody	849	1,500
No. of catalogued record items discoverable online	205,460	204,000
No. of record items catalogued	31,218	30,000
No. of tied grants to regional repositories	6	6
No. of archives information access points	42	42
No. of website visits	976,382	1,650,000
No. of original record items used by readers	25,640	29,500
No. of public program participants	4,065	3,600



***Facts 2006-07***

***976,382 website visits***

***61,405 reading  
room visitors***

***25,640 original  
archives used***

***40 community access  
points to State archives  
collection across NSW***

***373 kilometres of non-  
current records stored  
at Western Sydney***

***58 kilometres of  
standard format  
archives in custody***

***205,460 record items  
discoverable online***

C3801 Locomotive at Central Railway. From  
NRS17420 State Rail Authority Railway Photographs  
Digital ID: 17420\_a014\_a014000203