

FAREWELLING EMPLOYEE NUMBER 6611048



Doug Slade from the File Retrieval Section retired at the end of 2004, after 34 years working for State Records

How did you come to work at State Records?

I originally joined the NSW Public Service in 1966 when I became a Junior Attendant in the State Library, which in those days was part of the Department of Education. I started in the Circulation Department processing incoming books and sending boxes of books out to other libraries and country residents throughout the state.

The Archives Office was part of the State Library then and was located in the old library building. When I officially joined the Archives in 1970 I was attached to the Government Records Repository, which was located in a number of warehouses at Shea's Creek, near the airport, and at Yagoona. I worked at both places until 1973 when I was made the Supervisor at the Yagoona Repository.

PHOTO: EMILY O'REILLY

How did you end up at Kingswood?

Ever since I joined the Library there had been plans for the building of a large repository out at Kingswood. In 1974 the first stage of the building was completed and I was very happy to have my position transferred there, since I had just got married and bought a house at Mount Druitt, which was nearby. I started work at Kingswood in August 1974.

What was it like in those early days?

It was lonely work for the first few months because I was the only person in the building and the location was very isolated. There was no telephone so I used to drive down to the service station to ring the city office. Naturally there were no computers with email or even fax machines. There were no houses nearby — not at all like it is today. Also, the work was heavy compared to today; the storage boxes that were used at the time were much larger — weighing 20 kilos.

Shea's Creek had been very dirty, because of its location in an old industrial area, so Kingswood was wonderfully clean and new in comparison. It was very stark though, with no paint on the walls and a bit quiet and creepy, particularly those early months when I might open up in the morning, talk to no-one all day and then lock up and go home.

I was the dispatch officer, checking everything that went out to be delivered to clients. As the staff and the system got bigger I was absorbed into the File Retrieval Section, which now has 35 staff of its own.

What are the biggest changes you have seen in your 34 years with State Records?

It would have to be the impact of new technology. When I started in the Archives Office, there was one manual typewriter in the whole office. When I started at Kingswood, the city phone system had only just been extended that far West. People used to post

their requests for the issue of a file to us, because not all offices had access to telephones. It might take a week for the request to get to us.

Now everything is done instantly by email. I remember when we got our first word processor at Kingswood. It was a huge machine and only one person was allowed to touch it. Now there are computers everywhere and everyone wanders around with scanners. In the past we would make eight photocopies of the Archives shelf-lists and file them in different places. Now they are on the Internet and you can check them from home or even overseas.

And now you are retired?

My last day at work was 20 May 2004 — thirty-eight years to the day that I joined the library.

Things you will miss?

I particularly miss working in the reading room on Saturdays, which I had done for many years. Because most of my work with the Government Records Repository was with modern records and Departmental clients, it was really interesting to see what research people were doing with the old archival records.

And what are you enjoying most in retirement?

I've moved to the Central Coast, where my wife Pam and I have holidayed for many years. It's great to have time to indulge in my own interests, such as home movies, old films and mucking around in boats. I have just enrolled in a TAFE course to learn how to transfer all my old videos to DVD, and we have bought a bigger boat, and a dog to sit up the front of it! The kids and the grandchildren are still in Sydney so we're up and down the highway all the time. And I carry my video camera with me always — recording my own family archives for the future.

