

**International
Council on
Archives**



**International Council of Archives –
Section of Professional Archival Associations**

**Lobbying and Public Campaigns for
Professional Archival Associations**

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Kathryn Dan
July 2000

1. Introduction

Most professional archival associations have as one of their objectives “representing and promoting the profession”. This paper presents advice on one important aspect of promoting and representing the profession – lobbying.

Lobbying or public campaigns are used to influence events or a decision and to solicit support for archives and archivists. This paper does not cover public awareness campaigns used to generally educate or promote archives in the community. Often the nature of public campaign activities will depend on the context in which the association operates. In particular, the nature of social and political systems and the level of community understanding of archives will influence the type and extent of public campaigns that professional archival associations are able to undertake. Despite these differences, the following paper gives some general guidance on planning and undertaking public campaigns. It includes references to additional sources of information, step-by-step guides on what to do and what to avoid, and some example documents.

A touchstone for lobbying activity should be the ICA Code of Ethics. The Code indicates the kinds of situations where archivists may think it necessary to lobby. The ICA Code of Ethics can be found on the Internet at the ICA Website (www.ica.org) at www.ica.org/pub/c_ethics_e.html (accessed 20 July 2000).

2. Types of situations when an archival association may undertake a public campaign

An archival association can undertake a public campaign to:

- influence the development of legislation or other policy statements
- support archives organisations under threat
- raise public awareness of an archives related issue
- challenge an action taken about archives or records

The role and actions taken by an archives association will depend on:

- the size and nature of the archives organisation
- the political and social context

It is crucial that the association is responsible to its members and the preserves the integrity of the profession in all its actions. In public campaigns the association’s spokesperson will be seen as speaking on behalf of the whole community of archivists. It is important to act professionally and not do anything that would bring the association or the profession into disrepute.

3. Setting priorities and planning the campaign

It is important for the association to set its own plans and priorities so that it can be most effective in its efforts. Associations may have different priorities at different times. For instance, if archives legislation is being prepared, the association may be very active in commenting on such legislation and meeting with politicians. At another time, it may be

active in preventing the closure of an archives program by raising media attention. All activities will need resources so it is important to have a clear idea of the priority the activity has for the association. This is especially because the association will be doing many other things such as serving members, producing publications, etc. The association will need to define whether the public campaign is one activity or many, and whether the campaign will be short term or continuous.

The association will need to have a good idea of its environment and current events in order to gather the information base for a public campaign. Members can be critical in assisting to identify when and how the association could take action.

In developing the plan or strategy, the association must be clear about

- its objective or aim
- who the audience is
- what steps or actions will be taken and when
- who is responsible for undertaking the action
- costs or resources

4. Types of action: Media campaigns

When an issue about archives or records is of public interest, the archival association may choose to run a media campaign. This involves preparing and issuing media releases and having one or more spokespersons to deliver the association's message. Publicity events can also be organised as part of the media campaign.

It is crucial to have a simple and consistent message. Nominating a single spokesperson can assist with keeping the message consistent but it is also useful to have a few people who have a good knowledge of the issue in case they are needed to respond to media contacts.

The media release

The targeted issuing of media releases is a vital part of playing the media game. It is best to write as much as possible for the media by preparing media releases that can easily be turned into articles. So, media releases should be written in a journalistic style and should not be too long. Elements to remember are:

- an attention grabbing heading and opening sentence;
- pithy and memorable quotes from a person in authority such as the President (or equivalent) of the association or another spokesperson;
- a clear explanation of the issues;
- always include contact names and phone numbers so the journalist can pursue further information.
- include something you know will interest them such as the local aspect

The interview

It is important to be well prepared for any interview with a member of the media, especially for television and radio interviews which may be 'live'. Know the issue you are concerned about well and anticipate unusual questions where possible. It is useful to make a note of some general facts, figures and examples about archives so that you sound authoritative. The interview may also take an unexpected turn into general questions about archives so try to prepare generally. You may get a question such as 'how many people use archives?' Have a few phrases about the issue ready, which you can use confidently at appropriate points. A

simple, brief phrase will have more impact in most media situations than a detailed explanation. Take a particular perspective or ‘spin’ on the issue - controversy is always of interest to the media. But be careful not to sound as if you are complaining without offering any constructive points. Try to build sympathy for your case. Be reasonable, knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the subject.

Developing media contacts

It is important to target stories to the media where they are best suited. A message about the pervasion of electronic records in the modern working environment would be best directed to the editors of information technology sections in major newspapers or specialist journals. A message about threats of closure of an archives could be directed to print, radio and television in the local media and nationally. Locating a directory of media contacts is a vital tool for the association in targeting the media campaign. Once you have made contact with a journalist who shows interest in archives it is useful to foster the relationship.

Build alliances with others who share your concerns and can deliver a similar message from their own perspective.

5. Types of action: Building supportive alliances

In any public campaign, strong alliances with groups who have similar interests can be of great assistance. Archivists traditionally have formed alliances with those in either the cultural heritage or information management fields. So natural allies tend to be researchers and historians, museum curators, records managers and librarians. There is scope to form new alliances with professionals from different fields such as auditors, lawyers and information technology specialists. Sometimes these allies have dealt with the issue of concern before and can give valuable advice.

You can prepare the ground with some allies long before you need their assistance by maintaining regular contact either in person or by correspondence. When you need to enlist their help, they are more likely to understand your concerns. You can establish regular liaison at an executive level and take opportunities to provide documentation about your association. If an issue arises where you might want to implement a media campaign, be sure to inform them of the issues so that you can work cooperatively. There may be common approaches in making a submission to an inquiry on an issue of interest to both groups. It is possible to make a joint submission or independent submissions with some common themes.

6. Types of action: Making submissions

Government bodies often consider issues with implications for archives and archivists. Professional archival associations may provide submissions to such bodies. Examples of occasions when this could happen are the drafting of archives legislation, an investigation by a parliamentary committee into an issue like freedom of information.

Submissions should:

- Give a clear indication of the professional associations credibility and interests. It may be useful to mention how large the association is and where members work. It is also useful to state the aims of the association and why it may be interested in the issue.
- Relate as closely as possible to any terms of reference. Your input will be more easily dealt with and incorporated if it is aligned to the issues already identified for

investigation. Sometimes there may be an issues paper to respond to. This allows greater flexibility to cover broad issues but always come back to the main points.

- Include recommendations or clear statements about what outcome the association would like
- Include contact details so that those investigating the issue can ask further questions if they need to.

It is also likely that there will be public forums in which to make oral submissions to an inquiry. If the inquiry is not this formal, the association may be able to make appointments to see those undertaking the investigation to present the association's views. When appearing to give evidence or make an oral submission to a formal inquiry it is important to:

- Be able to summarise the main points of any written submissions
- Make strong statements about the actions or position recommended by the association
- Have well defined supporting arguments for each point

7. Types of action: Legal challenges

On occasions a professional archival association may become involved in legal action concerning an archives related issue. Taking legal action can gain significant public attention for an archival issue. However, the decision to institute legal action should always be carefully considered, as it is likely to be lengthy and expensive. Other options, which could be taken to achieve the desired outcome, should be considered before legal action is commenced and sound advice from legal experts is critical to considering possible options.

8. Some example cases

1. Campaign to stop the closure of an archives

The Noel Butlin Archives Centre in Australia is a national archives which collects the records of Australian business and the labour movement. It is based at the Australian National University in Canberra. In September 1997 it was threatened with closure and the dispersal of the collections. A number of groups including the Australian Society of Archivists, the Friends of the Noel Butlin Archives Centre and the Association of Labour Historians participated in a media campaign to prevent the closure of the Centre. The media campaign accompanied a letter writing campaign directed at the University administration. The media campaign included issuing press releases and giving interviews on radio and for the press.

The main messages of the campaign were:

- the crucial importance of the collection to an understanding of the Australian nation - the national scope of the collection was emphasised and examples of particular 'gems' were described
- the types of people using the collection and how they would be disadvantaged
- for local media, aspects of staff numbers being reduced and general community impact were emphasised
- the small cost of maintaining the archive given the great public benefit

More information on the events can be found in "Where have all the [Business] Archives gone?" a conference paper by Kathryn Dan and Bruce Smith delivered to the 1999 Australian Society of Archivists conference (www.archivists.org.au/events/conf99/dan_smith.html)

2. Making a submission on an issue of concern

The Federal archives legislation in Australia was reviewed by the Australian Law Reform Commission, an agency of government tasked with reviewing aspects of the Australian legal system and its implementation. The Commission issued an initial discussion paper seeking general public comments. The Australian Society of Archivists wrote a submission to the Commission, which gave responses to the questions raised in this issues paper. Members also participated in discussion forums organised by the Commission. When the Commission prepared a draft recommendations paper, the Australian Society of Archivists responded in writing and also invited members of the Commission to attend a meeting of the association's executive council for to discuss the options.

3. Taking legal action to protest actions affecting an archives

In New Zealand two associations, Archives and Records Association of New Zealand and the New Zealand Society of Genealogists took legal action in respect of restructuring of the National Archives. It is described in Rachel Lilburn's article in *Government Information Quarterly*, (Volume 15, Number 2, pp 173-196) 'Public Archives: Heritage, Happiness or Horror Story?'. The story is still unfolding. A High Court hearing was held in Wellington in early 1998 and a judgement released in August 1998. The judgement suggested that it was too early to determine whether the fears of the plaintiffs were well founded. It suggested the parties attempt to resolve matters. It is possible that administrative events may overtake the resolution of the legal case.

4. Campaign to change a political decision

With a change of government in Italy it was proposed to abolish the system of having a regional superintendent of archives. The association worked with other interested parties to gather signatures of protest and meet with politicians to present a case for retaining the system. This was successful.

9. Selected sources of additional information

Australian Society of Archivists. *Lobbying Guidelines for ASA Council*. January 1998. Available at www.archivists.org.au/council/lobbying.html

Bryan Corbett. "ACA's Public Awareness Strategy". *Janus*, 1997, 1, pages 73-109

Elsie Freeman Finch, editor. *Advocating archives: an introduction to public relations for archivists*. SAA and Scarecrow Press, 1994

Ann Ten Cate. *Promoting archives: a handbook*. Association of Canadian Archivists, 1992

Jenny Edgecombe, *Water Dripping on Stone: Development of New Archival Legislation in Western Australia*, Australian Society of Archivists Conference 1999, www.archivists.org.au/events/conf99/edgecombe.html

10. Step-by-step advice

What to do

Do your homework. Make sure you find out the facts of the situation before taking action and make sure you have an agreed position within your association

Look for a coordinator and committee of enthusiastic people who can concentrate on the lobbying campaign. Lobbying needs constant monitoring and effort

Report regularly to association members to maintain direction and ensure continuing support

Look for allies, enlist their help and keep them informed of developments

Recruit public figures to your cause

Prepare useful documentation – briefing notes, media releases, submissions and letters

Leave your ego at home when writing a submission, and ask someone with previous experience to help smooth the rough edges of what you write

Make sure that significant numbers of personal submissions are made by your members in addition to those formally made by the association

If you conduct a letter-writing campaign, ensure that members personalise their letters. Politicians will take no notice of form letters, but if there are individualised letters on the same topic, they will start to think there is significant concern.

Media releases should be brief and to the point, using your most articulate, informed member as contact person. Try to make personal contact with the target media outlets

Arrange personal meetings with politicians or key players.

Prepare carefully for these meetings. Decide on two or three points you can make quickly and clearly. These are busy people you are dealing with. Take a written summary you can leave with them

Be confident and professional in presenting your case. You might be surprised by how interested people are in what you have to say.

Keep everyone informed. It is important that any members of your association who might possibly be in a position to comment are aware of your position

Create publicity by issuing an authoritative statement in an impressive format

Make a significant gesture and bring in the heavy artillery when it might have the most impact.

If members consider the cause to be sufficiently important, spend the money to gain access at the highest levels

Learn from others with experience

Maintain the momentum and keep up the pressure

What to avoid

Public airing of differences with other professional bodies during a lobbying campaign is of absolutely no interest to the people you are trying to influence. Stick to your common concerns

An expensive and extensive campaign can debilitate a small association. You will need to have the necessary resources and agreement that the lobbying action is a high priority.

Avoid conflicts of interest for those undertaking lobbying.

Don't forget your own members during the heat of the campaign – keep them informed and involved

Try not to become locked into a reactive negative approach because you are fighting something you don't want. Try to look for positive options.

The whole debate can become too personal – always keep a professional outlook

Don't waste efforts on addressing the wrong person. Try to target those who have influence over the outcome.

11. Examples of documents you can use:

A submission	Attachment 1
Media releases	Attachments 2, 3, 4
A letter expressing protest	Attachment 5
A letter seeking support from allies	Attachment 6
A letter keeping association members informed	Attachment 7
A letter expressing concern and seeking information	Attachment 8

Australian Society of Archivists Inc.

**Submission to the House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs**

Inquiry into the Treatment of Census Forms

The Australian Society of Archivists Incorporated (ASA) is the national professional association which represents archivists in Australia. It was established in 1975 and has over 800 members, professional and para-professional. Members work with archives and records in a range of organisations: all levels of government, companies and businesses, universities, schools, religious organisations and community bodies, libraries and museums, and as independent consultants. The ASA is a member of the International Council on Archives (ICA) an international non-government organisation which operates under the aegis of UNESCO.

Archivists ensure that records which have value as authentic evidence of administrative, corporate, cultural and intellectual activity are made, kept and used. The work of archivists is vital for ensuring organisational efficiency and accountability and for supporting understandings of Australian life through the management and retention of its personal, corporate and social memory.

The Census of Population and Housing is a unique survey record of Australian society. As name identified data, it could provide a significant research resource to future generations. The 1993 Annual General Meeting of the ASA passed a resolution concerning the Census. It appears at Appendix 1.

Comments against terms of reference

- **the effect retention would have on the quality, and hence the value, of data from future censuses and other ABS collections**

It has been argued over a number of years that if name identified census data were retained, the Australian public would no longer have faith in the process and would provide inadequate or misleading information on Census returns. While there may be a high level of distrust currently, this largely relates to poor levels of knowledge about the long term value of the information, its potential benefits to society and the level of security which can apply to government records held in archival custody. The ASA considers that such fears are unfounded and could be overcome through an education campaign to raise awareness of the value of the information and the good security record of government archives. There are clear overseas examples where retention and long delayed release of name identified data coexists with public cooperation in successful conduct of censuses (UK and USA for instance).

- **the privacy concerns relating to the storage and use of name-identified census data**
- The ASA acknowledges that there are public concerns about privacy and the protection of personal information. However, the ASA would argue that the privacy of personal

information associated with census data can be adequately be protected against any likely breach.

Archives throughout the world have a long history of providing protection to information of a personal nature as well as information which may have other sensitive aspects such as national security and commercially confidential data. To the ASA's knowledge there have been no cases of breaches of privacy or confidentiality in relation to records held by archives in Australia. It is one of the central professional responsibilities of the archivist to administer access to records in such a way that privacy and other concerns are protected. The ASA's code of ethics, for example, states in relation to confidentiality and privacy that:

3.7.5 Archivists shall protect personal information gained under privilege and contained in records in their custody. Subject to relevant legislation and/or conditions of transfer, archivists shall neither disclose nor enable others to disclose, personal information that would identify individuals as subjects of case files without their consent.

Furthermore, the ASA is not aware that the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has ever had a breach of security in the collection and compilation of data where personal information is concerned. The ASA considers that the record for protection of privacy in Australia by archivists and the ABS is excellent.

In order to further assure the public of the security of personal information, the ASA would suggest that personal information (name and address data) be stored separately from other data until such time as the complete census information could be reunited for public release. There would be efficiencies in holding both sets of data electronically until matching which could be done at a period as much as 100 years after the taking of the census.

The experience of the USA, United Kingdom and Canada, countries with similar socio-political backgrounds, is that name identified census data can be held safely and made accessible many years after collection.

- **the value of name-identified records for medical, social and genealogical research released after a significant period of time**

The International Council on Archives together with UNESCO has undertaken international studies in archival science under the Records and Archives Management Program (RAMP). A 1991 RAMP study, *The archival appraisal of records containing personal information: a RAMP study with guidelines*, states that, "the historical research potential for certain categories of records containing personal information is ... extraordinarily high and forms an important part of our collective memory in a democratic era" (p.2). It describes the national census as "the single most essential personal information record in terms of both research for many disciplines and for genealogists", listing it among "classes of records containing personal information which should be preserved by archivists around the world" (p. 22).

The Census as a regularly taken comprehensive survey of Australian society is unparalleled as a potential research resource. The peculiarly valuable aspect of name-identified census data is that it enables the individual to be placed in a context and related to other individuals. Research may be undertaken many years after the point of collection of the data, when the individuals and immediate family members may be deceased. Even after such a passage of time, the information can contribute significantly to our understanding of Australian society particularly in disciplines such as social history and the social sciences. R. J. Morris of the

University of Edinburgh has argued that record linkage is an essential tool for the historian in revealing the complexity of social history. "The preservation of innominate records will permit only limited internal analysis of a document. ... When the interest is in groups rather than individuals, something may be recoverable from such emasculated records. Where the interest is in collective biography ... such emasculation will destroy historical evidence." (p. 510). In the case of census records, "the different levels of enumeration district, household and individual are all relevant for social science analysis, and provision for the linkage of information from one level to another is essential for full use of the document." (p. 505).

Census information which survives from last century has been used to examine the factors influencing the development of early Australian society. C. B. Schedvin, a leading Australian economic historian and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) at the University of Melbourne, has commended the research on long term development of the American economy able to be undertaken because of the micro-level data sets available from the United States Census manuscript records. Areas of study included labour force estimates, mortality, migration, wealth and inequality.

When identification of individuals is possible, researchers are able to match the same group of individuals according to characteristics so that they can be studied either at one point in time or over several years. This is particularly important for epidemiological research. Medical researchers point to the need for identification of individuals and families in the research on genetic factors in health and risk factors for particular groups. (see *Privacy and the Census*, pp 39-41).

- **the cost of retention**

It is true that retention of any records has a cost. However, consideration should be given to whether the cost of retention is outweighed by the value to Australian society of the information to be retained. The Australian population makes a significant investment in the collection of census data. To attain full value from the Census that Australian public should have the opportunity to benefit from the research use of the name identified information in the long term in the same way as it benefits from the use of statistical compilations in the short to medium term.

The ASA would suggest that personal identifying information also be converted to electronic form at the same time as other data from the census forms is captured into electronic form. The personal information could be held separately but in such a way that at a later date it could be matched with the remaining general census data. It would be possible for the data to be held at a location physically remote from non-identified data, for example, at the Australian Archives thus providing greater assurances of security.

In summary, the ASA considers that name identified census data is of high value to the Australian community. It considers that the information should be retained for release after 100 years. It recommends that this release of information be managed by the Australian Archives in accordance with general archival principles. The ASA considers that security of personal information can be assured through professional practices of statisticians and archivists. The ASA supports the retention of name-identified census data.

Sources

Law Reform Commission. *Privacy and the Census*. Report no. 12. Canberra, 1979.

R. J. Morris. "Does nineteenth-century nominal record linkage have lessons for the machine-readable century?". *Journal of the society of Archivists*. Vol. 7, no. 8, October 1985.

Letter from C. B. Schedvin to Director-General, Australian Archives, 25 November 1988
(copy held by ASA)

UNESCO. *The archival appraisal of records containing personal information: a RAMP study with guidelines*. PG1-91/WS/3. Paris, 1991

Census Data

That this meeting - noting that a paper was published in 'New Zealand Archivist' December 1992 supporting the policy of retaining only de-identified census data - confirms its support of the policy espoused recently by the ASA Council, which we summarise as follows:

- That the National Census is the most important of all personal information records in terms of its research value for many disciplines and genealogists;
- That de-identification of the data destroys much of this value;
- That the risk to civil rights and privacy from complete retention has been exaggerated;
- That long term closure against direct public access would adequately protect civil rights and privacy;
- That the present policy of de-identification and destruction of forms achieves little more in that regard;
- That retention of data in electronic form would facilitate research and reduce costs.

*Passed by the Annual General Meeting of the Australian Society of Archivists Inc.,
17 June 1993.*

AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY OF ARCHIVISTS

MEDIA RELEASE

OUR HISTORY PRESERVED

A Parliamentary inquiry has recommended that name-identified information from future censuses be kept for the benefit of future generations. The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs has reported on the first major public examination of the practice of destroying name identified census forms conducted since the Census was first taken in Australia.

In its unanimous report, the Committee recommends that the forms completed by Australians every five years when the census is taken be kept under strict protection by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Australian Archives. They have further recommended that the information contained in the forms only be released for researchers 100 years after the census was taken.

The Australian Society of Archivists (ASA) has expressed strong support for the Committee's conclusions and has written to the government commending the report and calling for speedy endorsement of its recommendations.

According to ASA National President Kathryn Dan, "This report recognises the crucial importance of keeping a full record of Australian life today to benefit future research on Australian society. Taking the census is a huge investment for the Australian people and we should make sure that the full benefits of that investment are realised by future generations."

"The value of the information contained in the census forms is unparalleled. It gives us a picture of ordinary people and their lives. It would be a terrific waste to abandon that research resource."

The committee has also made provision for strong protection from unauthorised access to this information. The Australian Society of Archivists supports these recommendations on security. "We are very pleased that the committee has recognised the importance of long term protection for this sensitive information," said Ms Dan. "Professional archivists have a long history of providing protection to sensitive information of all kinds and have strong codes of practice in this area."

"This report brings us hope that information on Australian society in 2001, the centenary year of Federation, will survive to tell our story to Australians in another century."

For further information contact xxxx on (xx) xxxx-xxxx or, after hours (xx) xxxx-xxxx.

5 June 1998

AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY OF ARCHIVISTS

MEDIA RELEASE

ANU ABANDONS NATIONAL HERITAGE

Outrage and alarm have greeted a decision by the Australian National University to mothball one of the nation's premier collections of historical records.

The National Council of the Australian Society of Archivists, meeting today in Canberra, has condemned the Australian National University's move to close the internationally respected Noel Butlin Archives Centre. The decision, which was announced by the Director of the ANU Research School of Social Sciences yesterday, would mean the closing of the Archives on 31 December 1997. The decision has been made in the context of financial problems and budgetary cuts being experienced within the University.

The Noel Butlin Archives Centre, which was established in 1952 as the Archives of Business and Labour, holds Australia's premier collection of historical records of companies, trade unions and employer and professional organisations dating back to 1824.

The President of the Australian Society of Archivists, Kathryn Dan, said today that "it is a tragedy that the ANU is prepared to oversee the loss and dispersal of a collection which is widely regarded as being of unparalleled national significance. It is a matter of grave concern that historical records such as those of the Australian Agricultural Company, CSR Limited, Dalgety's, Burns Philp, the ACTU, the Waterside Workers Federation and the Miners' Federation can be placed in such peril."

"This is an essential and irreplaceable component of Australia's national heritage" said Ms Dan, "and I am appalled that the ANU can simply walk away from a commitment made in good faith to its depositors and users to ensure the long-term preservation of these invaluable records."

The Australian Society of Archivists calls on the ANU to reverse its decision and reiterate its commitment to provide adequate funding for the continued operation of the Noel Butlin Archives Centre. While the Society appreciates the financial difficulties currently being experienced by the ANU, future generations of Australians will forever regret this short sighted and irresponsible decision.

For further information contact Kathryn Dan on (xx) xxxxxxxx or, after hours (xx) xxxxxxxx, or Adrian Cunningham on (xx) xxxxxxxx or, after hours, (xx) xxxxxxxx.

23 August 1997

**AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY OF ARCHIVISTS
AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF LABOUR HISTORY
JOINT MEDIA RELEASE**

OPTIMISM THAT ARCHIVES WILL BE SAVED

The Australian Society of Archivists (ASA) and the Australian Society for the Study of Labour History (ASSLH) have expressed cautious optimism that the Australian National University will soon be able to guarantee a secure future for the Noel Butlin Archives Centre.

This optimism is the result of recent constructive discussions between representatives of the ASA and Mr Chris Burgess, the ANU's Pro Vice-Chancellor for Finance and Development. At these discussions Mr Burgess provided details of the latest version of the ANU's proposed 'rescue package' for the archives. The current proposal provides a budget for the Archives of around \$280,000 per annum for the next three years, during which time a fundraising campaign would be implemented with the aim of transforming the Archives into a largely self-funding facility.

According to ASA National President Kathryn Dan, "This latest proposal represents a substantial improvement over the ANU's earlier 'rescue package', which appeared to only guarantee funding for one staff member during the three year period of transition. Under the current proposal the Archives should have sufficient funding for four positions, a staffing level which the ASA regards as being the absolute minimum required to keep the Archives operational during the transition period."

Ms Dan said "we are delighted that the ANU now intends to resource the Noel Butlin Archives Centre while steps are taken to secure independent sources of funding. The ASA endorses the ANU's long-term vision for an archival facility with partial support from external funding sources, especially as the ANU now intends to establish its own in-house archives for University records as an adjunct to the collecting archives function currently performed by the Noel Butlin Centre."

National President of the ASSLH, Greg Patmore, also expressed support saying, "the ASSLH welcomes this proposal and would certainly provide its support and assistance to the University to maintain the integrity of the collections and the infrastructure to support them. We wish to ensure that the Noel Butlin Archives Centre is able to continue as an important source of research material for Australian historians."

"The ASA hopes that the proposal as outlined by Mr Burgess will be approved by the ANU's Finance Committee at its meeting on 21 November and ratified by ANU Council at its December meeting" said Ms Dan. "The ASA and ASSLH look forward to being able to work with the ANU authorities to ensure the continued development of the Noel Butlin Archives Centre as a nationally respected facility providing specialist business and labour documentation and professional recordkeeping expertise."

This media release has also been endorsed by
The Friends of the Noel Butlin Archives Centre
The Australian Historical Association

For further information contact

ASA - Kathryn Dan on (xx) xxxx-xxxx or, after hours (xx) xxxx-xxxx.
ASSLH - Greg Patmore (xx) xxxx-xxxx.

5 September 1997

Professor Deane Terrell
Vice-Chancellor
Australian National University
Canberra ACT 0200

Dear Professor Terrell

Proposed Closure of Noel Butlin Archives Centre

The Australian Society of Archivists wishes to express its alarm and profound disappointment at the reported decision to close the Noel Butlin Archives Centre at the end of this year. The Noel Butlin Archives is a premier collection of historical records from companies, trade unions, employer and professional organisations and a vital resource for research and study. The Archives form a significant part of the nation's research infrastructure and therefore the decision to abandon them does a disservice to historians now and in the future.

Our concern extends, not only to those collections currently in the custody of the Centre, but to those records where completion of transfer to the Centre is pending. What arrangements have been made to fulfill the University's commitment to depositors to provide a professional archival service for their records? The University seems to be abandoning this commitment. The care and management of both existing collections and those where the transfer is pending require proper archival management.

Without the attention of professional archival staff the integrity of the collections and the provision of services to researchers are threatened. The Australian Society of Archivists calls on the University to reverse its decision to close the Noel Butlin Archives Centre and to give a commitment to provide adequate funding for its continued operation.

While the Society appreciates that this decision has been made in the context of general financial problems and budgetary cuts within the University, its impact will reach far beyond the University, impinging on the work of Australian and international scholars. In June I wrote to the Acting Director of the Research School of Social Sciences suggesting that options to increase the value of the Centre to the University could be explored. For example, the nucleus of professional staff at the centre could contribute to the management of the University's current and archival administrative records. I note that the ANU is the only one of the eight longest established universities in Australia which does not have an archives for its own records. I would appreciate hearing whether full consideration has been given to this possibility.

I and members of the national Council of the Society would be willing to meet with you to discuss any issues concerning the management of an archives of this size and possibilities which could be explored to ensure that this important resource continues to be available for researchers.

In the meantime I would appreciate it if you could clarify for our members:

- the University's plans for the existing collections should the Centre close in December; and
- arrangements for ensuring that the collection is managed by professional archival staff if the University retains records from the collection after December.

If you wish to discuss any of the issues raised in this letter, I can be contacted on xxxx xxxx.

xxxxxxx
President

Dear Colleague

Proposed Closure of Noel Butlin Archives Centre, Australia

I am writing to seek the assistance of the International Council on Archives Section of Business and Labour Archives. You may not be aware that the Noel Butlin Archives Centre (formerly known as the Archives of Business and Labour) is threatened with closure at the end of this year. The Noel Butlin Archives is a premier collection of Australian historical records from companies, trade unions, employer and professional organisations and a vital resource for research and study.

The Noel Butlin Archives Centre is situated within the Research School of Social Sciences (RSSH) at the Australian National University. Over recent years it has suffered diminishing resources. The Director of the RSSH has announced the intention to close the Centre if no external source of funding can be found to sustain it. Further, it is not clear what will be the fate of the records should the closure go ahead.

The Australian Society of Archivists is concerned that the Centre may close and the records either "mothballed" or the most attractive components dispersed to other institutions. Our concern extends, not only to those collections currently in the custody of the Centre, but to those records where completion of transfer to the Centre is pending. Both existing collections and those where the transfer is pending require proper archival management. Without the attention of professional archival staff the integrity of the collections and the provision of services to researchers are threatened. The collection of the Noel Butlin Archives Centre is a resource for both Australian and international scholars. Together with historians, the Australian Society of Archivists is lobbying with the University and government for the retention of the collection as an integrated whole with proper professional care. To date the RSSH has not altered its position. (I have enclosed a copy of the Australian Society of Archivists' media release on the subject and the most recent response from the Director of the RSSH.)

The Australian Society of Archivists would like to seek the assistance of ICA/SBL in voicing international concern for the impending loss of such an important archival resource. It would be much appreciated if you were willing to write to the Vice-Chancellor of the University and the Minister responsible for higher education in Australia expressing support for the Centre and its continued operation. I have provided contact details below.

...

Alternatively you may wish to supply a general letter of support to the Australian Society of Archivists for use in lobbying within Australia. If you would like further information or would like to discuss any of the issues raised in this letter, I can be contacted by e-mail at xxxx.

Yours sincerely

President

9 November 1997

Secretary, NSW Branch
Australian Society of Archivists

Dear

Thank you for your letter regarding the Noel Butlin Archives Centre. It has been excellent to see the level of support for the Archives throughout the archival community and I am pleased to report to you and Branch members that prospects for the Archives are starting to look much brighter. I am certain that this is largely due to the significant groundswell of opinion expressed to the University and particularly to the Vice Chancellor.

Adrian Cunningham and I met last week with the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Finance and Administration, Mr Chris Burgess, the University's business development manager, Bruno Ivanovich, and Paul McPherson of the University Library. At that meeting we heard a fairly detailed outline of the University's proposals for the survival of the Noel Butlin Archives Centre (NBAC). The proposal includes funding for NBAC over the next three years while fundraising activities are undertaken. Responsibility for NBAC will move to the mainstream of the University being attached to the University Library and the archives will move to a new building. In addition the ANU is intending to finally establish a University archives for its own records. The proposal is due to be discussed by the University's Finance Committee towards the end of November and will be presented to the December meeting of the University Council.

We have given cautious endorsement to this plan and will be observing the University's actions closely to ensure they deliver on the promises. An area which particularly concerns us, and where we have offered advice and assistance, is the planned re-appraisal of the collection. A brief article will appear in the next Bulletin to give an update on the situation.

Thank you for your suggestions for further action. I have written to the Minister for Education (no reply), and Adrian and others involved with the Friends of the Noel Butlin group have lobbied individual members of the University Council. I expect we will try to continue to use the Australian's Higher Education supplement as a forum to express our views should we need to in the future. I believe that NBAC itself has had support from the ACTU and we would certainly look on them and the ALP as allies should we need to revive a public campaign concerning the future of NBAC.

Yours sincerely,

President

20 June 1998

Vice Chancellor
xxxx University

Dear Professor xxx

I am writing to seek your advice about the current status of the University archives. It is rumoured that the University archives are to close. If these rumours are correct, I would urge you to reconsider and maintain the archives under the care of a professional archivist at the University.

The professional management of the corporate memory of a complex organisation such as xxxx University is a function that is critical to its ongoing efficiency and effectiveness. There have been considerable changes and restructuring of the tertiary sector in the last decade which have made the tracking of past decisions through records even more important to the ongoing operations of the organisation. This is particularly evident with the growth of electronic records systems which must be properly managed over time to prevent the University's investment being wasted. A properly resourced archives and records service can add significant value to the research and teaching functions of a university by enabling it to better manage its own pool of knowledge.

On behalf of the archival community I urge you not to commit your university to any short-sighted decision which places the archives in peril and which you and your successors may come to regret in the future. I hope you will be able to provide a reassurance that the University will be maintaining its archives. If you wish to discuss the future of the University archives with me, or any of my colleagues on the Society's Council, we will be only too willing to make ourselves available.

Yours sincerely

President