



Hon. Mike Rann MP
Premier of South Australia

Senator Hon Joe Ludwig
Cabinet Secretary and Special Minister of State
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Jos

Dear Minister

I am very concerned about the proposed closure of the National Archives' office in Adelaide from the end of 2010. The proposed closure will disadvantage users of this important national resource in South Australia.

I understand that the National Archives of Australia (the NAA) intends to relocate the South Australian records to Sydney. This follows an earlier relocation of a significant part of the South Australian material to Canberra and Melbourne. For users to access South Australian records in future it will therefore be necessary either to travel or to order digitised copies. Any travel may well involve trips to up to three other cities.

Extended research interstate involves considerable expense, in terms of both travel and accommodation. Such costs will discourage original research using primary sources into South Australian history and will particularly discourage unfunded community researchers.

The *Archives Act* 1983 requires the Director-General of the NAA to consider;

- the convenience of persons who are likely to require access to the material;
- the desirability of keeping related material in the same place; and
- the appropriateness of keeping State or Territory material that relates in particular to that State or Territory or to places in that State or Territory

when determining where archived material should be kept.

The Act clearly identifies, in my view, the importance of retaining records in their place of origin. The Act also recognises that the National Archives of Australia, as an agency, has an obligation to provide reasonable access to users in all states of Australia.

I have been informed that the NAA Director suggests that providing digital access is the preferred solution. However digitisation on request is very expensive. I am told the most recent NAA Annual Report makes the point that demand for records has fallen in South Australia specifically because of the cost of accessing digital copies (p.35, note to table 9). Current charges for digitisation are \$16.50 for a file of up to 100 pages, and \$38.50 for a file of over 100 pages. Research into a specific aspect of South Australian history may involve examining hundreds of files, such is the nature of historical research. Undertaking research using files digitised on request would inevitably involve considerable time and expense.

Further, much of the South Australian-related material is not yet listed on the Recordsearch database. It will prove difficult to discover such material to order either physically or online without knowledgeable local staff.

The relocation of such a service to Sydney would severely disadvantage Indigenous South Australians. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between National Archives and Nunkuwarrin Yunti on behalf of South Australian Indigenous people was signed in 2002. This MoU was put in place to assist South Australian Indigenous people to access Commonwealth records, responding to recommendations of the 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and the 1997 *Bringing Them Home* report.

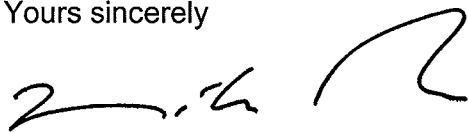
Additionally, currently people requiring proof of date of arrival in Australia for purposes including obtaining an Australian passport, making a citizenship application, or applying for a Centrelink benefit, can access the required information efficiently through the Adelaide office. Such information is often required urgently, particularly in the case of passport applications. The removal of such a service to Sydney would significantly disadvantage those seeking such documentation.

Lastly, the intended date for the launch of the National History Curriculum is 2011. The provision of appropriate supporting materials is vital to the success of this initiative. It is also extremely important that this material is drawn from the nation as a whole. The closure of the Adelaide office would make it much harder to ensure that South Australia's contribution to the national story is adequately represented in curriculum support materials.

Since 2011 also marks 175 years of European Settlement in South Australia it is a most unfortunate decision.

I urge you to reconsider the proposed closure of the Adelaide office.

Yours sincerely



MIKE RANN
Premier

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