



NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF AUSTRALIA

Submission into the review of the National Cultural Policy

National Archives of Australia (National Archives) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the inquiry by the Environment and Communications References Committee into the review of the National Cultural Policy, *Revive: a place for every story, a story for every place* on:

1. potential tax reform and ways to boost the productivity of Australia's arts and creative sectors; and
2. any opportunities, risks and challenges for Australia's arts and creative sectors associated with emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence.

National Archives is an Australian Government entity established under the [Archives Act 1983](#) (the Archives Act). It is a non-corporate Commonwealth entity (a listed entity) under the [Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013](#) (PGPA Act) and an Executive Agency under the [Public Service Act 1999](#) (Public Service Act).

We provide leadership in best practice management of the official record of the Commonwealth and ensures that Australian Government information of enduring significance is secured, preserved and accessible to government agencies, researchers and the community. This ensures the stories of our nation – its people, institutions, government decisions, and achievements – are preserved for generations to come.

Our work strengthens trust in democracy and improves government transparency and accountability by connecting Australians to government decisions and activities.

National Archives embodies the 5 pillars of the National Cultural Policy, *Revive: A place for every story, a story for every place*.

As Australia faces rapid technological, social and environmental change, National Archives is uniquely positioned to provide documentary evidence and stories that allow us to understand how we arrived at today and to chart a stronger path for the future.

The national archival collection has more than 54 million items that include the most valuable records of government decisions and action. These records document the workings of the Government, the development and implementation of public policy, and the impact of government decisions on the lives of Australians.

Beyond its practical and evidentiary uses, the national archival collection holds immense intangible value. It preserves the collective story of how Australia has evolved, from our First peoples, Federation and the world wars, to migration, cultural diversity, and modern technological change.

The stories are not simply records of the past but are vital information for shaping the future. By understanding the decisions, experiences, struggles and accomplishments of those before us, we enable ourselves to navigate present challenges with resilience and insight. The national archival collection not



only holds the memory of our nation but also of democracy. It has the potential to offer unique insights into today's challenges and how we can move forward.

Social cohesion sits at the core of stories of a nation. We are evolving our social cohesion focus towards social capital which results from the interplay, at the local and regional up to the national level, between:

- ☐ Social infrastructure (e.g. places, services and networks that support community wellbeing);
- ☐ Physical infrastructure (e.g. roads, housing etc.);
- ☐ Economic prosperity; and
- ☐ Environmental amenity.

Cultural institutions already play a role enhancing social capital given the stories presented and the networks fostered but more is needed.

Public engagement is at the heart of what we do at National Archives. Given the national archival collection belongs to all Australians we have a responsibility to foster discoverability and accessibility. AI is just one of many tools National Archives needs to leverage that will improve understanding of and connection with the stories in the national archival collection.

We are facing a range of challenges including that the volume of digital material is increasing along with the complexity of records and systems generating them. The spread of disinformation is expanding and the use in government of messaging apps is adding to the complexity of information management. AI presents an opportunity to enable the National Archives to ingest and manage an increasingly large and complex national archival collection.

Government agencies are already incorporating AI tools into the work they do, and this is expected to increase in coming years. National Archives is also exploring and testing emerging technologies that could assist in delivering services and enhancing workflows and tasks for specific scenarios.

However, there is a need to anticipate the emerging challenge of the negative impacts of AI. While there are guidelines and resources available for government agencies, in January 2025, National Archives published [Information management for records created using Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) technologies](#), which provides guidance to government agencies on:

- ☐ Principles for managing AI generated records;
- ☐ Guidance on how long to keep AI generated records;
- ☐ Managing records created with Generative AI assistants and tools; and
- ☐ What AI outputs must be retained or destroyed.

To achieve our outcomes and respond to the challenges, National Archives must embrace AI and other contemporary digital tools. In doing so Australians will be enabled to connect with the nation's stories in a more responsive, expansive and intentional way. However, responsible and ethical use of AI is key and the Archives Act and its supporting [Records Authorities](#) will continue to provide the legislative framework we need to ensure the required records are retained and managed, and released appropriately.

Management and access to the national archival collection facilitated by AI will strengthen the role National Archives has to play and in turn, will ensure the national archival collection remains relevant today and into the future.