

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings October 2015
Communications Portfolio
National Library of Australia

Question No: 63

National Library of Australia

Hansard Ref: Written, 30/10/2015

Topic: Former Defence Minister and Australian Ambassador to Indonesia, Bill Morrison

Senator Xenophon, Nick asked:

The NLA holds the Papers of former Defence Minister and Australian Ambassador to Indonesia, Bill Morrison. Some of this material is unavailable to the public pending an access clearance process:

- (a) Can you advise whether you've had any access requests to view these papers?
- (b) What steps did you take, and when, in response to these access requests?
- (c) Which Government Departments are involved in the access clearance process?
- (d) When do you envisage the access clearance process will be completed?
- (e) What appeal rights do applicants who have been refused part or all of their access requests have?

Answer:

a) Can you advise whether you've had any access requests to view these papers?

In the past five years four requests for access have been received. Further details of requests received since 2010 are set out at 63b. At November 2015 more than 90% of the Morrison papers are available for research, following access clearance undertaken by Library staff, arising from user requests.

b) What steps did you take, and when, in response to these access requests?

- May 2010 – A request was received from a researcher (A) to access Series 11; box 106. After review by Library staff, it was noted this box contained correspondence received in Mr Morrison's electorate office, and was not therefore subject to the Archives Act. Advice was provided to the researcher that permission for access would need to be sought from Mr Morrison. Mr Morrison was contacted by Library staff in June 2010 and gave permission for this box to be made available to Researcher A.
- February 2013 – A request was received from another researcher (B) to access the following materials:
 - Series 13; boxes 108-110
 - Series 20; boxes 124-125
 - Series 25; boxes 128-129
 - Series 27; boxes 132-133
 - 1984 additional series; boxes, 57, 65-67.

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Following review by Library staff, researcher (B) was advised in May 2013 that boxes 128, 129, 132, and 133 were now available for research, but that boxes 108, 109, 110, 124 and 125 contained Government records that would require referral to the National Archives of Australia (NAA) for access clearance. He was also advised that boxes 65-67 would require further work and review by Library staff as they were not listed at folder level and may also need to be referred to NAA. Researcher (B) was asked whether he wanted to pursue the request for access to material that had been identified as requiring referral to NAA and he confirmed that he would like to pursue further assessment of the material from the 1984 additional series (boxes 65-67).

Following this request, Library staff made a thorough assessment of the collection and identified material which could be opened for access. The Library's catalogue was updated to identify a number of Series and boxes that were able to be designated as "available for research". In June 2013 Researcher B was provided with the titles of the files in boxes 65-67 which required review by NAA; he asked the Library to request the clearance and stated there was no urgency.

- September 2014 – A request was received from another researcher (C) to access the following materials:

- Series 13; folders 7-9 (within boxes 108-110)
- Series 30; boxes 136-139
- Series 32; box 40
- 1984 additional series; boxes 65-67

Researcher C asked that priority be given to assessment of the 1984 additional series. He was advised in September 2014 that Series 32, box 40 was already designated as available for research. As work had also continued by Library staff to further investigate access conditions based on the earlier request from Researcher B, he was also advised in September 2014 that boxes 110, 136 and 137 were also now available for research, and that parts of boxes 65, 66, 67, 108, 109, 138, and 139 could be made available, but some folders within these boxes still required referral to NAA for access clearance.

- February 2015 – another researcher (D) enquired about access to the entire collection of Morrison papers. He was provided with the collection finding aid and given information about material currently available for research, and material still subject to access clearance.

In April 2015, because of the enquiries made by Researcher C, Library staff requested the NAA to undertake formal access review of the closed parts of the Morrison papers, and provided detailed information about the collection, including material that had already been designated as available for research following assessments undertaken by Library staff. In June 2015 (following from a previous related QoN), the Library contacted NAA, asking for a progress report on this process.

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c) Which Government Departments are involved in the access clearance process?

Clearance is a process which applies to Commonwealth Records governed by the Archives Act. Clearance of most Commonwealth records held in the National Library's collection, and to which access is managed in accordance with the Archives Act, is undertaken by the National Library. The Library has previously referred material that it knows is of concern under the provisions of the Archives Act s33 to the National Archives.

d) When do you envisage the access clearance process will be completed?

The Library is in discussions with the National Archives regarding arrangements for the access clearance of Commonwealth government records identified within personal papers in the NLA collections. Following this discussion, timing for the clearance process will be determined.

e) What appeal rights do applicants who have been refused part or all of their access requests have?

Applicants may seek the reconsideration, and then appeal, of decisions made under the Archives Act to exempt records from public access. The NAA's Fact Sheet 12 outlines the process.