



Your Ref

Our ref SRO/2002/015

Enquiries Lise Summers 9427 3436

Professor Peter Newman
Director, Sustainability Policy Unit
Policy Office
Department of the Premier and Cabinet

5 April 2002

Dear Professor Newman

State Records and Sustainability

The State Records Office of Western Australia, which has responsibility for government record keeping at State and Local Government level, contributes to the ideals of sustainability in the areas of civic responsibility and government accountability.

On page 4 of the Consultation Paper “Inter and intra-generational equity” is identified as a key principle of a sustainable economy. The State Records Office’s role in ensuring government records are created, maintained and, through its archives collection, made accessible to the community is pivotal in providing this equity. To ensure true inter and intra-generational equity, information about the decisions made today and in future must be made available to our descendants. Decisions made with the purest of motives and the best intentions may be seen by later generations as flawed. Only by having access to the information on which the decision was based can the decision be effectively assessed.

At a grass roots level it is vital that the concepts of sustainability and of sustainable records, created so that their long term preservation is assured, is taken up as a whole-of-government initiative. The retention and disposal schedules developed by agencies as a key proponent in their record keeping plan, identifies which records are created and their potential longevity. Where records are identified as archival, agencies must consider the use of archival or permanent paper for hardcopy records, and provide sufficient funding and support to ensure that electronic records are migrated or emulated on a regular basis, and that issues of access to these records by the public over the long term have been addressed.

There are two service delivery teams within the State Records Office, both of which contribute to this equity of access to information:

A. Archival Services - The State Archives Collection includes information relating to Aboriginal families, land use, industrial development, agriculture and pastoralism. Access to this information through a range of strategies will enable the State and community to develop a clear understanding not only of what can be done, but also what has been done in the past. Recent examples of use of the collection include providing

base information to assist with Native Title claims, family and local histories, identification of significant water and sewerage supply lines, heritage documentation, mining history and details of early experiments in sandalwood use.

B. Recordkeeping Services - The State Records Office provides training in record management principles and practices to both State and Local Government agencies. Remote and regional centres have had access to this training over time, and further training and support will be ongoing in the future.

A strategy that seeks to identify how this training and support may be delivered will contribute to the sustainability of social and cultural heritage in these two areas.

Through the development of regional archives, possibly based around or with WA Museum regional sites or regional public or school libraries, an opportunity exists to ensure that access to the State Archives Collection and records management training can be distributed across the State. These regional centres may not house original archival documents but provide virtual access through electronic databases, CDs, websites, microfilm and other access media. The provision of trained staff, possibly employed by the State Records Office or by a consortium of State, Local and private institutions, will ensure identification of State records and their appropriate retention or disposal, improve recordkeeping practices, and provide access to key State records. Community groups in Kalgoorlie, Albany, the Kimberleys and Derby have expressed interest in the development of regional archives.

A strategy to develop regional archive centres will be significantly contribute to ensuring that community values in relation to their history, heritage and culture are recognised, and in addressing the needs for social equity and reconciliation in Aboriginal communities.

In association with the establishment of these regional archives, an ongoing travel program to provide training and conservation support could be developed. State and Federal resources, with support from professional associations and industry organizations, could be used to provide access to these services. One possibility would be a “road show” program, in which a travelling conservation laboratory, staffed and equipped through these sources, could travel around the State on a regular basis and be attached to each of the main regional archives or museums in turn.

A strategy to address the delivery of professional support services in the area of material cultural heritage across the state will contribute to the sustainability of remote cultural collections and inter-generational equity.

Should you have any queries relating to the general concepts discussed above, please contact Lise Summers (94273436) in the first instance.

Yours sincerely

Chris Coggin
Director
State Records Office of Western Australia



Department of Culture & The Arts
Government of Western Australia

State Records Office of Western Australia