

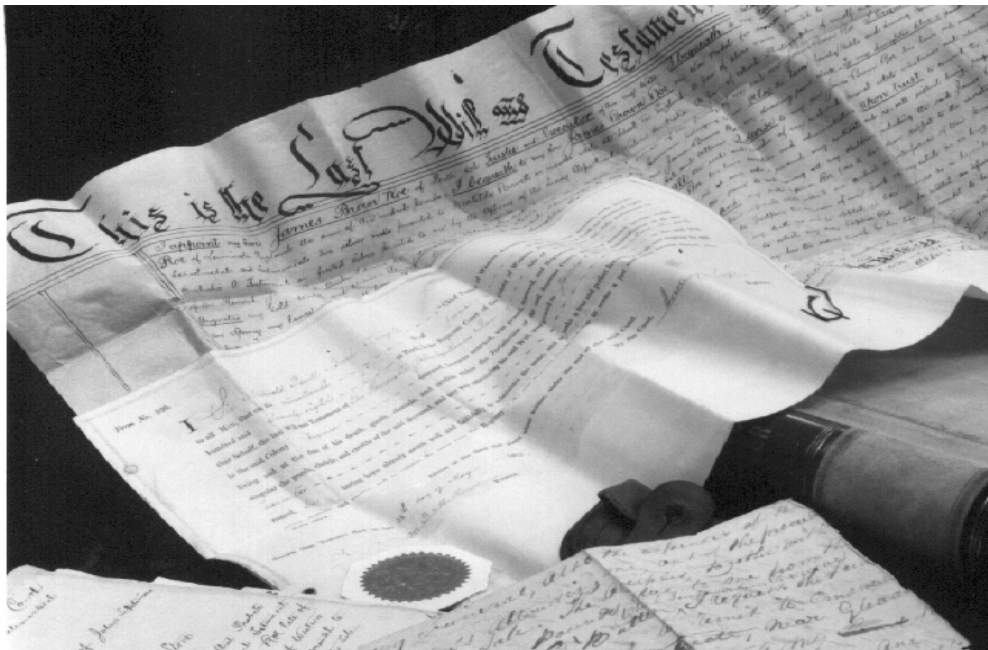


Government of Western Australia
Department of Culture and the Arts
State Records Office of Western Australia

STATE RECORDS OFFICE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Archives Keeping Plan

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Abbreviation of Terms

In this plan, the following terms are defined and abbreviated as follows:

The **Act** *means* the *State Records Act 2000*;

The **Collection** *means* the State archives collection (as defined in Section 3 of the Act);

The **Commission** *means* the State Records Commission (as defined by Part 8 of the Act);

The **Director** *means* the Director of State Records (as defined in Section 70 of the Act);

The **SRO** *means* the State Records Office (as defined in Section 72 of the Act).

Section 1.

Context

1. Introduction

1.1 Legislative Background

This document is presented to the State Records Commission (the Commission) under Section 41(3) of the *State Records Act 2000* (the Act).

Section 40(1) of the Act required the Director of State Records (the Director) to submit a draft Archives Keeping Plan to the Commission within twelve months of the commencement of the Act. The Commission approved the Director's Archives Keeping Plan on 8 May 2003.

Section 41(3) of the Act requires the Director to review the Archives Keeping Plan not more than 5 years after the approval of the plan or between one review and another.

This document constitutes the Director's second Archives Keeping Plan. This plan reflects changes in how State archives in the State archives collection (the Collection) are to be kept since the previous plan was approved.

1.2 Purpose of the Archives Keeping Plan

The Archives Keeping Plan documents the policies, procedures and practices for the keeping of State archives in the Collection.

As well as describing current practices, the Archives Keeping Plan identifies matters to be addressed prior to the next 5 yearly review.

1.3 Director's Functions

The office of the Director of State Records is established under Part 9 of the Act. The Director and staff comprise the State Records Office (the SRO).

The following sections of the Act describe the Director's functions with respect to the management and maintenance of the Collection.

Section 35 of the Act defines what constitutes the Collection.

Section 36 of the Act states that the Director has control of State archives in the Collection and requires the Director to keep those records in accordance with the Archives Keeping Plan.

Section 32 specifies when government organizations must transfer State archives to the Collection. State archives must be transferred to the Collection

after 25 years has elapsed since the date the records were created. Transfer of State archives may not occur when:

- The Director has advised a State organization that the SRO cannot accept custody of its State archives. This advice is to include directions as to keeping the archives until the Director is able to accept their custody.
- The government organization is required by its recordkeeping plan to retain control of specified State archives beyond the 25 year transfer date. Records retained as State archives by organizations must be kept in accordance with *SRC Standard 7 – Storage of Archives*.

Section 43 enables the Director to apply to the Commission for permission to destroy a State archive held in the Collection.

Sections 45 and 50 provide a right of access to those records in the Collection that are unrestricted, subject to any written law. Section 50(3) confirms that government organizations are entitled to reasonable access to records held in the Collection to which they had access prior to their transfer to the Collection. Section 51 enables the Director to attach conditions to access by government organizations and the public, where such access may affect the safe custody and physical condition of a State archive.

Sections 73(1)(c) & (d) define the functions of the Director with respect to public access to unrestricted records that are in the Collection, and require the Director to create and maintain a register of all State archives, irrespective of whether the Director or another government organization has control of those records.

Section 79(4) confirms that “a copy of a State archive certified as a copy by the Director has the same evidential value as the original”.

1.4 Operational Arrangements

The SRO operates as a Directorate within the Department of the Culture and the Arts.

The line manager within the SRO who has direct responsibility for maintaining and providing access to the Collection is the Manager: Archives Control and Access. That person reports directly to the Director of State Records.

Services and functions associated with the management, preservation and access to the Collection is undertaken by the SRO's Archives, Control and Access team. This team is currently composed of 11.7 substantive FTE's.

1.5 Services Provided by Agencies Outside the SRO

Prior to the administrative separation of the SRO from the Library and Information Service of Western Australia (LISWA) as of 1 July 2002, the Director and the State Librarian jointly agreed that the provision of certain services to the SRO by corporate branches of LISWA would continue beyond the separation date.

The following activities (pertaining to the Collection) are currently performed by the State Library of Western Australia (formerly LISWA) on behalf of the SRO:

- Building maintenance (including environmental controls) and security services at the Alexander Library Building and the Dianella records repository – Facilities Management Branch;
- Conservation services and preservation copying – Preservation and Maintenance Branch; and
- Internal recordkeeping services – Corporate Information Unit.

The provision of information and communication technology services is provided to the SRO by the Department of Culture and the Arts' Information Services Branch.

1.6 Stakeholders

Stakeholders who have an interest in the proper maintenance of records in the Collection are:

- The Minister for Culture and the Arts;
- The State Records Commission;
- The Department of Culture and the Arts;
- State organizations as identified by Schedules 1, 2 & 3 of the *State Records Act 2000*;
- Organizations representing researcher clients;
- The Australian Society of Archivists (Inc.);
- The Western Australian community; and
- National and International Researchers.

2. What is the State Archives Collection?

2.1 What is an archive?

In general terms, an archive is a record adjudged worthy of permanent retention for ongoing reference and research purposes. The reasons for retaining such records typically include:

- “As long-term memory, enabling better quality planning, decision-making and action by providing for continuity, access to past experience, expertise and knowledge, and a historical perspective
- As a way of accessing the experience of others
- As evidence of continuing rights and obligations
- As instruments of power, legitimacy and accountability, facilitating social interaction and cohesion
- As a source for our understanding and identification of ourselves, our organizations and our society
- As vehicles for communicating political, social and cultural values.”¹

The common perception of archival records is of material that is old. Whilst this may be true to some degree, it would be more accurate to think of archival records by their *significance*. In the Western Australian jurisdiction, State archives should be able to be identified from their initial creation via processes associated with recordkeeping plans.

The Act defines a State archive as a State record (a parliamentary record or a government record) that is to be retained permanently.



(SROWA, *Alien Registration certificates, Sunset Hospital*, series 2115, item 23)



(SROWA, *Plaint and Minute Book, Perth Local Court*, series 1385)

¹ Judith Ellis (ed.), *Keeping Archives*, Port Melbourne, 1993.

2.2 What is the State Archives Collection?

Section 35 of the Act provides direction as to what the Collection is to consist of:

- State archives that on the commencement of the Act are taken to be in the Collection;
- State archives that have been transferred to the Collection under section 32 (i.e. in practice, via recordkeeping plan processes);
- Records that have been transferred to the Collection under another written law; and
- Records that have been transferred to the Collection with the approval of the Director.

2.3 Historical Overview

In historical terms, the nucleus of the Collection is the Colonial Secretary's Office records which were acquired in 1903 by the first Librarian of the then Public Library, Dr James S. Battye. Other records were later collected by Dr Battye during the course of writing his various publications.

With the appointment of the first State Archivist Mollie Lukis in March 1945, a process for registering transfers of State archives commenced that continues to this day. Ms Lukis collected many records that form part of the Collection through active acquisition, particularly in regional areas of the State.

The first provisions relating to government recordkeeping and State archives appeared in the *Library Board of Western Australia Act* in 1971. At that stage, the Collection comprised 2, 140 linear metres of records.

The Collection was to rapidly increase in size during the 1980's and 1990's. In 1985, the Collection was moved from premises adjacent to the Victoria Public Library to the newly-built Alexander Library Building.

The proclamation of the *State Records Act 2000* in November 2001 introduced stricter controls for archives and the keeping of the Collection.

2.4 Collection Summary

The Collection currently consists of Colonial, State and Local government records for the State of Western Australia. The Collection documents a wide range of government activity since the formation of the Swan River Colony, including:

- Aboriginal policy and welfare;
- Birth, death and marriage registration;
- Colonial administration;

- Education and schooling;
- Health system and hospital management;
- The justice system - convict administration as well as court, police and prisoner information;
- Land administration;
- Local government administration;
- Mining and industrial development;
- Passenger arrivals and shipping information;
- Public works - public architecture and engineering; and
- Railway infrastructure.

Quantitatively, the Collection currently comprises:

- Date range of the Collection: **1827 – 2001**;
- Size of the Collection: **14, 855 linear metres**²;
- Number of State archives in the Collection: **2, 347, 090 items**³;
- Number of government organizations (past and present) archives have been received from: **1517 agencies**;
- Physical formats in the Collection:
 - Paper (correspondence files, registers, cards, maps/plans, etc.);
 - Photographic prints;
 - Microforms (microfilm, aperture cards, microfiche);
 - Audio tapes;
 - Digital copies (from the SRO's in-house digitization program);
 - Some archives in the collection are contained on additional specialized materials (e.g. linen, vellum, plastic, etc.).

The Collection is located in two buildings within the Perth metropolitan area. In general terms, most archives transferred to the Collection prior to 1994 are housed on the 3rd and 4th floors of the Alexander Library Building in central Perth. Archives transferred to the collection from 1994 onwards are housed in the archive section of the State Records Repository.

2.5 Who uses the Collection?

The Collection is used to satisfy a wide range of research interests, including:

- Genealogy (family history);
- Academic research;
- Heritage-based research;
- Local studies;
- Native Title and other legal research;
- Establishing personal rights or for personal evidential purposes;

² Council of Australasian Archives and Records Authorities, *CAARA Archival Statistics 2004-05* (sourced from <http://www.caara.org.au/Archival%20Statistics/statistics.htm> on 10 January 2008).

³ Ibid.

- Ongoing evidential and informational business needs of government organizations.

Statistical analysis shows the Collection is used by the research community and by government organizations in approximately the following ratio:

- Community users: **65%**
- Government organizations: **35%**⁴

2.6 The Need for a Collection Policy

The SRO currently has no policy that determines what is to be added to the Collection. Although Section 35 of the Act provides direction as to what the Collection is to comprise, there remains a need to develop qualitative criteria to shape what is to be added to the Collection.

Collection policies are in place in government archives in other jurisdictions.

The Collection policy will need to be integrated into appraisal (retention and disposal) processes to provide high-level guidance for such decision making.

The Collection policy will also need to give consideration to material that traditionally has not been transferred to the Collection (e.g. government publications, objects, etc).

Under Section 35(d) of the Act, there is also provision for non-government records to be added to the Collection upon the approval of the Director.

⁴ Ibid. Survey data from *CAARA Archival Statistics* show these figures to be consistent with those of previous years.

3. Custody of State Archives

3.1 Compliance Issues

SRC Standard 5: Compulsory Transfer of Archives (2002) establishes principles for the transfer of State archives by government organizations to the Collection.

State archives are transferred to the Collection in accordance with Sections 32 and 35 of the Act (see **1.3 Director's Functions** for a précis of Section 32 and **2.2 What is the State Archives Collection?** for a précis of Section 35). Subsection 16(6)(b) provides provision for the transfer of State archives to the Collection at a time other than that prescribed by Section 32 (e.g. prior to the 25 year compulsory transfer period).

State organizations wishing to retain State archives beyond the compulsory 25 year transfer period require approval to do so by the State Records Commission as per Section 23 and Subsection 16(6)(a) of the Act. Up until 2008, *SRC Guideline 2: Storage of State Archives retained by Government Agencies* (2003) provided instruction to those organizations wishing to retain archives in their custody. This Guideline has now been replaced by *SRC Standard 7 – Storage of Archives* (2008) which provides minimum compliance requirements for organizations wishing to retain archives beyond 25 years.

The SRO has been unable to accept transfers of State archives from government organizations since July 2001. The Director advised organizations of this situation in writing in July 2001. Further advice was provided to organizations in July 2002 and in June 2006. To date, the Director has requested of organizations that they maintain their State archives, to the maximum extent practicable, in accordance with *SRC Guideline 2* until such time that the SRO can accept custody of such material. This fulfills the Director's legislative obligation required under Sect. 32(4) of the Act.

At the time of writing, a further directive is being prepared to organizations for maintaining custody of State archives pending their transfer.

3.2 Lack of Archival Storage Capacity

The inability of the Director to accept transfers of State archives from government organizations since July 2001 is a key factor in achievement of the objectives of the Act. Survey and analysis work conducted by the SRO shows that there is a backlog of over 35, 000 linear metres of State archives currently held by government organizations awaiting transfer to the Collection.

A business case for building a new archives storage repository was prepared in 2005 but was unsuccessful in receiving funding. The business case is subject to revision and resubmission.

3.3 The Need for a Digital Archives Repository

The SRO is unable to accept custody of State archives in digital form from government organizations. *Public Records Policy 8 – Policy for the ongoing management of electronic records designated as having archival value* (1992) places responsibility upon organizations to maintain their digital archives and to implement policies and strategies for their ongoing preservation. *SRC Standard Standard 8 – Digital Recordkeeping* (2008) provides minimum compliance criteria for organizations retaining digital records, including digital archives.

The success to which digital archives are being properly managed and preserved by organizations is currently not known, although analysis of recordkeeping plan data in 2006 revealed that more than half of government organizations do not have adequate policies and procedures in place for digital recordkeeping.

The issues relating to digital permanence are significant and there are perceived risks to the integrity and longevity of State archives in digital format in the current environment.

A business case for establishing a digital archives repository was prepared in 2006 but was unsuccessful in receiving funding. The SRO is currently initiating a pilot project to research digital archive methodologies and needs. It is anticipated the findings of this pilot project will help inform an ongoing digital permanence strategy for government.

3.4 Photographic and Audio-Visual Records

Under the terms of the Act, photographic and audio-visual records of archival value are required to be transferred to the custody of the State Records Office unless an organization's approved recordkeeping plan states otherwise. At present, no organization has requested to retain custody of such material beyond the compulsory 25 year transfer period.

Apart from several isolated groups of records, the SRO has not received photographic or audio-visual records in any great quantity. Prior to the commencement of the Act, the Library and Information Service of WA's Pictorial Branch and State Film Archives accepted custody of government photographs and government film respectively. Significant collections of government photographs and government film transferred to these branches continue to be managed and maintained by the State Library.

In 2004, the SRO conducted a project identifying government photographs held by the State Library. The transfer of this material to the custody of the SRO remains subject to further negotiation with the State Library.

The SRO has not yet identified government films currently in the custody of the State Library. The identification of such material requires an additional project.

The 2004 project identified extensive collections of government photographs in the custody of external government organizations. The project highlighted the need to develop standards and guidelines for the management of photographs as records. The need for such a standard is identified on the SRO's schedule of proposed SRC Standards.

Consideration also needs to be given to the development of standards and guidelines for the management of films as records.

3.5 Estrays

From time to time, the SRO receives government records that are passed to its custody from private hands. Government records that have left the custody of government offices, for whatever reasons, are termed "estrays". Estrays that are returned or recovered and are deemed to have archival significance are added to the Collection on an ad hoc basis. In circumstances whereby an estray is deemed to not have archival significance, the Director returns such material to the custody of the government organization from which the record originated or its successor organization.

The reasons government records may be held in non-government hands are various but are largely owing to previous legislation (i.e. the *Library Board of Western Australia Act*) not providing the recordkeeping strictures of the current Act.

From anecdotal experience, the SRO believes that there may be government records still in the custody of non-government hands that require delivery to the Director. Where the Director has directed the return of an estray, custody in non-government hands may constitute unauthorized possession under Section 52 of the Act. Under the terms of this Section 52, unauthorised possession of a government record is an offence.

The issue of estrays in unauthorized possession requires further scoping by the SRO.

4. Review of Business Processes

4.1 Special Note

Throughout this plan, reference is made to reviews of various business processes that relate to the management of the Collection. As many of the SRO's business processes are interconnected, it is not intended that the stated reviews are conducted in isolation. Rather, these reviews will need to be conducted holistically, although several are dependant on Government resourcing additional archival storage facilities.

Abiding principles in which these reviews are to be conducted comprise:

- A fundamental re-examination of collection management and access services;
- A top-down approach to reviews;
- Better integration and consolidation of business processes across the office and for collection management;
- Improved control of the collection through fuller automation of processes;
- Improved efficiency and effectiveness; and
- Improved outcomes for SRO clients.

Section 2.

The Plan

5. Transfer of Archives to the Collection

The transfer of State archives to the Collection is facilitated under Section 35 of the Act (See **2.2 What is the State Archives Collection?** for a précis of Section 35).

Section 32 of the Act provides the basis upon which organizations transfer State archives to the Collection via recordkeeping plan processes. In practical terms, transfers of State archives to the Collection from organizations are effected through approved Disposal Authorities that identify which government records have archival significance.

As outlined in Section 3 of this Plan, the SRO has been unable to receive transfers to the Collection since July 2001 owing to lack of archival storage space.

The Director advised organizations of this situation in writing in July 2001. Further advice was provided to organizations in July 2002 and in June 2006. The Director has requested of organizations that they maintain their State archives, to the maximum extent practicable, in accordance with those stipulated in *SRC Guideline 2* until such time that the SRO can accept custody of such material.

At the time of writing, a further directive is being prepared to organizations for maintaining custody of State archives pending their transfer.

The business processes, policies/procedures and vital records for transfer practices outlined below are those that were in place prior to transfers ceasing in 2001. The transfer processes will however require comprehensive review prior to archive transfers recommencing in the event that central repository resources become available to facilitate this.

5.1 Business Practices and Processes

5.1.1 Transfer Requests

The transfer processes in place in 2001 were geared towards organizations initiating transfer requests. When a transfer request was received by telephone or email, SRO staff would provide external or on-site instruction on preparing records for transfer, depending on the organization's needs.

The SRO would conduct preliminary analysis at the transfer request stage to ensure the records proposed for transfer were identified as archives in the organization's approved Disposal Authority.

5.1.2 Organizations to Prepare Transfers

The SRO required organizations to conduct the work in preparing their records for archival transfer. This entailed that the organization:

- Ensured records to be transferred were boxed in a strict numbering sequence (e.g. by file number);
- Purchased and used approved archive boxes;
- Stamped all records with a SRO consignment stamp;
- Ensured all records were electronically listed;
- Conducted any other physical processing of the records as instructed by the SRO.

5.1.3 Transfer Documentation

Prior to transferring archives to the Collection, the SRO required that an organization submit transfer documentation as per the requirements outlined in the SRO's *Records Disposal: A Handbook for Government Agencies*. Of critical importance in this documentation was the manifest (or electronic listing) of archives to be transferred. The SRO would conduct further analysis of the transfer manifest to ensure records proposed for transfer were identified as archives in the organization's approved Disposal Authority.

This stage of the process would also allow any final problem solving with the proposed transfer before it was accepted into the Collection.

5.1.4 Receipt of Transfer

When the records were physically transferred to the Collection, the SRO would finalise documentation processes and upload the transfer manifest to its Archival Management System.

5.2 Policies and Procedures

Procedures for the transfer of State archives (including their arrangement and documentation) were published in the *Records Disposal: A Handbook for Government Agencies (Sections 11 to 17)*. The 2000 edition of the Handbook was distributed to all State and local government organizations. The Handbook was withdrawn from use in 2008, pending revision.

Advice to organizations regarding the transfer of records to the Collection is now also available via the SRO website: *Services to Government – Transferring Archival Records to the SRO*.

5.3 Vital Records

Control records for transfer processes maintained by the SRO are:

- The Consignment Register. This register records the allocation of consignment numbers to State archives prior to their transfer to the Collection. The Consignment Register records the registration date, location within the SRO, shelf meterage and final processing dates for individual consignments. This register is maintained in hard copy format. Consignment details are entered in to the SRO's Business Operations System once consignments are transferred to the Collection.
 - The Intellectual Control module of the SRO's Business Operations System.
 - The SRO's corporate files documenting correspondence to and from individual organizations about archival transfers.

5.4 Matters to be Addressed

5.4.1 Review of Transfer Procedures

In the event that resources are made available for central collection and retention of archival records, prior to the re-commencement of archives transfers, the SRO intends to review its transfer procedures to ensure the most efficient processes are in place. Transfer procedures which were in place prior to 2001 were dependant upon manual systems in place at SRO. The SRO has identified the need to more fully automate its back-end business processes which would facilitate a more streamlined transfer process.

Actions:

- Review transfer procedures that would leverage off (proposed) fuller automation of back-end business processes;
- Ensure all (revised) transfer documentation is available from the SRO website.

Because of the considerable volume of State archives awaiting transfer, the resourcing component required when transfer processes recommence is being addressed through the Business Case for a New State Archives Repository.

5.4.2 Review of Transfer Priorities

In the past, transfers of State archives to the Collection occurred largely at the behest of government organizations. This was due mainly to the legislative framework in place prior to the Act (e.g. the earlier *Library Board Act* did not mandate that all organizations have an approved Disposal Authority which resulted in incomplete coverage). Because of this, some organizations transferred large amounts of material to the Collection and others none at all.

As such, the Collection is under-represented in some areas of government activity.

The SRO estimates that there is a backlog of over 35, 000 linear metres of State archives still in the custody of government organizations awaiting transfer.

To ensure the best use of archival storage space once it becomes available, the SRO plans for future transfers to be prioritized and that the SRO will need to pro-actively direct transfer activity. To do this, SRO will need to develop a Transfer Prioritization Strategy that:

- Establishes criteria by which to prioritize transfers (e.g. age and fragility of archives, access needs of community, exceptional significance of archives, etc.);
- Leverages off information contained in recordkeeping plans for the purposes of i) identifying State archives and ii) any preservation issues that may relate to same;
- Factors in on-site surveys to assess/refine transfer needs and to assess if Ad Hoc Disposal Scheduling will be required if (older) sets of records are not currently identified in approved recordkeeping plans.

Although there is a special need to prioritize transfers to address the backlog of State archives awaiting transfer, it is anticipated that ongoing monitoring of transfer priorities would form part of the SRO's permanent transfer methodology.

Action:

- Work closely with Government in preparation of a business case to establish the need for an archives repository;
- Develop a Transfer Prioritization Strategy that incorporates the aforementioned matters;
- Plan for audit capacity to review transferred archives.

5.4.3 Retrospective box checking

Between 1994 and 2001 when archive transfers were made to the SRO's offsite repository at Dianella, audits of physical records transferred against the transfer manifest were unable to be conducted due to lack of resources.

Action:

- Subject to additional funding, initiate a project to scope, assess and correct any discrepancies between the manifests of archive transfers and the physical contents of what was transferred to the Dianella repository.

6. Intellectual Control of the Collection

Intellectual control of the Collection refers to what is traditionally known as “cataloguing” and is used to describe and list records in the Collection.

Until 1988, the Collection was described and listed in hardcopy catalogues called Archive Notes (ANs). These catalogues list archives by their creating agency but often lack important contextual information about the archives.

Since 1988, all new archive transfers have been documented using a series registration system. The basis for the series registration system is two-fold. It provides:

- Contextual information about archives (e.g. the government entity that created the record, the record category, etc.)
- Content information about archives (e.g. titles or descriptions of individual records).

The series registration system has become the national methodology for documenting information about archives.

6.1 Business Practices and Processes

6.1.1 Method of Documenting State Archives

Since the 1990’s, the SRO has been retrospectively converting archive listings from the defunct AN system into the series registration system. As well as consolidating the intellectual control of the Collection into a unified system, this activity has also converted hardcopy listings into electronic listings which have been loaded to the SRO’s Archival Management System over preceding years.

This activity has been aided greatly since 2004 when the SRO introduced a Work for the Dole program to assist in data entry. At present, the SRO estimates that 93% of the Collection is documented in the series registration system. Full conversion from the AN catalogues to the series registration system is expected by the end of 2009.

Completion of this work will consolidate the listing and documentation of all State archives in the Collection into a single system which is electronically searchable.

6.1.2 Computer systems

In 1991, the SRO commenced the computerised documentation of new archive transfers. Systems in place up until 2004 were limited to staff use only and lacked search capabilities.

In 2004, the SRO procured a new Archives Management System from State Records New South Wales. All data from SRO's previous database was migrated to this new Business Operations System which is SRO's current operating system for cataloguing the Collection and for related business processes.

6.1.3 Register of State Archives

Section 73(1)(d) of the Act requires the Director of State Records to establish and maintain a register of all State archives including those that are not in the State archives collection.

The SRO has fulfilled the first part of this requirement with respect to State archives that are part of the Collection. All State archives in the Collection are listed and documented in a combination of the AN catalogues and the Business Operations System (see previous sub-sections).

The requirement to register State archives that are not in the Collection has been subject to an ongoing project. (This project is outside the scope of the Archives Keeping Plan which relates purely to the Collection).

6.2 Policies and Procedures

The SRO maintains a series registration system procedure manual for providing instruction on documenting archives transferred to the Collection, although this manual requires updating.

SRO's Business Operations System also provides an online user "manual" for SRO staff using the system.

6.3 Vital Records

The control record for the SRO's cataloguing process is the Intellectual Control module of the Business Operations System. Incremental and full system backups are carried out by the Department of Culture and the Arts' Information Services Branch on a schedule agreed with the SRO.

In addition, the SRO maintains defunct sets of agency, series and accession registers previously used to allocate archive registration information. These registers are required for ongoing reference purposes by the SRO.

6.4 Matters to be Addressed

6.4.1 Review of series registration system implementation

Although the series registration system has become a national approach to documenting archives, there remain variations in how the system has been implemented in different jurisdictions. Often this has been the result of the system being adapted to suit business processes already in place.

The SRO has identified several areas of possible improvement for how the system could be implemented, with a focus on:

- introducing stricter business rules for arrangement and description of the Collection;
- expanding on the contextual entities used to describe the collection;
- providing improved comprehensiveness and consistency in the contextual descriptions for the Collection.

These areas of possible improvement need to be scoped more fully to assess cost-benefit ratios and to also identify the implications of introducing such changes.

Action:

- Review existing implementation of series registration system to identify perceived flaws, to examine options for improvement and to consider the implications for each of these. Implement any agreed changes and update series registration system procedures.

7. Physical Control of the Collection

Physical control of the collection refers to the mechanisms in place to ensure that archives are physically locatable and retrievable at any point in time.

Members of the public may only access original archives in the Collection at the SRO Search Room. Government organizations may access original archives in the Collection on a loan basis, subject to the SRO's Loans Policy (see also **10. Access to the Collection**).

7.1 Business Practices and Processes

7.1.1 Physical Arrangement of the Collection

In general terms, archives in the Collection are physically shelved in the order in which they were transferred. This is done through a sequential numbering system known as the consignment number (formerly accession number). Each group of records transferred to the Collection is allocated a consignment number as part of transfer processes. The way the Collection has been shelved effectively mirrors the order in which archives were transferred.

The consignment number has a two-fold purpose:

- To identify the transfer of a group of records to the Collection at a specific point in time; and
- To act as an ongoing physical locator for those records.

With respect to the latter point, the system is compromised as different types of records (such as maps or large items) will be stored in different physical locations particular to their storage needs. Intermediary and disparate location guides are therefore often needed by SRO staff to locate a given archive.

As yet, no detailed location coding against physical storage areas and shelving units has been undertaken, although this has been flagged for future review (see **7.4.2 Matters to be Addressed**). Such an initiative would allow for precise mapping of archives in the Collection against their physical location.

7.1.2 System for retrieving, replacing and tracking archives

The SRO currently operates a manual system for retrieving and replacing archives when they have been accessed. When archives are required for client access or other purposes, paper call slips are inserted into the box or shelf from which the archives are taken and carbon copies of the call slip are kept with the archive (to show who the record is issued to) as well maintained by SRO staff in a central location to track the location of that archive (e.g. issued to a

researcher in the SRO Search Room or issued to a government agency on a loan basis).

Archives issued to government agencies on a loan basis are also tracked on a spreadsheet by SRO staff to monitor their external location and loan period. This has helped the SRO recover a large amount of archival records that had previously been on loan to organizations for extended periods.

No electronic tracking of archives is conducted for archives issued to the SRO Search Room.

When client access to archives is completed, the archives are replaced using the call slip as the physical indicator of where the record is to be returned.

7.2 Policies and Procedures

The SRO maintains an internal *Policies and Procedures Manual for Loans Team Processes* which provides instruction on archive retrieval and associated protocols.

7.3 Vital Records

The SRO call slips used for retrieving and replacing archives, as well as the spreadsheet used to track the loan of archives to government organizations, form the vital records for physical control of the Collection.

SRO's intermediary location guides for archives are also deemed a vital record.

7.4 Matters to be addressed

7.4.1 Fuller automation of Collection control processes

Since the introduction of the Business Operations System, the SRO has been able to consolidate some of its business processes into an integrated system.

The SRO has identified further areas of process/system development so as to better track and monitor physical control of the Collection:

- An automated process for the ordering of archives;
- An automated process for the tracking of archives (possibly incorporating barcode or RFID technology); and

Further system development as per above would also support better analysis of how the Collection is used (both in the short-term and in the long-term). Analysis of longitudinal information collected from the use of the Collection could help inform preservation and access strategies, as well as inform ongoing appraisal decisions in the recordkeeping plan phase. Long-term analysis of

usage could also assist in any de-accessioning decision-making (see also **12. Destruction of State Archives**).

Action:

- Develop a cost benefit analysis of a fuller automation of Collection control processes and subject to that analysis, implement those processes.

7.4.2 Coding of storage areas

As stated, the SRO has not yet allocated a proper location code system to the storage areas and shelving in which the Collection is housed. Such coding, and the mapping of consignments against their location code, has the potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of retrieval processes.

SRO's Business Operations System provides the facility to enable such mapping although some reconfiguration of the system is required to suit SRO storage.

In the long-term (i.e. when additional archival storage space is available and as the Collection grows), the imperative to have a more accurate system for locating archives in the Collection will invariably increase.

Action:

- Scope the logistics for coding the SRO's archival storage areas and for mapping the Collection against such location codes. Implement as required.

7.4.3 Collection Audits

The SRO has been conducting micro audits of the Collection (i.e. box checking) for prioritized groups of records to identify any items which are missing, on long-term loan to government organizations (in parallel with tracking of loan processes) or which have not been listed.

This work is ongoing. Micro audits have been limited to the Collection housed in the Alexander Library Building but the SRO intends to extend the micro auditing process to archives housed at the Dianella Repository.

Once all archives have been electronically listed as part of retrospective conversion work (see **6.1.1 Method of Documenting State Archives**), the SRO also intends to conduct a macro audit of the Collection to ensure all consignments have corresponding lists. This macro audit will contribute to the SRO's aim to have the entirety of the Collection electronically listed and searchable.

Actions:

- Continue micro audit activity and initiate a macro audit of the Collection following the completion of retrospective conversion work.

8. Physical Storage for the Collection

[This section has been removed from the public access copy for reasons of collection security].

9. Preservation of the Collection

Preservation of the collection refers to the programs and practices in place to ensure that the Collection is accessible to current and future researchers.

Preservation issues are partly addressed via the previous section (see **8. Physical Storage for the Collection**). This section focuses on direct preservation initiatives the SRO undertakes to provide for the ongoing conservation of archives in the Collection.

9.1 Business Practices and Processes

9.1.1 SRO Preservation Program

An annual preservation program for the Collection is negotiated and implemented by the SRO and the Preservation and Maintenance Branch of the State Library of WA. In essence, the SRO is allocated a certain percentage of the Preservation Branch's time in order to carry out the SRO Preservation Program.

Work conducted in the Preservation Program is identified annually based on agreed Collection needs.

The Preservation and Maintenance Branch provides the following services to the SRO:

- Micrographics – Advice and technical support on the preparation and microfilming of internal and external records to archival standards; storage of microfilm masters and working negatives.
- Digitization – Scanning of internal archival records to an agreed specification;
- Conservation – Advice and technical support on the conservation of archival materials, including monitoring of storage environments and conservation treatments and repackaging to preserve archival records.
- Public orders – Reproduction of archival records for private research purposes or publication.

9.1.2 Copying of Archives

The Preservation Branch operates an internal microfilming program (i.e. filming records held within the Collection) on the SRO's behalf. The filming program comprises a major part of the SRO's annual Preservation Program. Material to be microfilmed is identified on an annual basis according to i) demands on its access and ii) preservation needs.

The SRO commenced digitization of internal archival records in 2001. This work has mainly been conducted on SRO's behalf by the Preservation Branch as part of the SRO Preservation Program. So far, the SRO has focused its digitization priorities on maps in the Collection (which have both strong preservation needs as well as high access demands).

With both microfilming and digitization processes, copying is conducted systematically in a phased approach rather than in an ad hoc manner. That is, whole consignments of archives are copied rather than just individual archives within a consignment.

The copying program is driven largely by access needs but the program has an important side-benefit of preventing further wear and tear of original material thereby also satisfying indirect preservation needs.

According to section 39(3) of the Act, "the Archives Keeping Plan may provide for a State archive to be reproduced in another form and for the destruction of a State archive if a reproduction of it is being kept". The SRO does not currently destroy any original material following copying of archives in the Collection.

9.1.3 Government Agency Archives Microfilming Program

Since 1996 the SRO has also microfilmed State archives that are held by government agencies as a component of the Preservation Program. The program is known as the Government Agency Archives Microfilming Program. At first the service was free but since 2001 participating agencies have been charged for the costs of materials required to film the records. The procedures for this program are described in Part 5 (*Microfilming of Permanent Value Records by LISWA*) of *Public Records Standard No 3: Guidelines for Microfilming Public Records*. This Standard was last issued in January 1997. More current information on microfilming is available on the SRO website via *Services to Government – Preservation Advice – Microfilming*.

In some instances, original records are destroyed following the microfilming of them under this program. Such destruction is only carried out in accordance with an approved disposal authority. As such, destruction of such records is regulated through the recordkeeping plan regime rather than through the mechanism of the Archives Keeping Plan.

9.1.4 Conservation work

The Preservation Branch undertakes conservation treatments and repackaging of archives in the Collection on the SRO's behalf as part of the SRO Preservation Program. Such work is undertaken both systematically (e.g. as part of a planned repackaging program) and on demand (e.g. when SRO staff become aware of records requiring treatment, usually when accessed by clients).

9.1.5 Public Orders

The Preservation Branch also undertakes on the SRO's behalf high resolution copying of archives at the request of public clients. Typically, such public orders comprise maps/plans that are too large to be copied without specialized equipment or consist of archival material that clients seek to have reproduced for display or publication purposes. Public orders are a fee-based service.

9.2 Policies and Procedures

The SRO's *Policy on Preservation of State Records* is accessible via the SRO website under *Services to Government*.

SRO staff are provided with instruction on handling and transport procedures for archives. The Preservation Branch conducts regular workshops on matters to do with handling and preserving archival material which relevant SRO staff are required to attend.

Public researchers must also agree to abide by certain conditions for handling archives as part of the Researcher Registration process. Reference staff working in the SRO Search Room monitor the handling of archives by researchers and provide guidance on protocols.

9.3 Vital Records

Conservation reports are documented in the SRO's Business Operations System.

Government Agency Archives Microfilming Program applications and the SRO's register for this program also constitute vital records.

9.4 Matters to be Addressed

9.4.1 Review of Copying Strategies

At present, the SRO conducts copying of archives in the Collection via microfilming and digitization. To a large degree, the SRO's copying strategies are required to conform with services the Preservation Branch of the State Library has the capacity to provide. The use of microfilming currently dominates as a copying strategy for archives.

The ongoing sustainability of microfilming as a copying strategy, and the suitability of this type of copying to meet the SRO's business needs, requires review. Such a review needs to be conducted in tandem with developing an access strategy for the Collection (see **10.4.1 Access Strategy**)

Action:

- Conduct a review of the SRO's copying strategies in alignment with an Access Strategy for the Collection. Plan and implement any changes in business practices that arise from the review.

9.4.1 Preservation survey of the Collection

As yet, no comprehensive preservation survey of the Collection has been undertaken although there have been specific surveys in previous years for discreet groups of records. Although a long-term and resource intensive exercise, a preservation survey would provide for a more holistic understanding of the preservation needs of the Collection and would flag potential preservation risks not yet identified.

Action:

- Scope the logistics and methodology to undertake a comprehensive preservation survey of the Collection.

10. Access to the Collection

Access to the Collection is the primary impetus to which the SRO's other business processes lead.

Under the terms of the Act, the Director is required to facilitate such access and to provide "appropriate facilities and services to enable them (the archives) to be effectively used for administrative requirements and for study and research."⁵

10.1 Business Practices and Processes

10.1.1 SRO Website

The SRO website (www.sro.wa.gov.au) provides the main source of information about the Collection and how to access it. The site includes two major sections of interest to public clients:

- Services to the Community – general advice to researchers about access to the Collection and protocols that apply;
- The Collection – guides to the Collection arranged under broad subject headings.

Information on the SRO website is maintained and updated internally by the SRO. Website maintenance procedures are documented in the SRO recordkeeping plan.

10.1.2 AEON – Archives Explored Online

In 2004, the SRO launched its web catalogue to the Collection – AEON (Archives Explored Online). AEON is accessible via the homepage of the SRO website (www.sro.wa.gov.au/aeon). AEON lists individual archives in the Collection as well as provides the context in which they were created.

Currently, AEON lists approximately 93% of the archives in the Collection and provides various search options to identify specific State archives. Work is currently being undertaken to ensure remaining archives in the Collection are listed and are searchable via AEON (see **6.1.1 Method of Documenting State Archives**).

As part of the AEON project, the State Records Office conducted consultation with whole-of-government to develop a policy that determines what archives are excluded from being identified in the public domain. This policy addresses the item titles of individual archives. Certain item titles, particularly where they relate to an individual in a highly sensitive context, may not be in the public

⁵ Sect. 73(1)(c)(iii) of the Act.

interest to have listed in the public domain. In reality, such a scenario would affect less than 1% of the item titles to the Collection.

The policy for the State archives catalogue is accessible on the SRO website (see *About the SRO – Overview: Further Information*).

10.1.3 SRO Search Room

The SRO Search Room is situated on the ground floor of the Alexander Library Building. The public and government organization staff may access original archival records at the SRO Search Room. Where the SRO has microfilmed or digitized archival records, clients are requested to access these copies in the Search Room in place of original material. Information about services provided in the Search Room is available on the SRO website under *Services to the Community*.

The SRO provides researchers in the Search Room with a free copying self-service using a digital camera. Researchers can elect to use their own cameras in the Search Room to copy archival material (subject to the SRO's conditions of use) or can request that high-resolution copies be made by the SRO for a fee.

Equipment is available in the Search Room for researchers to make copies (paper or digital) from microfilm.

10.1.4 Research Services

The SRO provides a limited reference service to clients who are unable to visit the Search Room. A brief service delivery statement including SRO contact details is available on the SRO. The SRO does not currently charge for this service, other than for any copying of archives that may be associated with responding to an enquiry.

10.1.5 Loans to Government Organizations

Section 50(3) of the Act stipulates that government organizations may obtain access to records that they formerly controlled and which are held in the Collection. Section 51 of the Act enables the Director to attach conditions to a person or an organization having access to State archives for the purpose on ensuring their safe custody and of protecting their condition.

Prior to July 2006, organizations were able to borrow any archives from the Collection which they previously had access to. Since then, the SRO has introduced a loans policy which sets limits on what an organization may borrow. For archives which cannot be lent under this policy, government staff are requested to view the material at the SRO Search Room.

Advice regarding government loans, as well as a copy of the loans policy, is provided on the SRO website (see *Services to Government – Government Loans Service*).

10.1.6 Restricted Access Records

SRC Standard 4: Restricted Access Archives establishes principles for determining the management of restricted access archives

Section 15(1) of the *State Records (Consequential Provisions) Act 2000* entailed that a review of the access status of all restricted access archives in the Collection be conducted within 5 years of proclamation of the Act. This review was completed in 2007 and the State Records Commission ratified all decisions relating to restricted access archives in the Collection.

The review helped ensure that groups of records that previously had open-ended restrictions placed on them now have finite periods of restriction, as per the requirements of the Act. The review also aimed to ensure greater consistency in restricted access decisions as they apply across the Collection.

As a result of the review, many archives in the Collection that were previously restricted are now open access archives.

The SRO has documented the revised access status of archives in the Collection and this information is reflected to public clients via AEON.

10.1.7 Fees and Charges

Access to the Collection in the Search Room is free of charge. The only fees involved are those requiring SRO staff to undertake the copying of archives. These copying charges are provided on the SRO website (see *Services to the Community – Copying of Archives*).

Fees apply to government organizations who borrow archives from the Collection created by their organization (or their predecessor organization). These loan charges are provided on the SRO website (see *Services to Government – Government Loans*).

10.1.8 Public Programs and Outreach Services

The SRO promotes access to the Collection via a series of annual public programs including:

- the Margaret Medcalf Award for Excellence in Research;
- The Cabinet Papers Release (from their 30 year access embargo);
- The Geoffrey Bolton Lecture; and
- Regular public seminars on aspects of the Collection or on research.

The SRO also participates in regional community-based talks and tours promoting access to the Collection. These talks and tours are conducted on demand.

10.2 Policies and Procedures

The SRO maintains a procedure manual for the operations of the SRO Search Room.

Protocols for clients who wish to access the Collection are available on the SRO website. These protocols cover matters including researcher registration, procedures for applying for access to restricted access archives and copying of archives.

The SRO's policy for Government Loans is also available via the SRO website (see *Services to Government – Government Loans*).

10.3 Vital Records

The SRO website and web catalogue, AEON, form the vital record for access to the Collection.

10.4 Matters to be Addressed

10.4.1 Access Strategy

The main conduit through which the SRO facilitates access to the Collection is currently via the SRO Search Room. There are obvious time and geographical constraints associated with this form of service that limit access to the Collection.

A fundamental review of how the SRO is to deliver its access services is required. Such a review is timely in light of most of the Collection being searchable via the SRO website and for digitized copies of archives to also be accessible this way.

A review of how SRO is to deliver its access services into the future would encompass, but would not be limited to:

- Client-preferred access mechanisms;
- Consolidation of SRO finding aids and indexes;
- The provision of web access to digitized copies of core sets of the Collection
- The introduction of 'digitization on demand' services (i.e. digitization of State archives) for public clients and government organizations;
- Integration of digital access services with a Digital Archives repository and infrastructure (see also **3.3 The Need for a Digital Archives Repository**);
- Consideration of an ongoing outreach and public programs activities to support access to the Collection and to educate SRO clients;
- Sustainable approaches for access and research services.

10.4.2 Monitoring of Restricted Access Archive decisions

Subsequent to the review of restricted access archives that was conducted in 2007, the State Records Commission is required to review these restricted access decisions on a 5 yearly basis as per the requirement of Sect. 37(5) of the Act.

The SRO will need to establish a process to monitor and coordinate ongoing reviews of restricted access decisions.

The SRO also needs to establish a procedure to facilitate applications made by government organizations to restrict access to an archive in the Collection that were previously on open access. Section 37(2)(b) of the Act provides organizations with the scope to make such an application.

Action:

- Establish a process to monitor and coordinate ongoing reviews of restricted access decisions;
- Develop a procedure that addresses applications made under Sect. 37(2)(b) of the Act.