PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into the Public Record Office Victoria

REPORT TO THE PARLIAMENT
OCTOBER 1996
PUBLIC ACCOUNTS AND ESTIMATES COMMITTEE

EIGHTEENTH REPORT TO THE PARLIAMENT

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PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE, VICTORIA

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MEMBERSHIP
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PUBLIC BODIES REVIEW COMMITTEE

The report draws heavily on a draft report, information, evidence and research material that had been prepared by the former Public Bodies Review Committee prior to the dissolution of Parliament on 5 March 1996. This information has been provided to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee under Section 45 of the Parliamentary Committees Act 1968.

Members of the Public Bodies Review Committee were:

Mr R. F. Cooper, MP                      Chairman
The Hon W. A. Hartigan, MLC               Deputy Chairman
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Duties of the Committee

The Public Accounts and Estimates Committee is constituted under the Parliamentary Committees Act 1968, as amended.

The Committee comprises nine members of the Parliament drawn from both Houses and all parties.

The Committee carries out investigations and reports to Parliament on matters associated with State financial management. Its functions under the Act are to inquire into, consider and report to the Parliament on:

(a) any proposal, matter or thing connected with public administration or public sector finances;

(b) the annual estimates or receipts and payments and other Budget papers and any supplementary estimates of receipts and payments presented to the Assembly and Council;

if the Committee is required or permitted so to do by or under the Act.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS, ACRONYMS AND GLOSSARY

Agency means

(a) any Victorian government department or office;
(b) any public statutory body (whether or not incorporated)
(c) any municipal council, and
(d) any other local governing body (whether or not incorporated)

APROSS Approved Public Record Storage Supplier
ASC Australian Securities Commission
ASIT21 Proposed national standard for records management
DB Dry Bulb (Psychrometer Dry Bulb Reading)

Government Agency means

(a) any Victorian government department or office;
(b) any public statutory body (whether or not incorporated)
(c) any municipal council, and
(d) any other local governing body (whether or not incorporated)

PBRC Public Bodies Review Committee
PRAC Public Record Advisory Council
PRO Public Record Office
RMAA Records Management Association of Australia
SARA State Archives and Records Administration
VGEMS Victorian Government Electronic Messaging Service
VPRS Victorian Public Records Series
I Chairman's Introduction

Records permeate every aspect of our lives. So much of who we are, what we do and what we know relies on our ability to create, share and access information. As we make greater use of technology, the number of electronic records we create grows. As the number of records increases, so too does the problem of managing and preserving them.

As with paper records, electronic records must be kept for long periods of time. Unfortunately, electronic records are inherently fragile. Unlike paper, they have no physical presence and can disappear from computer systems without anyone knowing they are gone.

The Public Record Office has a key role in ensuring the implementation of policies and procedures for the identification, management and retention of government information which is of continuing value. As this Inquiry has revealed, it is an organisation which is facing major problems in discharging its responsibilities under the Public Records Act and in developing strategies for electronic records.

The challenge is to set in place a framework that will promote the careful and effective keeping of records by government agencies so as to ensure that Victoria's history is completely and accurately recorded and to facilitate the future use of those records as archival materials.

The Committee takes up the challenge in this report.

Building on the recent commitment by the government to establish an electronic archive system and to build a new State Archives Centre, this Committee has made a number of recommendations which address the issues identified during the Inquiry and are intended to help generate a new momentum in the Public Record Office.

There is a sense of urgency for the Public Record Office and the government to pursue the matters raised in this report. As every day passes potentially vital records are lost. This has serious implications for government which has an obligation to the community and future generations to ensure the preservation of all public records which are of enduring legal, historical or administrative value. They are an important foundation for accountability.

As Chairman of the Committee, I wish to pay tribute to the energy, commitment and effectiveness of the former Public Bodies Review Committee led by its Chairman, Mr R.F. Cooper, for the work that they had undertaken in relation to this Inquiry. This report has drawn heavily on the draft material prepared by that committee. I also would like to acknowledge the considerable work of the Executive Officer to that Committee, Mr Barry Aitken.
In conclusion, and on behalf of the Committee, I would like to express our appreciation to those people who contributed to the review by preparing submissions and giving evidence at public hearings. All submissions and all opinions expressed at the hearings were taken into account.

Hon. Bill Forwood, MLC
Chairman
II Executive Summary

The Public Record Office

The Committee's report reviews the performance of the Public Record Office, with separate chapters addressing four further terms of reference. This report reaffirms the belief that the retention of the records of government and freedom of access to them is one of the key bases of a democratic society.

The report calls for new attitudes and for leadership by the Public Record Office. The recommendations in this report address how these may be achieved and are intended to help generate a new momentum in the Public Record Office.

The Committee does not recommend significant changes but seeks an improved legislative framework to ensure that the responsibilities of the Public Record Office and each government agency in relation to the preservation of public records can be improved upon.

Many submissions to the Inquiry praised the work of the Public Record Office but most recognised the need for change and for the Office to demonstrate leadership in a number of areas.

Submissions from government agencies identified the need for the development of comprehensive records management standards and records management models, two areas in which they have received little or no assistance from the Public Record Office in the past.

The Committee's inquiry revealed that insufficient attention is being given to the management of public records. Unless action is taken, no assurance can be given by the Committee that the appropriate permanent records of the 1980s and 1990s will be retained.

To develop a modern Public Record Office, an organisation which is proactive and bases its decision processes on 'best practice' principles, the Committee sees a need for the Office to refocus its priorities and resources to a new hierarchy of responsibilities.

The Committee believes that the Public Record Office must undertake four key responsibilities:

- continually develop comprehensive standards for all government agencies that outlines the management of the record from creation;
- ensure that all agencies remain aware of their responsibilities, each having an agreed records management plan with the Public Record Office, with a system that monitors record management performance;
- continue to manage the storage of the State's permanent record, and
- provide access to the State's historical record.
To carry out these functions, the worthy intentions of the Public Records Act 1973 must achieve a new prominence in government agencies. The Committee is concerned that the Public Record Office has remained a poor relation, limited by low levels of funding and lacking a clearly stated priority and direction under all governments.

The Committee believes that successive governments have, over time, sent conflicting messages to the Public Record Office and government agencies on the role of the Office. The Office has moved away from its function of ensuring that the appropriate records of the State are maintained in perpetuity, to a concentration on areas in which it can perform well in the public arena.

The Public Record Office forms part of the Department of Premier and Cabinet. Whilst the Arts Victoria agency has been supportive of the Office, the cultural focus of this agency tends to obscure the management and standards setting role that are established for the Office in legislation. The Committee believes that the Office cannot effectively fulfil its role whilst it is part of the Arts portfolio.

The Committee recommends that the Director report directly to the Parliament, by way of specific annual report, on the performance of government agencies in meeting their responsibilities under the Act.

This report should identify any government agency which, in the opinion of the Keeper, is not complying with the public record standards. This view was heavily supported in evidence and submissions to the Inquiry.

The inquiry has confirmed the need for most government agencies to meet their obligations more effectively under the Public Records Act. The fact that they have not done so is an indictment of both the agencies and the Public Record Office.

The Committee believes that changes are required to the operating structure of the Public Record Office. The proposed changes include:

- appointing a Director of the Public Record on a full time basis;
- transferring the Public Record Office from the Arts Victoria agency to an independent body within the Department of Treasury and Finance;
- ongoing consulting and audit responsibilities;
- presenting an annual report to the Parliament on the management of records in the public sector;
- re-organising the office into four operating divisions, and
- establishing Regional Records Management Consultants.

The Committee recommends that the Public Records Advisory Council not continue in its current form. The Council should be reconstituted as an advisory body, reporting to the Minister, and its functions should be to provide policy advice on public records management issues. The Committee considers that the important principles that should underpin the composition of the advisory body are expertise and independence.
The Committee believes that the Public Record Office has the skills to discharge its functions when its energies are directed to the development of proactive records management strategies that anticipate the needs of government agencies. It therefore recommends that the Public Record Office continue in its present form on the basis that the Committee's recommendations are brought into effect.

Specific Terms of Reference

1. What options are available for the government and the Public Record Office to meet the future storage and preservation responsibilities for the State's public record?

The Committee emphasises strongly the need for an agreed records management plan and standards to allow the process of creation, use, storage and disposal of paper and electronic records to occur more effectively in government agencies.

In establishing its recommendations, the Committee has developed management principles which it feels would enhance the storage and preservation of the State's historical record.

The Laverton site currently used for the storage of the State's archival heritage has severe site and building constraints, and has a potential, due to surrounding industrial facilities, to place the State's historical record at an unacceptable risk. As the Laverton site will be full by December 1996 the Committee recommends that the repository be closed and a new purpose built facility be constructed.

The Committee recommends the establishment of a new central repository, termed the Melbourne Public Record Centre, and the encouragement of a regional archives network. To ensure that a new site is close to its major clients - government agencies - and to public transport, it would need to be located within approximately 5 km of the Melbourne CBD.

2. How can the government and the Public Record Office re-engineer the records management process to meet its storage, preservation and access responsibilities for the State's electronic records?

The Committee believes that every electronic record should remain in an accessible form within the government agency that creates it, under protocols established by the Public Record Office.

Electronic records need to be managed from the point of creation on the same basis as paper records.

The Committee calls for the Office to establish minimum criteria for records management standards in electronic environments that must be met by the information technology industry when it sells equipment and software to the government.
The Committee further recommends that the government require government agencies to select only an accredited records management system when they move to the electronic environment. A system should only be accredited when it meets minimum standards set by the Public Record Office and the government.

3. What strategies may be used to manage the increasing quantity of records being generated by government in Victoria?

The Committee has found that records management has a low status in government agencies, and calls on Chief Executive Officers to develop strategies to ensure sound records management practices. The Committee also believes that every agency needs to have a written and agreed records management plan with the Public Record Office.

The Committee recommends optional State education programs for all records and information managers. In these, the aim of the government and the Public Record Office should be to develop 'best practice' standards for records management in the public sector.

The Committee also believes that the Public Record Office should institute a field advisory service with Regional Records Management Consultants located throughout Victoria to help agencies meet standards developed by the Office and that meet agencies' business needs.

To ensure that appropriate procedures are carried out, the Committee supports the introduction of a monitoring process by the Public Record Office which will include a random audit function and reporting by agencies on their records management function as part of the Financial Management Act 1994.

4. How can the government and the Public Record Office better meet increasing demand for access to the State's archival records?

The Committee recommends the use of new facilities and on-line computer technology to enable people from Mildura to Mallacoota to self-manage their access requests. The Committee proposes a system of access at regional library services, schools and tertiary institutions to the holdings, with finding aids and indexes held in an expanded Public Record Office database.

In addition to a Melbourne search room, a network of regional archives established by local communities to contain records of local significance, would have the Committee's full support.

The report proposes the sale of popular material, on a full cost recovery basis, on paper, microfiche and CD Rom. The Public Record Office must constantly monitor the popularity of access requests, and wherever possible, popular records must be transferred to each of these media forms for sale. The aim of the Office must be to facilitate access to archival holdings.
On the other hand, the Committee believes that special tours and displays of archival material should continue only if funded independently. Whilst these programs are attractive in the short term as a public relations exercise, they divert scarce resources from the development of programs and material that ensure that the public record is accessible to all Victorians.

To fund these new access services the Committee recommends the charging of realistic fees. The Committee believes that these fees should be seen as a means of recovering from users a pool of funds that must be returned to the Public Record Office to increase the amount of popular material available through each media type and at each location.

The Committee recognises that a charge may be unpopular. The Public Record Office offers a range of services like any other government agency, and so the Committee supports the view that the cost of expanding the range of accessible material should be recovered from the users rather than the public at large. The Committee has called upon the government to build new facilities for the Public Record Office, and this must take priority.

Conclusion

The Public Record Office has indicated in evidence to the Committee both a willingness and a capacity to rectify its deficiencies. However, it will need the support of government to reinforce the importance of good records management.

The Committee's recommendations would ensure that the Public Record Office is able to carry out its most significant task, to assist government agencies in managing their records accountably and effectively, so that the history of this State can be preserved.
III  Recommendations

The Committee has made a number of recommendations which are listed below, cross-referenced to their locations in the text.

Chapter 1  The Public Record Office

The Committee recommends that:

1.1 the Public Record Office be retained;

Paras 1.216 to 1.219

1.2 the Public Record Office be located in the portfolio of Treasury and Finance;

Paras 1.69 to 1.73, 1.117 and 1.118, 1.185 to 1.189

1.3 the Public Record Office be refocussed to provide its functions according to the following hierarchy:

• Standards Development
• Monitoring Records Management Performance
• Storage of the Archival Record
• Provision of Public Access

to ensure that all agencies manage effectively the State's records;

Paras 1.119 to 1.135

1.4 all Public Record Office standards and schedules be subject to review every three to five years to reinforce 'best practice' principles in the management of the State's archival record;

Paras 1.154 to 1.159

1.5 the Victorian standard for a records management system be based on the Australian standard;

Paras 1.136 to 1.144 and 1.160

1.6 the Public Record Office urgently ensure that all agencies implement records management and disposal plans that meet standards set by that Office;

Paras 1.171 to 1.174

1.7 the Public Record Office initiate a continuous cycle of random audits of agencies to ensure that public records are correctly managed according to Public Record Office standards;

Paras 1.175 to 1.179

1.8 the cost of audits undertaken by the Public Record Office be met by each agency in a manner similar to the services provided by the Auditor-General;

Para 1.180
1.9 any agency found to be holding records in an inappropriate manner be offered an opportunity to rectify the problem. If the agency fails to take the necessary action, the Public Record Office complete the task at the agency’s cost;

Para 1.181

1.10 a realistic and fair contribution towards the cost of Public Record Office services, other than the development of standards and educational programs for agency records and information managers, the storage of permanent records and most public access services, be met by users;

Para 1.205 and 1.206, 5.53 to 5.92

1.11 the position of Keeper of Public Records be renamed the Director of Public Records;

Paras 1.191 to 1.193

1.12 the Public Record Office prepare an annual report to the Parliament on the management of records in the public sector;

Paras 1.75 to 1.80

1.13 the Public Record Office operate through four functional areas. The principal role of the Office should be to develop and implement records management standards under the control of the Director of Public Records. The three remaining areas should be of an operational nature reporting to the Director of Public Records. The four proposed areas are:

- **Director of Public Records**
- **Consulting and Audit Unit**
- **Archives Management Unit**
- **Public Access Unit**

Paras 1.194 and 1.195

1.14 to enhance the quality of liaison between agencies and the Public Record Office throughout the State, positions titled Regional Record Management Consultants be created. These positions be developed as field officers to manage the records of a region, industry type or ministry on an on-going basis;

Paras 1.196 to 1.200

1.15 periodic increases in operational activity from agencies be met by the employment of short-term staff fully paid for by the user agency;

Paras 1.202 to 1.206

1.16 the Public Record Advisory Council be reconstituted with a smaller membership that reflects expertise and independence. The function of the Council should be to provide policy advice, to the Minister, on the management of public records in Victoria;

Paras 1.207 to 1.215
1.17 the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee review the management of public records in Victoria 10 years from the date of presentation of this report to Parliament, and

Para 1.220

1.18 the Public Records Act should limit ministerial intervention solely to ensure compliance with the Keeper’s statutory obligations.

Paras 1.30 and 1.31

Chapter 2. Storage and Preservation Responsibilities

The Committee recommends that:

2.1 the Public Record Office manage the storage of, and public access to, the State’s permanent record;

Paras 2.15 and 2.54, 2.55 and 2.83

2.2 government agencies manage the storage of all active, inactive and temporary records to the standards set by the Public Record Office;

Para 2.15

2.3 the Public Record Office immediately conduct a comprehensive survey of all agencies to determine the amount of records and rate of records growth as part of the planning process for a new archives facility;

Paras 2.33 and 2.34

2.4 all records of the State be held in conditions which meet the current storage and preservation standard of the Public Record Office. The Chief Executive or principal officer of each agency be held accountable for this requirement;

Paras 2.38 to 2.48

2.5 the Financial Reporting Act 1994 and any other relevant legislation be amended to require every agency to report annually on its level of compliance with the standards set down for the care of the public record;

Paras 2.49 and 2.50

2.6 a new site for the storage of the State’s archival record be established within five km of the Melbourne CBD, to contain the archival record, all staff of the Public Record Office and public access facilities. That this site be called the Melbourne Public Record Centre and that it be supported by the development of a regional archives network;

Paras 2.84 to 2.100

2.7 the government, when developing the functional brief for the construction of the new storage facilities, investigate the use of high rack shelving systems and module based construction methods that allow a site life of forty years;

Paras 2.106 to 2.125
the Laverton repository be closed as it does not meet the standards for the long term storage of permanent records;

Paras 2.75 to 2.80

the cost of establishing the new facility be met in part from the sale of the Laverton site;

Para 2.81

the Public Record Office establish, on an annual basis, the anticipated storage requirements for government records for the next five year period, and

Paras 2.61 and 2.62

the Public Record Office immediately conclude the sentencing and disposal of all unsentenced records held at the Laverton repository.

Paras 2.68 to 2.74

Chapter 3. Electronic Records

The Committee recommends that:

3.1 electronic records be considered on the same basis as the paper record;

Paras 3.19 and 3.62

3.2 the Public Record Office urgently conclude development of an electronic records management standard that is hardware and software independent, capable of being implemented across the whole of government;

Para 3.24

3.3 agencies be required to continually convert all electronic archival records in their care to the current software and operating systems of the agency so that they can be accessed by the Public Record Office;

Paras 3.48, 3.50, 3.52, and 3.53

3.4 agencies seeking to implement an electronic records management system be required to select software that has been accredited by the government to meet standards established by the Public Record Office;

Para 3.27

3.5 the responsible Minister meet with ministerial counterparts in other States and Territories to foster the development of a national electronic records management strategy, standard and protocols; and

Para 3.66

3.6 the Public Record Office be part of the development, design and implementation team of any statewide information technology policy.

Para 3.65
Chapter 4. Records Management

The Committee recommends that:

4.1 the State manage its public record through the development of ‘best practice’ procedures;

Para 4.15

4.2 the Public Record Office develop standards for the care of each record from creation;

Paras 3.26 and 4.21

4.3 model records management systems, integrating the standards process, be prepared and released by the Public Record Office;

Para 4.25

4.4 a disposal schedule be agreed between each agency and the Public Record Office as a matter of urgency;

Paras 4.32 and 4.34

4.5 the government develop, with the Office of Training and Further Education and the Public Record Office, an education program for all public sector records and information managers. That the program be structured to the broad needs of every government agency, from the largest to the smallest;

Paras 4.36 and 4.45

4.6 responsibility for implementing sound records management practices be shared between agencies and the Public Record Office, and

Para 4.48

4.7 each agency be required to appoint a senior officer, skilled in archives and information management, to implement an effective records management system.

Para 4.46

Chapter 5. Public Access

The Committee recommends that:

5.1 the Public Record Office provide public access programs that require the public to ‘self-manage’ their personal access requests;

Para 5.5

5.2 the primary facility for public access be the Melbourne Public Record Centre;

Para 5.23
5.3 the Public Record Office increase access opportunities for all Victorians by providing on-line electronic facilities through regional library services, schools and tertiary institutions to the holdings, finding aids and indexes available at the proposed Melbourne Public Record Centre;

Para 5.31

5.4 section 8 of the Public Records Act 1973 be amended to define better the authority of the Keeper to recover the costs of the development, preparation and production of any publication or record series made available to the public;

Para 5.46

5.5 fees be charged (a) to access the original record, (b) for consulting services;

Paras 5.53, 5.60, 5.76

5.6 the revenue from fees be retained by the Public Record Office and dedicated to increasing the amount of popular records available for public access on the Public Record Office database, microfiche or CD Rom format;

Para 5.95

5.7 regional library services, schools and tertiary institutions that provide electronic access to the Public Record Office be permitted to recover any administration costs from users;

Para 5.71

5.8 the Public Record Office negotiate with universities an appropriate scale of fees that would accommodate the need of academic researchers for (a) access to original records and (b) consulting services;

Para 5.79

5.9 the Public Record Office constantly review its permanent holdings to determine the potential for converting its physical records into an electronic or microfiche medium to maximise the opportunities for public access;

Para 5.73

5.10 popular documents that can be made available on the electronic or microfiche medium be sold to users on a full cost recovery basis;

Paras 5.37 and 5.45

5.11 the Public Record Office provide a gateway to the electronic record held by government agencies under a secure password arrangement and that an administrative fee be charged for providing this service;

Para 5.29

5.12 persons seeking access to the original record be required to book documents that they wish to view in advance;

Para 5.28 and 5.65

5.13 the opening hours of the proposed Melbourne Public Record Centre be determined by user demand;

Para 5.24 and 5.25
5.14 the Public Record Office encourage the use of volunteers in indexing of popular material that may be made available through the electronic medium and that these services be recognised by a credit scheme that directly reduces any access charge that may be incurred by the volunteers, and

*Paras 5.13, 5.93 and 5.94*

5.15 travelling programs of archival material be carried out only when specific funding has been provided by budget, grant or bequest.

*Paras 5.51 to 5.52*
IV  Terms of Reference

On 5 September 1995, the former Public Bodies Review Committee was requested by the then Minister for the Arts, The Hon Haddon Storey, QC, MLC to review the Public Record Office under the following terms of reference:

(a) That the Committee is requested to conduct a review of the Public Record Office. In particular the Committee is requested to consider:

- what options are available to the government and Public Record Office to meet their future archival storage and preservation responsibilities for the State’s public records;
- how the government and the Public Record Office can re-engineer the records management process to meet their storage, preservation and access responsibilities for the State’s electronic records;
- what strategies are available to government and the Public Record Office to manage the increasing quantity of records being generated by government in Victoria; and
- how government and the Public Record Office can better meet the increasing public demand for access to the State’s archival records.

(b) The Committee is requested to make a final report to Parliament by the first sitting day of the 1996 Autumn Parliamentary session.

The 52nd Parliament was dissolved prior to the Public Bodies Review Committee making its report and the reference therefore lapsed. The Committee had prepared a draft report but as the Public Bodies Review Committee was not reconvened for the 53rd Parliament, the report was never formally adopted.

The Public Accounts and Estimates Committee was requested by the Premier and Minister for the Arts, on 25 June 1996 to finalise the work commenced by the PBRC and to table its report on the first sitting day of the 1996 Spring Parliamentary Session. Because of the volume of evidence to be reviewed by this Committee an extension of time to report was sought and agreed to by the Premier. The Committee was required to table its report by 8 October 1996.
V The Process of Review

The review process undertaken by the Committee was to consider the terms of reference in light of the work completed by the former Public Bodies Review Committee (PBRC). If additional or new information was required it was sought as part of this process.

The report contains a review of the Public Record Office and its performance, with separate chapters addressing the specific terms of reference.

Throughout the draft report of the Public Bodies Review Committee consistent references to both common themes and specific needs are mentioned. The Public Accounts and Estimates Committee reaffirmed the method that had been developed to consider the reference which in its view allows government agencies to acquaint themselves with the four specific issues facing the management of the State’s archival record without needing to refer to the full report.

Records management is a field with many different views and strategies. Considering how the Public Record Office should work within that environment to adequately protect the records of the State was the biggest challenge facing each Committee. Unlike other inquiries which the Committee has undertaken in the past, there was no shortage of information as to what direction the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee could take. However, there was insufficient evidence about the practical implementation of the many strategies that had been put forward.

Members of the Committee needed to become fully acquainted with the issues and drew most of their responses from the information and evidence that had already been collected by the PBRC. Committee members recognised the short reporting period and the need not to duplicate unnecessarily any of the work that had been conducted in the past.

In particular the Committee recognised the wealth of evidence taken by the former Public Bodies Review Committee and the extensive series of inspections and meetings with Public Record Offices in Victoria, interstate and overseas.

In particular, a sub-committee of three members, Messrs Hartigan, Seitz and Strong from the former Public Bodies Review Committee travelled to the United States and Canada in January 1996 to inspect the latest advancements in archival and records management technologies, paying particular attention to the treatment of the electronic record.

The sub-committee visited the State Archives and Records Administration in New York, the National Archives and Records Administration, Washington DC, and met with Professors David Bearman and Richard Cox at the University of Pittsburgh, who are eminent in the field of electronic records. Commercial records services in New York and Pittsburgh were also inspected.
In Ottawa, the sub-committee visited the National Archives of Canada and met a commercial supplier of records services.

The Public Accounts and Estimates Committee resolved not to take further evidence or submissions on the reference and relied on the evidence that had been received by the former Committee. Of the 56 public submissions that were received, 42 individuals or groups were invited between November and December 1995 to give evidence, either in public or in private session, to the Public Bodies Review Committee.

In this report, a reference to “the Committee”, unless otherwise specified, refers to the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee.

All submissions and transcripts of evidence taken at public and closed hearings were reviewed by the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee during the preparation of this report. A list of the people who made submissions to, and those who appeared before, the Public Bodies Review Committee are shown in Appendices Three and Four.

The Committee believes that the review process has highlighted the direction for the future of the Public Record Office. The Committee’s recommendations range from minor organisational matters to the need to set new standards for each part of the records management process. Of great importance is the recommendation that a new archives facility be established in Victoria whilst encouraging the creation of small distributed custody archives centres.

The Committee has concentrated on developing simple solutions to improve the record keeping environments of the State’s archival heritage. It has not proposed a solution to all of the problems that face records managers and the Public Record Office today.

Finally the Committee wishes to thank the Public Record Office for its willing assistance, when appearing formally before the Public Bodies Review Committee, and in the provision of submissions and research information when requested.
1. The Public Record Office

Introduction

1.1 The Committee's report reaffirms the belief that freedom of access to the records of government forms one of the key bases of a democratic society.

1.2 Evidence to the Committee supported this philosophy.

... one of the basic principles of mature democratic governments is that there be a separate and independent archival authority. This is hardly a new principle. The Greek city state democracy depended on separate archives for its functioning, as did the Roman republic at its most democratic.¹

The systematic preservation of government records and their accessibility to the public, or at least to their representatives, are among the hallmarks of a democratic society. Governments which do not document their decisions, and keep records, are apt to be inefficient and arbitrary; those which make records only open to themselves are apt to be tyrannical; those which destroy them as soon as they cease to be useful for current bureaucratic purposes may risk a kind of political and bureaucratic amnesia.²

1.3 Emperor Justinian in the fifth century provided one of the key reasons why a state keeps its records. Mr Harry Nunn, a former Keeper of Public Records, restated the Justinian Code:

Let your eminence give orders throughout each and every province that a public building be allocated in which building the magistrate (defensor) is to store the records, choosing someone to have custody so that they may remain uncorrupted and may be found quickly by those requiring them and let there be among them an archive and let that which has been neglected in the cities be corrected.³

1.4 Records are kept by government to form a corporate memory of its business activity. Accounting and financial records are a traditional source of accountability for the actions of the organisation. A small portion of records are needed to be kept for historical purposes to record for all time the rationale and policies behind the decisions of government. This was best described in the submission from the Department of Health and Community Services:

The Public Sector creates records of historical significance by documenting government intervention into society in line with the wishes of the public, through their elected representatives. Agencies manage these records through their administrative lives and those records providing key insights to the society that created them will be eventually transferred to the PRO.

This culturally vital process of records creation and preservation has two key elements: the management of records by their actual creators, (the Public Sector) and the preservation and access of the historically significant component. The PRO's role is to ensure that the process employed at both stages leads to the preservation of the historically significant component of all records created.⁴
1.5 The Public Records Act 1973 sets out the responsibilities of the Public Record Office and government agencies, and provides the legislative base for access to the State’s public record. Section 3 of that Act establishes the role for the Public Record Office:

For the better preservation management and utilisation of the public records of the State there shall be established an Office to be known as the Public Record Office.

1.6 The Act further defines what constitutes a public record and its application across government. The definitions are shown as Appendix One to this report.

1.7 The Public Record Office is required to advise government and to set the standards used by government agencies that create and maintain the public record so that agencies retain the accountable and historical record whilst encouraging the orderly disposal of the routine record. This office is also required to manage the permanent records in a secure place of storage and to provide public access.

1.8 The Committee has reviewed a significant amount of evidence in submissions and comments from the Public Record Office, other Australian archives, government agencies and from inspections carried out in the United States and Canada.

1.9 The Committee is required to report on four specific terms of reference, and these form separate parts of this report.

1.10 The Committee’s report does not recommend significant changes but seeks to update the legislation and ensure that the responsibilities of the Public Record Office and each government agency in relation to public records can be more effectively carried out.

The Performance of the Public Record Office

1.11 The Committee was required to consider the performance of the Public Record Office and whether there was any need for change. The Committee has examined the need for a public record office and whether the current body is meeting its legislative responsibilities.

1.12 The Committee has endorsed the need for an agency to assist and advise government on the maintenance of the public record. What the Committee must now ask itself is whether the current structure of the Public Record Office is able to carry out the tasks that are required through legislation.

1.13 Evidence on the performance of the Public Record Office came to the Committee in two streams.
1.14 The first stream consisted of government agencies, universities and records management professionals, who are bound under Section 13 of the Public Records Act to operate under records management procedures established by the Public Record Office. The Committee has given particular attention to the submissions from the former Department of Health and Community Services and Education Victoria in this report. Both have initiated departmental records management and archival programs which have led to them being significant users of the Public Record Office. Their experiences were of direct relevance to the Committee's Inquiry.\textsuperscript{5}

1.15 The second stream were individuals conducting private research, such as students, genealogists and historians, who expressed a general level of satisfaction with the services provided by the Public Record Office. They are the users of the inactive record, the last part of the public record's life cycle.

1.16 Organisations in the first stream need direction and advice from the Public Record Office on the creation and maintenance of records. Submissions indicated that they were dissatisfied with the direction, quality and speed of services being offered by the Public Record Office. Government agencies believed that the Office had directed its resources away from assisting them in an effective and timely manner.

1.17 In indicating their concern, these organisations provided a range of considered solutions and many of these form part of the Committee's comment on the future direction of the Public Record Office.

1.18 The Committee believes that the performance of any government agency is strongly influenced by the five following factors:

- is there a clear articulation from government as to the role of the agency?
- is the agency managed in a way that will allow it to complete the tasks that have been set?
- can the agency operate independently under legislation?
- does the agency have support from its client base (the public sector) in carrying out its joint responsibilities?
- has the agency adequate resources?

**The Role of the Public Record Office**

1.19 The Committee believes that successive governments over time have sent conflicting messages to the Public Record Office and to government agencies on the role of the Office.
1.20 Successive governments have not given sufficient incentive for the development of clear standards to be applied to the creation of the public record, or provided the resources to ensure the Public Record Office’s task under the Public Records Act could be carried out.

1.21 The Keeper of Public Records has clear obligations under Sections 7 and 12 of the Public Records Act 1973, viz:

7. The Keeper of Public Records shall be responsible for-
   a) the preservation and security of public records under his control;
   b) the logical and orderly classification of such records and the publication of lists, indexes and other guides facilitating their use;
   c) the duplication and reproduction of public records for official and other purposes; and
   d) the authentication of copies of and extracts from public records required as evidence in legal proceedings or for other purposes.

and:

12. The Keeper of Public Records shall establish standards for the efficient management of public records and in particular with respect to-
   a) the creation, maintenance and security of public records;
   b) the selection of public records worthy of preservation;
   c) the transfer of public records to the Public Record Office; and
   d) the segregation and disposal of public records not worthy of preservation.

and shall assist public officers in applying these standards to records under their control.

1.22 The Business Plan of the Public Record Office for 1995/96 defines its corporate mission and goals as:

Mission

The Public Record Office’s mission is to develop and implement cost effective management of Victorian government records, to ensure the identification and preservation of permanent value public records and to promote and deliver efficient access to the State’s Archives.

Goals

1 To ensure the performance of the Public Record Office is in line with world best practice.

II To ensure the identification and preservation of the archives of the Victorian government.

III To facilitate and expand appropriate access to the holdings of the Public Record Office for all Victorians.

IV To improve records management systems and procedures within government.
1.23 The Committee noted that the Public Record Office did not see that one of its primary goals was the setting of standards. One of the key complaints received in evidence was that government agencies need standards and advice if they are to manage the public records of the State. The Committee does not doubt that standards are being developed under Section 12 of the Act, but the role clearly does not have the prominence that it should.

1.24 Mr Nunn was critical of the changes in direction that have occurred since he left the Public Record Office in 1981. He believes that the wrong focus is now being pursued:

In 1973 the PRO was separated from the State Library following extensive consideration of its future role and direction embodied in a Report of the Public Records Advisory Committee (1970). The change in direction recommended by the Report and embodied in the Act was away from essentially a passive custodial institution in the mould of a library or museum (where the focus is on the development of a "collection") towards a modern public records program (focused on the better management and utilisation of the totality of the government’s records).

In 1990, an attempt was made to return the PRO back to the cultural heritage model which was abandoned in 1973. ... In 1991, in a move which compounded this error, the PRO was moved into the Arts portfolio where the PRO was linked administratively with the Office of Library Services.7

1.25 Mr Nunn felt that these changes were based on the false premise that collection management was the Office’s proper role. He believed that this had led to:

A lack of strategic direction is compounded by the inappropriateness of linking the PRO with the Arts portfolio where a collection management focus dominates and swamps the PRO’s proper role which is to guide, direct and assist other agencies in managing the maintenance, selection, disposal and availability, that is to say, the life cycle of the public records of the State.8

1.26 The Department of Librarianship, Archives and Records at Monash University recognised the ease with which archival institutions may lose direction:

The concentration on only one aspect of the archival role - for example, that of public access or promotion of the content of the archival record - has been increasingly discredited as an appropriate strategic direction for any archival institution. Indeed the abortive attempt by the Victorian government in the 1980’s to establish the Public Record Office as ‘Archival Heritage’ won no significant support because it represented a threat to the fundamental nature of an archival institution in a mature society.9
1.27 Since 1985 there have been two reviews of the Public Record Office. The most recent public report was the Review of Public Records Policy\(^\text{10}\) by Nicholas Clark and Associates, released in May 1986 covering a wide range of public records management and public access issues. Some of the recommendations from this report concerning public access were implemented but the majority concerning the management of the public record have not, as yet, been implemented. A decade later this Committee will make similar recommendations on records management issues.

1.28 A 1990 internal report to the Minister for Property and Services under the former Labor government identified that the Public Record Office did not prioritise the use of its resources. The report made a number of significant comments including:

... the Keeper has been reluctant to formalise any priorities within the legislative framework of the PRO. As a result, the PRO has been operating over several years without the benefit of consistent directions about its broad priorities and divergent views about priorities were expressed by the Keeper, PRAC and Staff.

In the light of the need to increase productivity, PRO, like all public sector agencies, must identify its fundamental purpose and the areas in which it must perform effectively if it is to provide the government with an appropriate return on its investment.\(^\text{11}\)

1.29 These reports reflect a change in attitude to the role of the Public Record Office and its liaison with government agencies and the community. There has been a slow but subtle incremental change in the direction of the Public Record Office towards facilitating public access at the expense of more essential requirements of the Office. When no accompanying changes have been made in legislation, the level of confusion within agencies can only increase.

1.30 The obligations of the Keeper of Public Records can be easily obscured by Section 6(2) of the Public Records Act which allows the Minister of the day to give general direction and control. Section 6(2) states:

Subject to this Act and to the general direction and control of the Minister, the Keeper of Public Records shall have the management and control of the Public Record Office and of all the public records therein.

1.31 The Keeper of Public Records may be placed in a position of potential conflict. Should his or her obligations be to the Minister and government of the day or to his or her statutory responsibilities? The Committee noted that the Public Record Office business plan provides that the Office ‘operates within a broad policy context set by government, particularly Arts 21‘.\(^\text{12}\) The Committee recommends that the Public Records Act should limit Ministerial intervention solely to ensure compliance with the Keeper’s statutory obligations.

1.32 In view of the ability of the Minister to give direction, and the changes in the 1980s which promoted public access, it did not surprise the Committee that not all of the Keeper’s obligations have been carried out with sufficient vigour.
1.33 It is the government and Minister's responsibility to ensure that a clear policy direction is provided to the Public Record Office, its staff and its users. If this policy direction is to change, it must also be clearly seen by all users and amend legislation where necessary. The Office must be able to provide a clear statement to the community and to government agencies as to where it will be applying its resources and energies.

**Management of the Public Record Office**

1.34 The effective management of the Public Record Office and its resources is essential. The Office has a significant legislative role to perform and, in an era of declining resources, its success will fully depend on establishing clear priorities.

1.35 Successive governments have attempted to make the Public Record Office all things to all people which, given its limited resources, the Committee believes it cannot be.

1.36 Dr Ann Mitchell, Manager, Records and Archives Services at Monash University, recognised that:

> It is well known that the Public Record Office was under-resourced long before the tenure of the present government. It is also a truism within the profession that whenever a department wants a records problem solved, it wants it done “yesterday” even though the problem may have taken 20-30 years to accumulate. Amalgamations within government and without have heightened corporate awareness of inherited records backlogs.¹³

1.37 A clear direction is required so that the organisation can attempt to meet one of the major criticisms, that it was not sufficiently proactive.

1.38 The Committee believes that scarce resources have not been prioritised to address the ongoing management of the State's public record. The Public Record Office has an obligation to ensure that public records are correctly maintained from the point of their creation and through the phases of active, inactive and archival life.

- **Areas of Concern**

1.39 Mr Ross Gibbs, Keeper of Public Records, indicated in his evidence to the Committee that the Public Record Office has not provided sufficient focus to its primary task:

> The Office has the primary role of professional, effective management of records for government before the records get to us. Despite all the reports being done, that is probably the area over the years, particularly in the late 1970s, we have been weakest in.¹⁴
1.40 Evidence to the Committee indicated that there is a perception by
government agencies that the movement of resources towards the management
of existing archives, publications, touring of archival displays and increased
public access has reduced the capacity of the Public Record Office to undertake its
primary role of ensuring that agencies manage and keep the public record in an
accountable manner.

1.41 The Committee sought information on where the resources of the Public
Record Office were being applied, to determine whether they were sufficient and
in a priority that reflected the needs of the Office in carrying out its
responsibilities. The Public Record Office,\textsuperscript{15} in its submission of November 1995,
identified the distribution of the Office’s resources between four functional areas:

**Distribution of Resources per Function**

- **Corporate Management Services**: 23%
- **Public Access Services**: 32%
- **Records Management Services**: 9%
- **Storage Services**: 36%

1.42 The Committee believes that a disproportionate amount of the Office’s
resources is applied to facilitating public access when evidence has demonstrated
that it should be applied to its principal function of records management services.
The submission from the Public Record Office recognised that:

*The success of the public access program comes at a cost. It represents a significant proportion of the PRO Budget.*\textsuperscript{16}

1.43 Records management was the area in which the authors of many
submissions believed that they had not received adequate support or guidance in
the form of standards.

1.44 Mr Carl Temple, Manager, Archival Services of the former Department of
Health and Community Services, saw a need to establish minimum standards for
disposal and records management practices for agencies In particular he felt:
It is common sense that the better performing the Public Sector is on records issues, the easier the PRO's load. To turn inwards as the PRO has and dwell upon its historic lack of resources rather than rethinking its approach is to see it progressively slide into irrelevance, as is currently the case. To reverse this undesirable situation, the PRO must lead and not attempt to undertake the base grade work. This reversal can only be achieved if the PRO develops and publicises viable standards for the Public Sector records management.\(^{17}\)

1.45 In responding to a question on the need for standards, Mr Peter Kirby, former Chairman of the Public Records Advisory Council, indicated:

> The setting of standards is the important role of the Keeper of Public Records. Then, I think, the rest becomes judgments made largely by departments. \(^{18}\)

1.46 The Committee believes that the fundamental role of the Public Record Office is to work with government agencies to ensure the careful and effective keeping of public records. The Committee is of the opinion that this needs to be more strongly pursued for the future benefit of the State. All government agencies must have guidance through direct liaison and provision of standards and policies that will assist them in meeting their tasks. The Committee saw the need for:

- **operating procedures** - model records management procedures for all public offices, no matter what their size, which incorporate their obligations under the Public Records Act;
- **storage** - atmosphere control, pest control and boxing methods;
- **handling** - file construction and movement procedures within agencies;
- **disposal** - agreed disposal schedules and destruction methods for temporary records;
- **transfer** - procedures for the transfer of the permanent record to the Public Record Office.

1.47 The current standards of the Public Record Office are limited to:

- transfer procedures
- individual disposal schedules

and the Committee believes that they do not constitute any real form of guidance to agencies in managing the State's public record. The Committee makes further comment on this issue later in this Chapter and in Chapters Two, Three and Four of this report.

1.48 Standards must be developed to meet the growing use of the electronic medium and records created by government agencies. To date, questions relating to how electronic records should be managed have not been answered by the Public Record Office in a way that would allow any government agency to implement a sound policy.
1.49 In a survey of records management practices used in government agencies in December 1995, the majority of comments concentrated on the need for the Public Record Office to be proactive.

1.50 The former Department of Agriculture, Energy and Minerals spoke of the need for the Office to position itself in such a way that it meets the challenges that are constantly developing, and is able to advise government agencies. It mentioned two specific areas:

(i) A more proactive approach in the management of the records of the State by providing up to date manuals and conducting courses on all aspects of records management.

(ii) Production of regular updates of disposal schedules for common classes of records such as Personnel, Transport and Finance.19

1.51 Standards are the building blocks of sound records management. But standards and schedules alone will not ensure that agencies will be able to meet those requirements. Capable staff, trained in records management, are required by all government agencies and this action needs to be sponsored by the Public Record Office. This matter is addressed in Chapter Four of this report.

1.52 Providing assistance in the training of persons involved in the making, management and preservation of the State’s historical record has not been a priority of the Public Record Office. Mr Ross Gibbs stated that the Office has not given sufficient consideration to the training of records managers:

As I said much earlier, the training of record managers within departments has been one of our weaknesses. We have begun local government, we have done TAFE this year on a fully funded client basis, and we are about to do prisons next.20

1.53 Following the restructure of local government municipalities in 1994-95 to reduce local government bodies from 210 to 78, considerable pressure was placed on local government records managers. In particular, records managers needed proactive assistance and an education process from the Public Record Office that would allow the folding of the records of several councils into one new system. The response of the Public Record Office was to remind them of their obligations under the Public Records Act.21

1.54 Ms Rita Maiuto, Records Manager of the Municipal Association of Victoria, outlined why she was critical of the response that local government had received from the Public Record Office:

I believe the local government disposal schedule is an important tool for local government. Over the past 10-year period it has obviously known it was going to expire, yet we are still in the dark about it all. Last week we were at the stage of getting field officers out there, and the Public Record Office said it would write to me and give me details, but as yet I have not heard anything. That has already been extended once, and the guidelines will be extended again to July 1996, but it seems that it has been left very late to deal with something that has already expired.
Given that there have been changes, that electronic documents are coming into it and that we will be playing a big part in records, it appears that this area should have been looked at before the expiry date.

I would have thought that something should have been put in motion at least two or three years beforehand.\textsuperscript{22}

1.55 The Municipal Association considered that the need for a current schedule was critical to the smooth amalgamation of councils during this period. Ultimately, the Association contributed $10,808 to meet the non-staff costs of updating the schedule.\textsuperscript{23}

1.56 Despite the number of initiatives that the Public Record Office is now taking to address some of these issues, the Committee supports the view that the Office has not been a proactive organisation in recent years.

1.57 The ability of the Public Record Office to deal with the daily processing of work was criticised. The former Department of Health and Community Services felt that it was subject to "cumbersome and onerous procedures"\textsuperscript{24} and it believed that the staff of the Public Record Office remained, "inflexible to new approaches that might aid both agencies in achieving a better outcome for all concerned."\textsuperscript{25}

1.58 To support its criticism, the Department provided an example to illustrate how the Public Record Office, "procedures and bureaucracy have been found to be inadequate in providing meaningful solutions to the real needs of the Department."\textsuperscript{26}

\textit{The first legal destruction of psychiatric case histories in Victoria was approved in six days without a sample being taken. A second approval was also granted in six days. A third has been delayed over 12 months and is still not approved.}\textsuperscript{27}

1.59 The management of scarce resources remains the responsibility of the Keeper of Public Records and this is spelt out in legislation\textsuperscript{28}. However, the Committee believes that the Keeper is no longer taking the lead in determining standards that must be applied to managing the public record. The Keeper of Public Records must immediately act to re-establish this key role.

- \textbf{Areas of Achievement}

1.60 The Committee, in recognising that the performance of the Public Record Office was deficient in some areas, also found that it excelled in others. The Public Record Office's secondary role of providing public access to archived material from agencies has been very successful.

1.61 When the government of the day does not indicate the key focus and priorities for an organisation on a consistent basis, it is not unexpected that the organisation will concentrate on areas in which it can perform well.
1.62 The Public Record Office has developed an extensive range of finding aids and publications designed to enhance and assist public access to archival material. Recent publications include:


- *Eureka: From the Official Records* (December 1994)


- *10 Victorian Women* (April 1996)

1.63 The Public Record Office has also developed several touring exhibitions including:

- *Eureka 140*, developed in conjunction with the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, funded by the Community Support Fund, opened at the Daylesford Museum in November 1995.

- *Lucy's Story: a family case study* was refurbished for tours in 1996.

- *Bigamy, Theft and Murder: the extraordinary story of Frederick Bailey Deeming* opened at the Old Melbourne Gaol in January 1996.\(^{29}\)

1.64 Funding from the Commonwealth government 'Visions of Australia' National Touring Exhibition\(^ {30} \) program was received by the Public Record Office in early 1996 for two of its travelling displays. The displays are:

- "*My Heart is Breaking*" based on the Aboriginal records of the Public Record Office; and

- "*Eureka: the First Republic?*" based on the rebellion of miners at Ballarat in 1854.

1.65 The holdings of the Public Record Office are very popular. A boom in the use of genealogical and historical material has placed additional demands on the Office. Such demands are being met by expanding the range of material that can be obtained in alternative formats, such as microfiche and CD Rom, and innovative programs such as:

- 1800 telephone access throughout Australia;

- Saturday opening at Laverton;

- same day records delivery to the City search room (at cost); and
• extension of search room opening hours and the opening of the extended Ballarat search room.31

1.66 Public access programs are conducted at Laverton, Ballarat and in the City search room at the Information Victoria office in Little Bourke Street, Melbourne.

1.67 Compared to other Australian archives, the Victorian Public Record Office is the busiest.

Number of Research Visits

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<th>1993/94 Financial Year</th>
<th>Source: Australian Council of Archives</th>
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<td>C'wealth</td>
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1.68 Another area of achievement has been the development of a strong volunteer base that continues to work with Public Record Office staff to increase the amount of available material. Currently there are 60 volunteers indexing material from the 19th century, predominantly for genealogical purposes. The report discusses the use of volunteer services in Chapter Five.

Need for Independence

1.69 The Committee believes that the management of the Public Record Office lacks the authority to exercise an independent role to decide what public records need to be retained for the State. The Keeper and Office must always be seen as independent, not open to influence on what records should be kept and what standards are to be applied in maintaining the record throughout the public sector.
The need for independence was cited in submissions. A submission from the Department of Librarianship, Archives and Records at Monash University considered that the Public Record Office could operate separately from the normal functions of government. This could be achieved by the development of an independent reporting role to Parliament or the establishment of a Records Management Office at arm’s length from the public sector.\\n\\nOn the enactment of the Public Records Act it was proposed that the Public Record Office would report directly to a responsible Minister. The Public Records Advisory Committee of 1970 believed that independence was necessary ‘in order to deal effectively with, and provide an impartial and equal service to, all departments or public bodies on a government-wide basis.’\\n
The Public Record Office was part of the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism until the conclusion of the 52nd Parliament in March 1996. It has now been transferred to the Arts Victoria agency which is part of the Department of Premier and Cabinet. Whilst Arts Victoria has been supportive of the Office, the cultural focus of this agency tends to obscure the management and standards setting role that are established in the Public Records Act. The Committee believes that the Office cannot effectively fulfil its role whilst it is part of this portfolio. A different portfolio is required to correctly position the Office so that it can meet its broader responsibilities to the public sector.

Mr Nunn provided the Committee with a chart to demonstrate how, in his view, the Public Record Office had been slowly submerged within government.
1.74 The current requirement under Section 21 of the Public Records Act 1973 that the Keeper report to the Minister on 'the carrying out of his functions' under the Act and that the Minister table the report in Parliament needs to be strengthened.

1.75 Legislation should require the Keeper of the Public Record to report on the extent to which public agencies are complying with the Act and contain instances of non-compliance and measures that the Keeper recommends to be taken to prevent or reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

1.76 Mr Peter Kirby, when responding to a question as to whether the Public Record Office should report directly to Parliament indicated:

They are in much the same position as the Ombudsman or the Auditor-General. If one examined the cost to government of this process, most people would share that view. It is important for Parliament to be aware.

As to how they report: they should basically report on all departments, not just pick out those who happen to be reviewed, but there are shades of grey in this. They should, in the same way as the Auditor-General does an annual review of departments, outline whether they are bad or good - hopefully, some are good - to give some sort of overview of what each department is doing.

1.77 Mr Mike Harrington of the Department of Premier and Cabinet held a similar view:

... for too long in government and elsewhere we have seen records management as a kind of peripheral activity, not of central importance. But the world is changing and we keep records in a variety of ways and on a variety of media, so the function needs to be strengthened and upgraded ... The technology is there to enable the virtual entity to function, but it needs a strong, upgraded central core that can report in the same way that the Ombudsman and the Auditor-General report.

1.78 Mr Joe Manders, representing the Auditor-General at a hearing of the Committee, noted that the Public Record Office:

... has an important role in relation to records management. When one examines the legislation one sees that most of the public bodies within the arts portfolio have specific accountability and reporting responsibilities to the Parliament; but unfortunately the Public Record Office does not have that environment. There certainly is a strong case for strengthening the legislative framework so that Part 7 of the Financial Management Act applies - that is where all the accountability and report responsibilities of public bodies are documented.

1.79 Dr Barry Perry, Ombudsman, supported the view that the Public Record Office should report independently to Parliament. When responding to the question that the Public Record Office should report on the performance of public bodies to Parliament he indicated:
I will answer both in general and in particular. Firstly, as Ombudsman I believe there is great benefit in being able to report directly to Parliament. Secondly, in the particular, I see the PRO as the experts in the field and Parliament would be well advised if it were advised by experts. I believe that type of role or function by the PRO would be of assistance and it would keep Parliament informed about the way its public administration is performing.39

1.80 It is essential that a report on the issue of records management within the public sector, a vital component of accountable government, be part of an independent reporting process to government and the Parliament. The role of the Public Record Office is too important to be submerged to a secondary function of government.

Support

1.81 The Committee believes that its Inquiry has confirmed the need for most government agencies to meet their obligations more effectively under the Public Records Act. The fact that they have not done so is an indictment of both the agencies and the Public Record Office.

1.82 The development of formal records management and disposal programs requires time, effort and often considerable expense. Financial and accountability factors have driven many government agencies to see the benefits of this action, and they are actively pursuing better records management techniques.

1.83 Health and Community Services and Education Victoria are two agencies that have demonstrated support for the benefits of sound records management. However, this is not representative of all government agencies, particularly small agencies or those with large amounts of storage space, and many continue, unaware of their obligations under the Public Records Act.

1.84 The former Department of Conservation and Natural Resources believed that:

The PRO inherits a legacy of poor records management practices within Agencies and therefore has a vested interest in being pro-active to ensure that Agencies adopt sound records management practices and develop and maintain stringent records retention or disposal programs.40

1.85 The benefits of actively approaching this issue were outlined by Mr Roger Crowe of the Victorian Ombudsman’s Office:

Some months ago I attended a seminar on Financial Improvement which was organised by the Royal Institute of Public Administration. The subject matter of the seminar was ‘Advantages of Rationalising Public Records’.

In my view, one impressive aspect discussed at this seminar concerned the high cost of records storage within the Central Business District (CBD) and it was certainly an eye opener to me.
As an example of this, Mr David Aughterson, a Deputy Director with the Accommodation Division of the Department of Finance outlined that a 1990 survey of one Department only indicated that 36,000 square meters was being used for records requirements. Given an estimated rental rate within the CBD of $260/m² it computes out to a cost of $25M per annum. Transfer of this material to off site facilities resulted in substantial savings.¹¹

1.86 Government departments have largely ignored the reason why the Public Record Office is charged with the role of ensuring that appropriate records are kept to document the history of the State. The Office is only important to many government agencies during a process of amalgamation, dissolution or relocation. The old records of the agency become a problem, and it attempts to pass it on to the Public Record Office. The Public Record Office becomes aware of the problem at this stage, often for the first time.

1.87 The Public Record Office has no program that ensures that every government agency is aware of its obligations to maintain the public record appropriately. The Office has not initiated any action with individual agencies to reach agreement on the records and disposal practices they will follow. This deficiency is unacceptable to the Committee.

1.88 This problem has been compounded by the lack of standards which cover all parts of the records management process. When these standards have been developed, immediate action must be taken to establish formally the requirements of each government agency and the Public Record Office through an individual agreement process.

1.89 Similar experiences were found by the sub-committee when meeting with representatives of archival institutions in the United States and Canada in January 1996.

1.90 Mr Tom Mills, Co-Director of the State Archives and Records Administration (SARA), New York State, outlined the problems that were facing them when they were established in 1971:

The first thing that the new State Archives did, in cooperation with a kind of a central administrative agency, was conduct an inventory of all records of New York State agencies.

... it was the first time that anybody had started doing a systematic assessment and basically what we found was there was a huge backlog of records that fortunately, although they were in many cases in lousy shape, had at least been preserved because our history does go back over three hundred and fifty years to Dutch and British colonial times to the early 1600's. The Secretary of State's Office, for example, and the State Library had a lot of older Dutch and British colonial records. Agencies like the Department of Transportation and the Comptroller's Office had enormous volumes tucked away in warehouses ... early social service records existed, just an incredible wealth of archival records ... ¹²

1.91 Mr Mills summarised the records found in this period as being 'pretty much in a mess'¹³.
1.92 Mr Terry Cook, Director, Records Disposition Division, National Archives of Canada, believed that the problem of access had become apparent as records staff had retired and, with them, a total knowledge of the records system:

We have found that increasingly government departments are alarmed by the fact that they can't find their records for their business ...44

1.93 In South Australia the need for sound records management has been recognised and is being addressed under a ‘whole of state’ approach to the management of the public record. This approach has growing support within Australia and in Victoria45: lifting records management standards within agencies before archival bodies receive inactive or permanent records.

1.94 The Committee felt strongly on this issue, and developed a survey of all government agencies to ascertain how the public sector was meeting its obligations under the Public Records Act 1973. The Committee’s findings appear as Chapter Four of this Report.

Resources of the Public Record Office

1.95 The Committee found that, despite the worthy intentions of the Public Records Act, the Public Record Office has been accorded a low status. The significant role it has to play has been limited by insufficient funding under all governments.

1.96 Dr Mitchell spoke of the reality gap:

There is a huge gap between aspirations adduced from a reading of the Public Records Act and the capacity of the Public Record Office to convert aspirations to reality. Given the conflict between shrinking resources and increased demand for service signalled within its terms of reference, this will come as no surprise to the review Committee. ...

As the Public Record Office through no fault of its own is unable to help agencies practice what it preaches, particularly in the field of records management, a review of all or part of the Act would appear to be appropriate.46

1.97 The former Department of Health and Community Services believed that it was time to reform the Public Record Office, recognising the restrictions that had been placed on it in the past:

Notwithstanding the Department’s support for reform of the PRO, it is acknowledged that the PRO has long suffered from being a relatively low priority. As a consequence, this valuable cultural institution has endured below standard facilities in the Laverton repository and a host of other handicaps.47
1.98 Based on the levels of expenditure by the Commonwealth and each State on the public records function, the Committee found that the Victorian Public Record Office received the lowest level of funding per capita in the 1994/95 financial year.

**Financial Comparison**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Archives Location</th>
<th>Expenditure $ million</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Funding per Capita $</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian Archives</td>
<td>37,732,000</td>
<td>17,642,100</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>5,916,000</td>
<td>6,081,200</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>992,000</td>
<td>172,200</td>
<td>5.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>3,970,000</td>
<td>3,233,900</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>1,902,000</td>
<td>1,479,900</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>1,032,000</td>
<td>472,600</td>
<td>2.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>2,628,065</td>
<td>4,487,000</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Australia</td>
<td>1,745,000</td>
<td>1,715,300</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.99 On a national level, per capita funding is $1.90.

1.100 The Committee recognised that per capita funding is a poor measurement tool as it does not relate to the size of the public sector, the archival needs of the State and the degree of legislative power conferred on each archival institution to carry out its responsibilities. However, it does indicate that other States have committed themselves to a higher level of contributions from their tax base to this function.

1.101 The Public Record Office has supplemented its budget allocation by levying charges for some of its services. In the 1994/95 financial year, $301,836 was raised in additional revenue but this amount is not reflected in the above chart. From this amount, the funds raised from secondary storage are returned to Consolidated Revenue.

**Revenue by Services**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Area</th>
<th>Income Source</th>
<th>Total $</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Records Management &amp; Public Access Services</td>
<td>Photocopying</td>
<td>56,937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indexing and Boxing</td>
<td>66,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4,105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>Publications &amp; Microfiche</td>
<td>13,337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Archives Boxes</td>
<td>56,228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>29,658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Storage</td>
<td></td>
<td>75,371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>301,836</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inquiry into the Public Record Office, Victoria
1.102 Staff resources differ in each State. The Victorian Public Record Office had 44.5 staff in the 1994/95 financial year.\textsuperscript{51} The following table demonstrates that, for the same period, the Office is well resourced when compared with the other States.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Archives Location</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
<th>Number Of Staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>5,916,000</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>992,000</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>3,970,000</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>1,902,000</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>1,032,000</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>2,628,065</td>
<td>44.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Australia</td>
<td>1,745,000</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.103 Staff of the Public Record Office are deployed in the following functional areas:

1.104 As the Public Record Office maintains four sites, in contrast to the other States which operate no more than two, a significant amount of resources is required for duplicated services.

1.105 The Committee further examined why government agencies complained that they did not receive adequate service from the Records Management Services, despite the section having twelve full time positions.

1.106 The Committee believes that the Office has sufficient staff resources when measured against the national average. What was apparent from the Committee's investigation was that the resources were not being applied effectively to what should be the key priorities of the Office.
1.107 The Committee further found that the existing management processes used by the Office were cumbersome and did not recognise the capacity of the agencies. Mr Carl Temple, of the former Department of Health and Community Services, recognised the dilemma facing the Public Record Office but believed that the Office was not changing its procedures to reflect this situation:

_It is accepted that the PRO tends to apply its limited resources to meet crises in agencies where no archival programs operate and records are often at risk of illegal destruction. This Department accepts that this is a desirable and appropriate use of the PRO’s energies._

_However at the same time, the PRO remains somewhat bureaucratic and insists that the Department comply with its own cumbersome and onerous procedures, remaining inflexible to new approaches that might aid both agencies in achieving a better outcome for all concerned._

1.108 One area that should be addressed is the approval process for the destruction of records, particularly when the request contains new records that do not form part of the records disposal schedule. The suggestion has been made for agencies to become accredited organisations which would not require them to seek further approval to dispose of their records. This matter is examined later in the report.

1.109 The Public Record Office must examine the management of its staff resources and apply them to its priority areas more effectively. It should also examine the necessity for many of its existing procedures with a view to simplifying operating requirements with agencies. This is a function of a proactive organisation.

**Storage and Archival Facilities**

1.110 The crisis that faces the Public Record Office and the government is that the Laverton storage facility will be full by the end of 1996. The Public Record Office has known for some years that it would be unable to deal with the estimated 200 km³ of records that need to be assessed for their archival status, and with permanent records to be transferred into the Office’s care.

1.111 The Committee is aware that in the past the Public Record Office has received insufficient priority from successive governments to fund a new purpose-built archives facility for permanent records. The Committee is therefore pleased that the government has at last addressed the issue and that funding was provided in the 1996/97 Budget for this purpose.

1.112 New initiatives such the APROSS (Approved Public Record Office Storage Supplier) scheme have allowed agencies to use commercial storage facilities for temporary and unsentenced records. This scheme has allowed agencies to manage the storage of their records and has allowed the Public Record Office to withdraw from the responsibility for storing these records.
1.113 The Committee has been asked to examine this question in detail, and this appears in Chapter Two of this Report.

Summary of Performance

1.114 The Committee believes that the Public Record Office is a body of enthusiastic and committed staff that needs direction and support.

1.115 The Public Record Office has not until recently actively pursued the role of leadership, particularly in the development of standards in the paper and electronic environments, nor has it been able to establish that all government agencies have carried out the appropriate management of the archival function.

1.116 The Office has instead concentrated on providing public access to, and management of, the archival collection that it currently holds. This is not an unexpected outcome if support has not been received at the highest levels of government, and all governments have not ensured that the focus of the Public Record Office was maintained.

1.117 The Committee has noted that the Public Record Office has been transferred to the Arts Victoria agency in the Department of Premier and Cabinet following the March 1996 elections and subsequent re-election of the Kennett government.

1.118 Whilst commending the move, and the separation of the Public Record Office from the Office of Library Services and the provision of a full-time Keeper of the Public Record, the Committee is still of the opinion that the Public Record Office should not be part of the Arts agency where the emphasis is on cultural matters. The Committee strongly supports the transfer of the Public Record Office to the Department of Treasury and Finance. This issue needs to be pursued as a matter of urgency.

Future Directions

1.119 Evidence to the Committee confirmed the need for a body, operating under a clear legislative base, to manage the public record.

1.120 During its review of the performance of the Public Record Office, evidence to the Committee indicated that the priorities and needs of the users of the Office’s services, when creating, using and archiving public records, are not being fully met.

1.121 The Committee believes that the Public Record Office has the skills to perform this role when its energies are directed, in the first instance, to the development of proactive records management strategies that anticipate the needs of government agencies.

1.122 The key priorities of the agencies were clearly signalled in evidence.
1.123 The former Department of Health and Community Services saw the focus as:

The PRO needs to refocus on what is its core business and either retire from other areas or significantly deregulate. Core functions should include:

1) centralised holding of and provision of access to the State's historic records in a facility designed to maximise the life of the physical record and efficiency in meeting access demand;

2) deregulation and devolution of records destruction authorisation processes;

3) establishment of minimum standards for disposal and records management practices for departments and the Public Sector;

4) provide leadership and direction on the management and archival storage of electronic records.\(^{55}\)

1.124 Mr Harry Nunn suggested that from his experience:

An integrated program needs to be developed to:

- extend effective disposal programming and end the neglect stemming from the attack on the true role of the PRO;

- reduce the extravagant waste of inappropriate accommodation used for temporary and secondary records;

- give impetus to the program by introducing the 30 year rule (as recommended by the Parliamentary Legal and Constitutional Committee);

- combine all of these initiatives in a comprehensive system of fees and charges within government for secondary storage and records management services under the control of the PRO in order to offset costs of implementation.\(^{56}\)

1.125 The Department of Librarianship, Archives and Records at Monash University saw that:

... an external archival authority must still play a number of roles.

- It should be the source of advice on policies for appraisal, documentation, storage and access.

- It should monitor the performance of agencies and service providers.

- It must take on responsibility for the retention of material which is no longer required as part of the organisations active corporate memory, but is required for retention for other purposes.\(^{57}\)

1.126 Mr Peter Kirby, Secretary to the Department of Education believed:

... the future role of the Public Record Office should encompass the following:

- Development of strategic policy on records management service wide.
• Setting and maintenance of records management standards.
• Accreditation of agencies to exercise delegated authorities.
• Facilitation of staff development, marketing and information.
• Protection and promotion of the historical record of the State.\textsuperscript{58}

1.127 Mr Roger Crowe, of Victorian Ombudsman’s Office believed:

Over the years, I have come across a myriad of records management systems. Some good and some ... Well the less said the better. I have often wondered why there was no standard created which could be used as the basis for all public sector areas to adopt.

Can I suggest that the creation of a simple standard as described above be a starting point?\textsuperscript{59}

1.128 Dr Anne Mitchell provided three options:

The Public Record Office should redefine its objectives and concentrate on what it does best. Ways to assist this process may include:

(i) mandating the appointment of professional records manager/archivists in all government departments and other bodies deemed to be public offices within the meaning of the Public Records Act;

(ii) allowing more independence/responsibility to organisations that have their own recognised professional record keeping services;

(iii) making all organisations more accountable for their record keeping outcomes using existing-reporting requirements imposed by the Annual Reporting Act 1983.\textsuperscript{60}

1.129 Professor William Martin, of the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, considered how the Public Record Office could extend its services:

The Public Record Office should perhaps be looking at the use of approved record management contractors to provide records processing services as well as other records management services. Standards for performance of records management tasks can be set and monitored if approved contractors are used to develop and/or implement record management practices.\textsuperscript{61}

1.130 The Committee accepts that this evidence suggests both that the Public Record Office has not responded effectively to its challenges, particularly the electronic environment, and that it has not structured itself to meet current challenges.

1.131 In this vacuum of comprehensive guidance and advice, agencies are taking the initiative. Without adequate guidance, they may implement electronic records management systems, without considering the need for sound records management or for retaining the historical record of the State.
1.132 The Public Record Office must be an active participant in fundamental changes occurring in the workplace. The implications arising from this change must be clearly understood. The submissions to this Inquiry have provided an indication of the needs of agencies.

1.133 The Public Record Office must develop strategies that ensure that agencies keep the records that are needed to account to the public on how the government transacted its business. These records may represent only 10% of all the records that were created, but the Public Record Office must have a process that ensures that all agencies understand their obligations under the *Public Records Act*.

1.134 The Public Record Office is not part of the *Victoria 21* project team in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet[62] which seeks to implement an electronic messaging and network service across government. This is not necessarily the fault of the Public Record Office but the Office must position itself in areas like this, where change is being driven. Furthermore, departments are providing corporate resource agencies to advise users on document management services and, in the absence of 'whole of state' standards from the Public Record Office, the State faces an uncoordinated approach to records management.

1.135 Using the evidence that has been provided and its own inspections in Australia, the United States and Canada, the Committee believes that the Public Record Office must undertake its key functions in the following order of priority:

1. Standards Development  
2. Monitoring Records Management Performance  
3. Storage of the Archival Record  

**Function One  Standards Development**

1.136 The Public Record Office, in identifying the records to be retained, must urgently develop comprehensive standards for all government agencies on how this process is to take place. The role of standards to date has been largely limited to the generation of disposal schedules and transfer procedures.

1.137 Records managers in agencies need guidance on how they should structure and operate records management systems which will meet standards set by the Public Record Office. Not to have such standards will leave records managers at the mercy of the information technology industry and personal preferences within each organisation.

1.138 In the absence of a standard, agencies could move independently towards de facto standards, and the State may lose any opportunity to develop a common approach, particularly for the emerging use of the electronic record.
1.139 Mr Chris Hurley, Chief Archivist of the Public Record Office, in a speech to the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission, succinctly stated:

... The Ombudsman asked us to set a standard under Section 12 of the Victoria Act on the filing of correspondence to establish, as he called it, a benchmark that he could use when his investigations were thwarted by inadequate documentation. His difficulty was not a want of power to deal with Agencies' poor record keeping but the absence of a standard by which to call them to account, and it was to the archives legislation that he looked to remedy that deficiency.63

1.140 Action is being taken to develop national standards through the Keeper of Public Records, Mr Ross Gibbs, and his membership of the Australian Council of Archives.64 The proposed national standard for records management, AS IT21, is a first for Australia, and all Australian archivists who have been involved in its preparation should be commended for taking action to develop it.

1.141 However commendable this approach has been, it should have been driven by government per se, directly involving the Public Record Office. The organisation needs to be committed to the ongoing development, review and upgrading of whatever standard is required to keep better public records in Victoria.

1.142 The Ombudsman, Dr Barry Perry, believed that, until recently, the Public Record Office has "put the cart before the horse"65 in developing standards that deal with only one part of the records process. He further believed:

If one looks at the standards that have been set by the office one sees that the office has set very good universal standards for the transfer, storage, disposal and retention of public records, but until recently there has not been much of an attempt to set good universal standards for record making and keeping.66

1.143 A minimum range of standards is required to assist all organisations, no matter how small, to develop a sound records management system. The Committee recognised that larger departments would need standards to cover records handling, registration and security procedures, an electronic records model and industry based records disposal schedules. The development of these standards is the responsibility of the Public Record Office, and this forms a significant immediate task.

1.144 The Committee recommends that Victorian standards be based on or use portions of the Australian Standard on records management to promote a national approach. If this is done, government will be in a better position nationally and will be able to deal as a united voice with the information technology industry in obtaining computing systems designed by records managers for records managers.
Function Two Monitor Records Management Performance

1.145 The preservation and maintenance of the public record for future generations can only occur when a system is in place that ensures:

- agencies maintain a records system that ultimately retains only the necessary records; and

- agencies cannot destroy records without the approval of the Public Record Office.

1.146 Records disposal activities continue to be largely initiated by agencies. The Committee found that the Public Record Office is working under an ad hoc system of establishing and renewing disposal schedules, which are standards under Section 12 of the Public Records Act 1973.

1.147 Public records management needs to be based on a range of operating standards which cover:

- general standards for each public record from the point of creation, irrespective of where it originates, on a ‘whole of state’ basis;

- general disposal standards prepared for an industry sector or group of government agencies;

- specific disposal standards prepared for a single government agency; and

- an audit process.

- ‘Whole of State’ Standards

1.148 ‘Whole of state’ standards are general standards that may apply to every agency, no matter what their size or status may be. It is in this area that agencies need standards designed to ensure sound records management practices so that records are maintained at minimal cost. The standards should ensure that documents of historical importance to the State are held in a way that ensures their survival.

1.149 Examples of standards that cover all agencies include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRO Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Issue Date</th>
<th>Expiry Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>84/32</td>
<td>Transfer of Public Records to the Public Record Office</td>
<td>14/09/84</td>
<td>14/09/94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inquiry into the Public Record Office, Victoria
• General Disposal Standards

1.150 General disposal standards are established to cover a large number of government agencies working in a generic industry. Each standard has a life of ten years and it may be subject to a number of general or specific variations during that period. At the end of ten years, the standard must be reconsidered.

1.151 The following are examples of a general standard for major segments of the public sector:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRO Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Issue Date</th>
<th>Expiry Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>84/10</td>
<td>Public Hospitals and Community Health Centres Personnel Records: General Disposal Schedule</td>
<td>31/07/85</td>
<td>30/07/95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84/25</td>
<td>Local government General Disposal Schedule</td>
<td>24/05/85</td>
<td>24/05/95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84/32</td>
<td>Transfer of Public Records to the Public Record Office</td>
<td>14/09/84</td>
<td>14/09/94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84/37</td>
<td>Common Administrative Records for Accounting, Stores, Transport and Services Records</td>
<td>07/05/87</td>
<td>07/05/97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88/2</td>
<td>School Records: General Disposal Schedule for post 1960 school records.</td>
<td>22/06/88</td>
<td>22/06/98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.152 Of the thirteen general standards that have been developed, only two have been created since 1990. These are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRO Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Issue Date</th>
<th>Expiry Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>92/4</td>
<td>Pre-Employment Police Checks: General Disposal Schedule</td>
<td>02/09/92</td>
<td>02/09/02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92/5</td>
<td>Magistrates' Courts: General Disposal Schedule for post 1/9/90 records.</td>
<td>09/10/92</td>
<td>09/10/02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.153 The Public Record Office received $57,000 from Treasury during the Committee’s Inquiry to redraft the Common Administrative Records schedule to take into account changes that have occurred since it was issued in 1987. Whilst this action is commended, it does not address the more fundamental problems facing records managers when dealing with a record from the point of its creation.
• Specific Standards

1.154 Departments, statutory authorities or agencies may have a specific standard that has been tailored to meet their needs. Examples of a specific standard include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRO Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Issue Date</th>
<th>Expiry Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>84/5</td>
<td>Office of the Auditor-General Records Disposal Schedule</td>
<td>27/11/84</td>
<td>27/11/94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85/2</td>
<td>Grain Elevators Board Records Disposal Schedule</td>
<td>01/07/85</td>
<td>30/06/95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88/9</td>
<td>Ministry for Transport Records Disposal Schedule</td>
<td>23/08/88</td>
<td>23/08/98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94/02</td>
<td>Victoria Police: General Disposal Schedule for Police Station Records</td>
<td>14/11/94</td>
<td>13/11/04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.155 Specific standards have assumed a greater prominence than the general standards. This has occurred when an agency is amalgamated or restructured, and where there has been a need to control more effectively the records through to disposal.

1.156 All standards need to be constantly monitored so that they continue to reflect the needs of the public sector. The Public Record Office has not ensured that this occurs at the macro level, and many general standards have passed or are close to their date of expiry.

1.157 A review of these standards should have been commenced well before expiry date. It is unacceptable that they have been allowed to reach this point, when the expiry date has been known from the date they were issued.

1.158 Standards should not be static. As the needs of an agency change, the standards should change to reflect current circumstances. The Committee does not accept the ten year expiry period considering it too long in a time of rapid change.

1.159 The Committee believes that all standards should be reviewed on a rolling three to five year program. The need for a standard to be current ensures that its application is a meaningful requirement for agencies. If standards are allowed to slide into irrelevancy, they will never be followed.

1.160 The Committee believes that the Australian standard is a potential base for the Victorian Public Record Office. However, whatever the standard selected, it must reflect the diverse size and needs of all government agencies.

1.161 VicRoads saw this as a function of a "proactive central co-ordinating agency" which would:

... produce, promulgate and maintain current policies and guidelines for agency management for all public records (importantly including electronic records).
1.162 Despite the development of 'whole of state', general and specific standards, current legislation does not ensure that agencies will comply with them. The Keeper of Public Records cannot be assured that all agencies covered by a standard will even recognise its existence or meet its requirements, an obligation that has existed under Section 13 of the Public Records Act since 1973.

1.163 Unless agencies and the Public Record Office communicate with each other and agree to a plan, records may continue to be destroyed.

1.164 The recent contraction of the public sector has resulted in a large number of agencies being forced to deal with the problem for the first time. Both the public sector and the Public Record Office are going through a period of rapid change, where the most immediate problems must take priority.

1.165 Irrespective of the pressures placed on the Public Record Office during this period of change, the Office must offer a service that meets the needs of the government agencies.

1.166 One of the solutions put forward to better meet the needs of the larger agencies was the use of accreditation programs. Accreditation would allow each agency to establish with the Public Record Office classes of records that may be disposed of without further approvals being required.

1.167 VicRoads considered that:

... within a consistent framework for the management of records common across government, agencies should as part of their normal business management, have the operational responsibility for the:

- classification of their business records;
- determination of disposal/retention periods and subsequent destruction of their business records (unless otherwise determined by legislation/regulation). 

1.168 Education Victoria proposed a similar level of ongoing accreditation and delegations to agencies which could demonstrate:

- Staff skills and competence and an ongoing commitment to staff development.
- Established policies and procedures for record management including risk management.
- Effective records management systems - particularly electronic systems.
- Sound archiving practices.
- A rolling business plan to ensure ongoing effective records management.

1.169 The former Department of Health and Community Services believed that agencies could better manage more than 90% of all their records through deregulating disposal practices by:

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... authorising agencies to undertake routine disposal without contact with the PRO when their programs are managed professionally, (i.e. an accreditation process).

This suggestion is fundamentally premised on the PRO selecting the records they wish to keep for historical purposes and allowing departments to undertake the management of its temporary value records without direct supervision or detailed authorisation processes (much like the Auditor General might regulate and supervise accounting practices currently). 72

1.170 The Committee supports these suggestions. However, they are premature at this time because the Public Record Office has not adequately developed its standards and audit processes, issues which should not be complicated by further changes. These suggestions need to be pursued by government when it is satisfied that adequate 'whole of state' standards have been developed by the Public Record Office as the basis for an accreditation program, and that the standards are in place.

* Audit of Performance*

1.171 To ensure that all agencies are aware of their responsibilities, the Committee believes that each agency must have a current records management plan that has been agreed with the Public Record Office.

1.172 This plan would be the first step in removing the current ad hoc nature of liaison with the Public Record Office.

1.173 The number of agencies in Victoria is constantly changing as the needs of government change. In 1995, the Committee estimated that there were 3,000 agencies in Victoria, which ranged from major government bodies handling millions of dollars each year, like the Public Transport Corporation, to small rural water boards.

1.174 Each of these bodies comes under the broad umbrella of eight government departments, and it may be more practical for the Public Record Office to establish initially a records management plan with each department. This process would allow the Public Record Office to establish a base within each department that takes into account the diverse functions and operating needs of that department. The Committee believes that the resources of the Public Record Office should be immediately focused on this task.

1.175 To ensure that the process is taken up on a consistent ongoing basis by successive management personnel in agencies and the Public Record Office, the Committee believes that a system of auditing record management performance needs to be initiated.
1.176 The Australian Council of Archives believed that the Public Record Office needed more resources to:

... perform a more regulatory and auditing role in the government sphere.\textsuperscript{73}

1.177 Education Victoria saw the auditing function as part of the standards development process:

Standards would be protected through judicious monitoring and auditing and implementation of risk management strategies.\textsuperscript{74}

1.178 The former Department of Health and Community Services also supported an auditing function in the deregulation of administrative practices with the Public Record Office, and the need to:

... audit agencies to ensure that these minimum standards are complied with.\textsuperscript{75}

1.179 In response to a question as to whether ‘... the Public Record Office has an auditing role to ensure that standards are being upheld’, Mr Mike Harrington replied:

My personal view is it should. One of the problems we have now is that because of the proliferation of computers, particularly desktop computers, we have officers with different levels of experience and understanding of records management making decisions about records and the way they are treated.\textsuperscript{76}

1.180 The Committee believes that its call for a new series of standards is well matched by a similar view of the auditing of these standards. The audit process should be conducted on a similar basis to that of the Auditor-General, with the agency meeting all costs involved. This is not a new concept and could be introduced easily.

1.181 If, as the result of the audit process, the Public Record Office finds that an agency is not meeting the standards established by the it, the Committee believes that the agency should be given an opportunity to rectify its deficiencies. If the agency chooses not to rectify the deficiencies within a reasonable time frame, then, in order to assess and protect the historical record, the Public Record Office should enter the site, carry out the work required and charge the agency the costs involved.

1.182 The Public Record Office would need to reallocate some of its resources to undertake the audit function. The audit role should be used as an opportunity to maintain the relationships between agencies and the Public Record Office. Auditing of performance should not be seen as policing, but as acting in the best interests of Victorians both now and in the future.
Function Three  Storage of the Archival Record

1.183 The Public Record Office must continue to manage the storage and public access of the State's permanent record. The Committee believes that this function is the essential role of an archival institution, a function that cannot be given to others. Storage of archival records is a non-negotiable function of the Public Record Office.

Function Four  Provision of Public Access

1.184 The final key role of the Public Record Office is to ensure that the records remain accessible to the public. This role has been very successful to date, as demonstrated earlier, but how it should be addressed in future is a key area of the Committee's report, which is considered in Chapter Five.

1.4. Management Structure

1.185 The Committee believes that changes are required to the operating structure of the Public Record Office to meet its four core functions. The proposed changes are:

- removal of the Public Record Office from the Arts Victoria agency
- restructure of the position of Keeper of Public Records
- development of four operating divisions
- provision of Regional Records Management Consultants

1.186 The Public Record Office needs to be removed from the Arts Victoria agency. The most appropriate place would be as a separate functional area within the Department of Treasury and Finance reporting directly in the first instance to the responsible Minister and secondly to the Parliament by the tabling of an annual report.

1.187 This view was supported by representatives from the Department of Premier and Cabinet. The Chairman of the former Public Bodies Review Committee, Mr Robin Cooper, MP, asked Mr Harrington:

... would you see that the responsibility of the Keeper of Public Records or the PRO should remain with the Minister for the Arts or would it be better under your scenario to transfer that body to the public control of the Department of Premier and Cabinet.77

Mr Harrington replied:

... It probably should be based in a central agency because I think that is where it gets greatest coverage and perhaps response from.
1.188 The Hon. W. Hartigan, MLC, sought information on which central agency. Mr Harrington indicated:

The Department of Treasury and Finance, the Department of Premier and Cabinet - central departments that have a central coordinating role in the public sector.78

1.189 A change in policy environment may allow the Public Record Office to be involved from concept to delivery in new projects, particularly in the electronic environment. This role will be necessary if the Public Record Office is to have an impact on decisions to be made on how the public record is created, used and stored for the use of later generations.

1.190 Changes are required to the structure of the Public Record Office. The Office needs to have a management philosophy to achieve its objectives.

1.191 The Committee believes that the title, Keeper of Public Records, is antiquated and suggests a person with the responsibility for storing old records rather than someone responsible for advising government agencies on current records management issues and efficiently managing the State’s permanent records.

1.192 This position calls for a diverse range of skills and experience which generally cannot be offered within a single public office career path. For example, the position needs policy and standards development skills together with an ability to liaise with Ministers and the heads of government agencies. The position also needs the management skills to develop records storage sites, provide a contemporary customer focus, and manage staff and financial resources. A new title is required to reposition the role and to reflect its functions.

1.193 In the Committee’s view, the position does not need to be filled by a trained archivist. The position needs someone experienced in delivering functions set out in legislation, and managing conflicting priorities through the best use of staff and financial resources. An appropriate title for this position would be Director of Public Records.

1.194 The Committee believes that the Public Record Office should continue in a form similar to its current structure. Based on the current staff numbers, the Committee believes that the numbers assigned to each task should reflect the functions in each section.

1.195 The sections are:

Director of Public Records
  • Corporate management and finance;
  • Standards development, approval and implementation;
  • Development and provision of policy advice on records management and associated issues, eg. electronic records;

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• Ensuring that the executive or principal officer of each agency is aware of their responsibilities under the Public Records Act 1973;
• Making and signing agreements with each agency on the operating standards for records management and archival practices used within that organisation; and
• Acting as the State’s representative in intrastate and interstate forums.

Consulting and Audit
The prime function of this section is to ensure that ‘best practice’ principles are applied in the management of public records. The section would be responsible for:
• Regional Records Management Consultants;
• Records management audits across government;
• Advising agencies on the development and implementation of records management plans using the broad policies that have been established;
• Training courses; and
• Implementation of records management and archival programs, costed against the government agency.

Archives Management
The management of cost effective storage and access to the State’s archival records.

Public Access Unit
The provision of public access services to the State’s public record in both physical and electronic media.

1.196 To overcome the perception from non-metropolitan areas that it is difficult to deal with the Public Record Office because its staff are primarily located in Melbourne, the Committee believes that a system of regional advisory officers needs to be established.

1.197 In a visit to the State Archives and Records Administration (SARA), New York, in January 1996, a sub-committee of members was told one method used to facilitate the management of the public record was a system of nine regional offices spread across New York State. Each of these regions made skilled staff available to help deal with more than 4,000 local government bodies:

Each Regional Office is headed by a Regional Advisory Officer who acts as a consultant, trainer, and technical advisor (sic) to local governments developing records management programs.79

1.198 The Committee believes that a system of regional advisory officers would be an effective way of providing access to all agencies in Victoria in a more co-ordinated manner. The Committee’s report calls upon the Public Record Office to develop new standards and procedural documents, and these would be more easily implemented if agencies could deal with people aware of each region and
its issues. Regional Records Management Consultants, a term preferred by the Committee, could be based at a State office within each region or at the Melbourne Office, travelling to the region when required.

1.199 The Committee believes that the costs of these officers should be recovered from a user charge, provided that this charge does not inhibit the key intention of assisting both government agencies and the Public Record Office to perform more effectively.

1.200 The Committee recognises that this will increase the overall operating costs to government, but this cost should be more than offset by the savings that would be generated through the better keeping of its records. These officers would form part of the proposed Consulting and Audit Section.

Cost Recovery

1.201 The costs of many of the services offered by the Public Record Office are not charged to the user agencies.

1.202 With the adoption of accrual accounting by the government, the Committee believes that some services should be on a charge out basis. Under this procedure, the Public Record Office could establish the costs that are incurred in the demand for its service.

1.203 When the Public Record Office is faced with a short-term demand on its resources, additional staff should be employed specifically for the task, at the expense of the agency.

1.204 The Committee notes that the Public Record Office is addressing this issue through the development of a pool of archivists and records management professionals who may be called upon at any time, with the cost charged to the government agency which require the services.\textsuperscript{80}

1.205 The Committee believes that there are two exceptions to this view on cost recovery. The first is that the ongoing development of records management standards and disposal schedules is fundamental to the government retaining the accountable and historical records of the State, and is therefore a cost that the Public Record Office must bear.

1.206 The second is in storage of historical archives. Historical records in the care of the Public Record Office are of enduring value for legal, historical or administrative reasons. They are vital to understanding the development of the State. These records should be held in an appropriate facility, funded from the budget allocation of the Public Record Office.
Public Records Advisory Council

1.207 The Committee examined the role of the Public Records Advisory Council (PRAC), established in 1973 under Section 5 of the Public Records Act:

5. The Public Records Advisory Council
   
   (a) in consultation with the Keeper of Public Records, shall promote co-operation between the Public Record Office and public offices; and

   (b) may report and make recommendations to the Minister on any matter relating to the administration of this Act.

1.208 In 1973, membership consisted of seven members appointed by the Governor in Council, of whom:

   (a) four shall be persons holding the position of permanent head of a department specified in the Second Schedule to the Public Service Act 1958 or their nominees;

   (b) one shall be appointed from a panel of three names submitted by the executive committee of the Municipal Association of Victoria;

   (c) one shall be a person holding a senior office in a tertiary institution in Victoria; and

   (d) one shall be the State librarian or his nominee.

1.209 On the recommendations of the Nicholas Clark Report81 in 1986, the Council was made more representative of users. Section 4(1A) of the Public Records Act was amended to increase membership to the following ten persons:

   (a) the Director General of Property and Services; and

   (b) the remaining members shall be persons with knowledge of or experience in any of the following areas:

   (i) Public administration;

   (ii) Local government;

   (iii) The management of records;

   (iv) Librarianship or library management;

   (v) Historical research;

   (vi) Genealogical research;

   (vii) Any other area considered by the Minister ...
1.210 The Arts Institutions (Amendment Act) 1994 revised membership qualifications to:

- replace the ‘Director-General of Property and Services’ with ‘Department Head or his nominee’; and

- replace a person skilled in ‘librarianship and library management’ with ‘business administration and finance’. 82

1.211 An inspection of the PRAC agenda and minutes by the Committee for the last six months confirmed the criticism that it had become involved in the normal business functions of the Office, moving away from its broad advisory and policy role on matters concerning the public record. A question the Committee needed to consider was at what point the advisory role should move to an active involvement in the normal daily responsibilities of the Keeper.

1.212 Mr Gibbs, in his evidence, saw the Council as part of the approval process, particularly for disposal schedules. Mr Cooper, MP, asked Mr Gibbs whether he took matters of a controversial nature to the Council for advice. Mr Gibbs replied:

Yes. The Councillors sometimes get very obstreperous about issues. In a current case involving the Police the Council, or parts of it, was more concerned to retain some records than the Police or we were. That is what the Committee is for. There was much said by staff about that. That shows that the Council and its Disposal Subcommittee, which is chaired by Judith Ellis - she is probably the most experienced records manager in the country; she runs her own records management consultancy business - are healthy for government, for us and in this case for the Police. The Council and Committee act as watchdogs, ensuring things are not destroyed without proper regard for the consequences. 83
1.213 A number of sub-committees have been established by PRAC, being:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Committee</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Representation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>Examination of the accommodation needs of the PRO and the records storage needs of public offices</td>
<td>• Treasury and Finance&lt;br&gt;• Public Administration&lt;br&gt;• Business Administration&lt;br&gt;• Nominee for Arts, Sport and Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disposal</td>
<td>Reviews disposal schedules and prepares recommendations for the full Committee.</td>
<td>• Records Management&lt;br&gt;• Genealogical Research&lt;br&gt;• Koori Heritage Trust&lt;br&gt;• Historical Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Training</td>
<td>Examines professional development issues for records managers in the public sector</td>
<td>• Records Management&lt;br&gt;• Public Record Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic Records</td>
<td>Examining policy issues and options for government</td>
<td>• Public Administration&lt;br&gt;• Public Record Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal Records</td>
<td>Considers records management issues in Local government including the review and reissue of the General Disposal Schedule</td>
<td>• Local government&lt;br&gt;• Genealogical Research&lt;br&gt;• Business Administration&lt;br&gt;• Municipal Association of Victoria&lt;br&gt;• Historical Research</td>
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1.214 The Committee finds it difficult to establish why a part-time advisory body, that has a role in determining the future directions of the records management of the State, has become involved in some of the normal management functions of the Office. The Committee believes that this body and its sub-committees are no longer appropriate.

1.215 The Committee considers that the advisory body should be reconstituted with a smaller membership and that the important principles that should underpin the composition of the advisory council are expertise and independence. The functions of the Public Records Advisory Council should be to provide policy advice to the Minister, on the management of public records in Victoria. Section 5 of the Public Records Act would need to be amended to reflect this.

The future of the Public Record Office

1.216 The Public Record Office has indicated in evidence to the Committee both a willingness and a capacity to rectify its deficiencies, provided it receives the support to tackle the issues.

1.217 The Committee reiterates its support of the philosophy that an agency is needed to ensure that the records of the State are managed in a way that ensures documents of historical importance are retained for future generations. This agency could be a new entity or a continuation of the Public Record Office. Either agency would need to address the issues raised in this report.
1.218 The Committee's recommendations, if pursued by the government, would ensure that the Public Record Office carried out its most significant task, that is to assist agencies in managing their records so that the history of this State can be preserved.

1.219 This Committee and the former Public Bodies Review Committee believe they received no evidence to justify the closure of the Public Record Office.

Future Review

1.220 The Committee further believes that the success of its recommendations will need to be reviewed, and suggests that the agency controlling the management of the public record in Victoria be reviewed 10 years from the date of this report being tabled in Parliament.

Conclusion

1.221 The Public Record Office is a skilled and energetic organisation, but its staff lack direction from the government as to what its core role should be. The Committee believes that any notion that the Office is primarily a storage facility for old records, and an access site for hobby use of records, must be seen to be inappropriate, a perception which can only be overcome through pursuit of a new direction.

1.222 The role of the Public Record Office must be refocussed to ensure that all government agencies maintain their records effectively and, in the long term, retain only the portion of records that are relevant to the business process and the history of the State. This will require a significant allocation of Public Record Office resources.

1.223 The Committee further supports the application of some user charges that reflect the true cost of the services provided by the Public Record Office. These user charges should be retained by the Office to increase the range, timeliness and effectiveness of its services. New initiatives such as the Regional Records Management Consultants need to be taken up so that the Office can work throughout Victoria with all government agencies, no matter what their size or status.

1.224 The energy of the Office needs to be redirected to a new hierarchy of responsibilities which can be summarised as follows:

- Standards Development
- Monitoring Records Management Performance
- Storage of the Archival Record
- Provision of Public Access.
1.225 Regrettably, the things that the Public Record Office does well, such as its public access, publications and travelling exhibitions programs may need to be scaled down until the Public Record Office can assure its Minister that the first three functions have been satisfactorily implemented.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee recommends that:

1.1 the Public Record Office be retained;

1.2 the Public Record Office be located in the portfolio of Treasury and Finance;

1.3 the Public Record Office be refocussed to provide its functions according to the following hierarchy:

- Standards Development
- Monitoring Records Management Performance
- Storage of the Archival Record
- Provision of Public Access

...to ensure that all agencies manage effectively the State’s records;

1.4 all Public Record Office standards and schedules be subject to review every three to five years to reinforce "best practice" principles in the management of the State’s archival record;

1.5 the Victorian standard for a records management system be based on the Australian standard;

1.6 the Public Record Office urgently ensure that all agencies implement records management and disposal plans that meet standards set by that Office;

1.7 the Public Record Office initiate a continuous cycle of random audits of agencies to ensure that public records are correctly managed according to Public Record Office standards;

1.8 the cost of audits undertaken by the Public Record Office be met by each agency in a manner similar to the services provided by the Auditor-General;

1.9 any agency found to be holding records in an inappropriate manner be offered an opportunity to rectify the problem. If the agency fails to take the necessary action, the Public Record Office complete the task at the agency’s cost;
1.10 a realistic and fair contribution towards the cost of Public Record Office services, other than the development of standards and educational programs for agency records and information managers, the storage of permanent records and most public access services, be met by users;

1.11 the position of Keeper of Public Records be renamed the Director of Public Records;

1.12 the Public Record Office prepare an annual report to the Parliament on the management of records in the public sector;

1.13 the Public Record Office operate through four functional areas. The principal role of the Office should be to develop and implement records management standards under the control of the Director of Public Records. The three remaining areas should be of an operational nature reporting to the Director of Public Records. The four proposed areas are:

- **Director of Public Records**
- **Consulting and Audit Unit**
- **Archives Management Unit**
- **Public Access Unit**

1.14 to enhance the quality of liaison between agencies and the Public Record Office throughout the State, positions titled Regional Record Management Consultants be created. These positions be developed as field officers to manage the records of a region, industry type or ministry on an on-going basis;

1.15 periodic increases in operational activity from agencies be met by the employment of short-term staff fully paid for by the user agency;

1.16 the Public Record Advisory Council be reconstituted with a smaller membership that reflects expertise and independence. The function of the Council should be to provide policy advice, to the Minister, on the management of public records in Victoria;

1.17 the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee review the management of public records in Victoria 10 years from the date of presentation of this report to Parliament, and

1.18 the *Public Records Act* should limit ministerial intervention solely to ensure compliance with the Keeper's statutory obligations.

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1 Department of Librarianship, Archives and Records, Monash University, Submission, 6 November 1995, p.2.
4 Department of Health & Community Services, Submission, 23 November 1995, p.6.
Department of Health & Community Services, Submission, 23 November 1995, p.4.
ibid.
Department of Librarianship, Archives and Records, Monash University, Submission, 6 November 1995, p.2.
Dr A Mitchell, Manager, Records and Archival Services, Monash University, Submission, 3 November 1995, p.3.
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Mr J Manders, Assistant Auditor-General, Transcript of Evidence, 11 December 1995, p.179.
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Mr R Crowe, Victorian Ombudsman's Office, Conference Papers, RMAA 12th National Convention, p.31.
Mr T Mills, Co-Director, State Archives and Records Administration (SARA), New York, State, Transcript of Meeting, 8 January 1996, pp.2-3.
43 ibid.
44 Mr T Cook, Director, Retention Disposition Division, National Archives of Canada, Transcript of Meeting, 15 January 1996, p.3.
45 Ms E Proust, Secretary, Department of Premier and Cabinet, 3 January 1996.
46 Dr A Mitchell, Manager, Records and Archival Services, Monash University, Submission, 3, November 1995, p.4.
47 Department of Health & Community Services, Submission, 23 November 1995, p.3.
49 Mr R Gibbs, Submission, 17 November 1995, Attachment H.
49 ibid.
50 ibid., Attachment B.
51 ibid., Attachment A.
52 Department of Health & Community Services, Submission, 23 November 1995, p.5.
53 ibid., p.11.
54 ibid., p.4.
56 Mr H Nunn, Submission, 31 October 1995, p.9.
57 Department of Librarianship, Archives and Records, Monash University, Submission, 6 November 1995, p.6.
58 Mr P Kirby, Secretary, Education Victoria, Submission, 6 November 1995, p.1.
60 Dr A Mitchell, Manager, Records and Archival Services, Monash University, Submission, 3, November 1995, p.3.
61 Professor W Martin, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Submission, 21, November 1995, p.3.
62 Mr M Harrington, Submission, 6 December 1995.
64 Mr R Gibbs, Submission, 17 November 1995, p.8.
66 ibid., p.188.
69 ibid., p.2.
70 ibid., p.2.
71 Mr P Kirby, Secretary, Education Victoria, Submission, 6 November 1995, p.8.
74 Mr P Kirby, Secretary, Education Victoria, Submission, 6 November 1995, p.2.
76 Mr M Harrington, Transcript of Evidence, 11 December 1995, p.173.
77 Mr R Cooper, Chairman, Transcripts of Evidence, 11 December 1995, p.173
79 Local Government Records Services, New York State Archives and Records Administration Booklet, p.1.
82Arts Institutions (Amendment) Act 1994, Section 77.
83 Mr R Gibbs, Transcript of Evidence, 20 November 1995, p.34.
84 Mr R Gibbs, Submission, Attachment L, 17 November 1995.
2. Storage and Preservation Responsibilities

2.1 The Committee has been asked in its terms of reference to examine what options are available for the government and the Public Record Office to meet the future storage and preservation responsibilities for the State's public record.

2.2 As discussed in Chapter 1, the government has announced a commitment to provide $20m over 3 years for the design and construction of a purpose built archives for Victoria which will incorporate an electronic records archive system as well as provide long term storage for archival records.

2.3 This chapter does not canvas all the options that may be pursued but proposes two alternatives to the government for the storage and preservation of the public record. Both alternatives recognise the need for easier public access and for the Public Record Office to use 'best practice' storage techniques.

2.4 The current Victorian repository and public reading room is located at 57 Cherry Lane, Laverton. The site was developed in 1973 from a former drug warehouse. The site provides 72.7 km of storage space, of which, at June 1995, 60.8 km was used. Based on the projections of the Public Record Office the facility will be full by December 1996.

2.5 The need for a new or extended facility was well known to government. In this report the Committee has drawn on the preservation requirements identified by the Public Record Office in 1994 in its most recent approach to the government for a new facility and the subsequent response of the Department of Treasury and Finance.

2.6 The proposal for a joint facility was not approved at that time as the Department of Treasury and Finance felt that:

...this proposal was not seen as offering adequate solutions to the more economical handling of burgeoning paper records or sufficiently acknowledging the advent of electronic record keeping; nor offering the public better access to this valuable historical resource.

2.7 Dr Michael Vertigan, Secretary of the Department, outlined the need for any proposal to meet the government's 'Investment Evaluation Guidelines' and to draw on opportunities now available.

2.8 Dr Vertigan put forward three recommendations for the Committee to consider:

- explore opportunities for better use of archives that new information technologies are offering;
- examine potential for relocating PRO and archival facilities away from Melbourne;
- examine potential for PRO to operate as a service agency and for private provision of archival services.

Inquiry into the Public Record Office, Victoria
2.9 The Committee believes that this report proposes viable alternatives that meet the needs of the Department and the Public Record Office.

Storage Cycle

2.10 Storage and preservation needs are determined by the currency and usage of a record. The following diagram demonstrates how records pass through three stages as they move from active daily use to archival records held by the Public Record Office.

**Storage needs of a record**

**ACTIVE**
Records created, managed and stored in a government agency to meet the frequent access needs of staff.

**INACTIVE /TEMPORARY**
Records subject to less frequent access which can be transferred to lower cost storage areas. Temporary records can be disposed of.

**PERMANENT**
Records of permanent value transferred to archival storage at the designated time.

2.11 Each of these stages has different storage and preservation requirements. Evidence revealed that as little as 10% of all paper records that are created need to be retained permanently, and in the electronic environment the figure could be as low as 1%.6

2.12 The question addressed by the Committee was how each stage could be managed in the most cost effective and efficient manner to meet the operational needs of government and the public.

2.13 When records are created, those of permanent value to a government agency are identified. Others that are important to the current business of the agency, may, over time, not be required and should be disposed of with the approval of the Public Record Office.
2.14 Each stage needs to be constantly monitored and the best option selected if considerable savings in rental, state accommodation and ongoing staffing levels are to be obtained. The key is keeping a record for as long as it is required.

2.15 The Committee commenced its review of storage and preservation requirements by assessing the storage needs of a record, and established that:

- active, inactive and temporary storage should remain the responsibility of the agency under the standards established by the Public Record Office, and

- permanent archival storage should remain the exclusive responsibility of the Public Record Office.

2.16 The Committee has emphasised strongly, in its evaluation of the Public Record Office, the need for an agreed records management plan, and recognises that standards, when implemented, should allow the process of creation, use, storage and disposal to occur more effectively in government agencies.

Storage Media

2.17 The needs of each storage option is determined by the media type. The most common medium, paper, will be challenged by computer technology, reducing the dependence on the written form.

2.18 The Committee requested the Public Record Office to establish a profile of the media types at its Laverton repository. The Office supplied the following chart:

![Laverton Media Holdings by Percentage 1996]

Inquiry into the Public Record Office, Victoria
2.19 The chart demonstrates that the main recording medium is paper. Even with the advent of new technologies and a significant change in the way that government performs its business, under the existing transfer rules it may be 20 to 25 years before all paper records have been placed into the care of the Public Record Office.

2.20 The use of highly sophisticated technology, such as electronic scanning, large database systems or jukebox technologies to manage the storage of paper records, a view suggested by the Department of Treasury and Finance, is an attractive option but remains beyond the financial capacity and business needs of most government agencies.

2.21 The previous Committee viewed the operations of the Australian Securities Commission (ASC) in Traralgon, Victoria, where the Commission scanned active correspondence onto 'jukebox' technology. The ASC has a need to send randomly accessed material on-line to all parts of Australia, a situation which would justify this degree of capital expenditure. Ongoing costs in the scanning of each document averaged between ten and twenty-five cents per copy. No evidence was received to suggest that any government agencies in Victoria had similar needs.

2.22 No information was available to demonstrate any operational savings in using this medium for the storage of active records, particularly those of a temporary nature.

2.23 This medium may be more appropriate to facilitate an electronic public access program if it was used for the small portion of documents that become archival records. Equipment may be purchased by the Public Record Office, or contract services may be used, avoiding the need for government agencies to duplicate the capital investment.

2.24 However, the question of the approval process necessary to destroy original paper records still remains in any proposal to scan the original record. As in many other issues, urgent direction is required from the Public Record Office.

2.25 Based on a small survey of government agencies in November 1995, the Committee found that the predominant medium continues to be paper, with a growing use of electronic records.

2.26 The survey demonstrated that the Public Record Office's estimate, of 200 km^8 of records awaiting transfer, is now outdated. From the small sample of 90 returns, the Committee found an estimated 125 km of records requiring some form of action by the Office. For example, the Department of Transport holds 35.8 km of records.
2.27 From the responses, the Committee was able to build a profile of the records in common use in government agencies.

**Recording Media by Percentage**

![Pie chart showing recording media by percentage]

- Paper
- Paper & Electronic
- Electronic

2.28 The electronic environment created 41% of all records in the survey undertaken by the Committee. Only 1% used the full electronic environment and 40% used a mixture of both paper and electronic records. Of the responses that used paper and electronic records, no indication was available as to the percentage of each medium being used.

2.29 Until one medium fully assumes the role of creating records in government, the Public Record Office will face a continuing need for physical storage of the paper record. The question of electronic records is considered in more detail in Chapter Three.

2.30 One of the issues highlighted by the survey was that the government agencies still did not know nor understand the cost of running their records management programs, which includes the storage function.

2.31 Since 1993 government agencies have been required to meet the cost of their accommodation. As a consequence, significant savings in accommodation costs have been made by some agencies disposing of large volumes of unwanted records. The Public Record Office has estimated that these savings to government were in the vicinity of $6 million in 1994.9

2.32 The government's move to accrual accounting must highlight the true costs of records management in government agencies and lead to practices which continually search for the most cost effective storage options.
2.33 Prior to the government proceeding with any of the options put forward by the Committee, the Public Record Office must immediately establish, from a thorough survey of all government agencies:

- the amount of records that need to be assessed as to their archival status;
- the media being utilised to create the current record, and
- the rate of record growth in the last three years and a projection over the next five years.

2.34 Without this information, no sound projections can be made on the future storage and preservation needs of the Office.

2.35 The question of record management practices, which has direct implications on the storage and preservation of records, has been addressed by the Committee and appears as Chapter Four.

2.36 The Committee believes that, whatever the mix of options adopted by the government, additional archival facilities that concentrate on the paper record are required.

Storage and Preservation Principles

2.37 In establishing its recommendations, the Committee developed management principles that it believes will enhance the storage and preservation of the State's historical record.

- Storage Standards

2.38 Each record must be cared for from creation so that it remains useable. Records must be maintained in conditions within the government agency or commercial provider so that, on transfer to the Public Record Office, they will be readable and worth retaining. Permanent storage is forever.

2.39 As highlighted in the first chapter, the Public Record Office must establish records management standards and practices that define how records are to be kept.

2.40 These standards must include the electronic record and its storage and preservation needs. Whilst part of the overall framework of this chapter, it is considered in more depth in Chapter Three.

2.41 Two examples of storage and preservation standards that are required are 'paper' and the physical storage of the record.
2.42  A standard is urgently required for paper. This standard has become vital as the proliferation of photocopiers and pursuit of whiteness has produced a bleached paper which is unstable as a public record. The use of A4 photocopy paper is almost universal but photocopy paper will not last as a permanent record. Unlike paper used in the 19th century, it has been estimated by the Australian Archives that A4 photocopy paper will last about 20 years.

2.43  Acid free paper which will last indefinitely without recopying is now available at a comparative cost, and new purchasing policies are required by the government to establish its use.

2.44  A storage and environment standard is required for all sites holding the public record at each stage of its life cycle. The previous Committee, during its inspection of sites holding inactive and permanent records, found a wide degree of variation in standards being applied to their care.

2.45  Anecdotal evidence indicated that records have been found stored in bell towers under stages and in the dungeons of many government agencies. Several storage sites inspected by the previous Committee met reasonable levels of temperature, moisture, and pest and rodent control whilst other sites could be best described as meeting no standards at all. Permanent records were by default often those that survived, not those that had been retained for the public record.

2.46  The storage and environment standard must define minimum atmospheric, racking/shelving installations, physical handling, fire and access requirements. The standard should also allow for the commercial storage of records, provided the site meets the same requirements. The Committee believes that the record, no matter where it is held, should be subject to the same level of care.

2.47  The Committee believes that the current situation of requiring commercial providers to meet minimum storage standards whilst not requiring any at all for government agencies is patently absurd.

* Assignment of Responsibility

2.48  The responsibility for ensuring that the records of an organisation are correctly maintained forms part of the obligations of the Chief Executive Officer of a government agency. This obligation currently exists under Section 13 of the Public Records Act 1973 but has a low profile.

2.49  To ensure that these obligations can be seen to be carried out in the same manner as the financial duties of a government agency, the Committee believes that the records management function needs to be reported on in each agency's annual report.
2.50 This action is required to ensure the continuation of the standards process over the years without the need for further intervention by the Public Record Office. The annual reports should also disclose records storage and preservation standards, the level of implementation and the location of each government agency's active, temporary and archival records. This would involve an amendment to the Financial Management Act 1994 and other relevant legislation.

- Public or Commercial Storage

2.51 Dr Vertigan, in his submission, suggested:

... the potential for establishing the PRO as a service agency and for putting its operations on to a more commercially-orientated footing.10

2.52 The Public Record Office has recently established a scheme that allows for the storage of scheduled temporary records and unsentenced records with approved storage suppliers. The APROSS (Approved Public Record Office Storage Suppliers) scheme provides government agencies with a list of commercial agencies that meet minimum storage standards.

2.53 The storage of temporary and unsentenced records with commercial storage suppliers should be a component that is considered in the development of an overall records management plan for a government agency. The Committee believes that the storage of long-term temporary records in high cost rental accommodation must be minimised.

2.54 The Committee does not support an extension of that philosophy to the commercial storage of the State's archival record. No government agency or commercial records service should hold any of the State's historical record unless approval has been given by the Public Record Office.

2.55 The Committee opposes any suggestion that existing archives held by the Public Record Office be relocated to a number of sites. The State's historical record must be retained as a single entity. The breaking down and reestablishment of the archival record by successive governments should never occur. In the Committee's view, the risk of documents being lost or damaged is too high.

2.56 The Public Record Office is intrinsically a service agency. The Committee's recommendations call for the greater development of the standards process and for advisory services. These functions are part of the Public Record Office's core role and fully demonstrate the need for a refocus of the Office to ensure the careful and effective keeping of records by public agencies.
• **Transfer to the Public Record Office**

2.57 Every paper record assessed as permanent should be transferred to the Public Record Office, 25 years from the date of the record's creation. This function is part of existing legislation under Section 8A of the *Public Records Act* 1973 but it has not been carried out due to a perceived lack of resources, including storage space, at the Public Record Office.

2.58 The Public Record Office must have access to, and obtain, all permanent records so that trained staff and appropriate standards can be applied to the preservation of public records.

2.59 The Committee does not oppose a government agency keeping its permanent records on site or at a commercial provider during the 25-year period before transfer, provided the sites meet appropriate storage standards. Information on the records or the file series held by each agency must be forwarded to the Public Record Office prior to the 25-year transfer date to form part of the Office's database. This information should be identified and documented at the time of preparation of an agency's disposal plan.

2.60 Electronic records cannot be handled by the Public Record Office under this transfer requirement. The Committee does not see the Office being the storage site for electronic records or a museum of obsolete electronic equipment but the co-ordinator of access to electronic records held by each government agency.

• **Facilities Planning**

2.61 To overcome the current situation where the Laverton repository will run out of storage space with no endorsed options for a new storage facility, a system that determines the inflow of records to storage needs be established. This system should establish future storage requirements five years in advance for the State capital works program, taking into account any change in the volume and percentage of each media type.

2.62 To ensure that anticipated storage requirements remain accurate, this estimate needs to be updated annually. The Committee believes that a five-year period would reflect adequate time for the funding, design and construction work to take place before a current facility is filled.

**Laverton**

• **Storage Space**

2.63 The projections of the Public Record Office are that, by December 1996, the Laverton facility will be full.\(^\text{11}\) Shelving capacity is made up of the following:
Storage Capacity in Kilometres

- 2.7
- 5.3
- 63.7

| Mobile Shelving | Fixed Shelving | Maps and Plan Cabinets | Electronic Storage |

2.64 The Public Record Office has estimated that a further 200 km of paper records await assessment, and a portion of those records will be transferred to permanent storage. The Committee's own survey has indicated that this figure is not accurate, and a comprehensive survey needs to be carried out.

2.65 Based on the established convention that about 10% of records become permanent, it could be anticipated that 20 km of paper storage space is required to meet the current backlog estimated by the Public Record Office.

2.66 To determine if the amount of available archives space could be increased, the Committee sought information on whether any non-permanent record currently held by the Office could have been stored at another site.

2.67 Based on the 1994-1995 Annual Report of the Office, only 44.75% of records at the Laverton repository are permanent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Holdings By Class</th>
<th>Volume By Metres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Permanent</td>
<td>27,233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary</td>
<td>4,316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review</td>
<td>10,348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsentenced</td>
<td>17,624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work in Progress</td>
<td>1,345</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inquiry into the Public Record Office, Victoria
2.68 Despite the Public Record Office charging government agencies for the storage of temporary records, and the introduction of the APROSS scheme, no decision has been made to remove the 4.316 km of temporary records to another site. More importantly, the Public Record Office has not acted promptly to ensure that the facility is used primarily for sentenced permanent records. The Committee believes that the perceived lack of space has been used as a convenient excuse to justify a lack of action on this issue.

2.69 No review has been carried out by the Public Record Office to determine the status of the unsentenced records. Many of the records are from government agencies at the turn of this century, and the Public Record Office believes that significant resources will be required to review them.

2.70 Records that have been sentenced, but require review, total 10.348 km of the archival holdings. Additional records that require review have been accepted in the last financial year13 despite the Public Record Office maintaining that it is running out of storage space. The Committee believes that these documents should not be held at Laverton but at an approved secondary storage site.

2.71 Large consignments of unsentenced records, such as records from the former State Bank, must be immediately processed off-site at the cost of the succeeding public body or the government before transfer to the Public Record Office. This function could be carried out by a commercial provider.

2.72 If the Public Record Office was to remove all temporary records and records under review from the Laverton repository, it would immediately recover 14.6 km of additional archives space. Further space may be available if it conducted a thorough review of unsentenced records, and staff and resources need to be allocated immediately to this task.

2.73 The Public Record Office should therefore immediately transfer all records under review and temporary records to a commercial or secondary storage site. The cost of storage should be met by the responsible government agency.

2.74 Action should have commenced to clear the repository of any record that was not permanent when it became clear that the facility had insufficient space. This task must be completed if valuable storage space is to be available during the period it will take to design and establish the new archival facility.

- Repository Standards

2.75 The Committee sought clarification on the many statements that the Laverton repository was not suitable for use due to site and design constraints. Almost all submissions from the public supported the need to establish a more central facility.
A copy of a Risk Evaluation and Risk Management Report prepared by Marsh & McLennan Pty Ltd in June 1995 was forwarded to the Committee to support the assertions that the site was unsuitable.

The report documented the construction of the main storage facility:

The records storage building is a single story premises, with extensive mezzanine levels, having brick walls covered with corrugated asbestos cement roof carried on all steel frames, reinforced concrete ground floor, with steel mezzanine floors in compactus storage areas.

Marsh & McLennan identified the following risk factors:

- **Roof Cladding**
  The roof of the repository records store is of corrugated asbestos cement construction, which have a history of failure in the event of very severe hail storms. Breach of roof cladding would result in potential for serious water damage to records and attract significant cost associated with the recreation of such data.

- **Exposure Hazards**
  Located some 100 metres to the north-east of the record repository is a large storage vessel for the storage of Ethyl Alcohol operated by Borden Chemicals. Whilst the facility appears well protected there have been numerous catastrophic events involving the Petro Chemical Industries, and under adverse conditions, it is possible that this storage facility provides a severe exposure to the record repository.

- **Automatic Sprinkler Protection**
  A number of unsatisfactory conditions were observed in respect to automatic sprinkler protection standards on the site.

- **Halon Gas Fire Protection Systems**
  Two areas on site are protected by Halon Gas fire protection system. ... Australian government Legislation has decreed that these systems be decommissioned by December 30, 1995, and the gas appropriately disposed of.

- **Vault Protection**
  Storages such as the original Eureka Stockade plan are irreplaceable and whilst stored in a fire proof vault, the room is sprinkler protected and has no environmental controls.

The site is not well served by public transport and is located 22 km from the City centre. This has required a second research facility within the Melbourne Central Business District (CBD) at additional cost to the government in rental and staff.

The Committee concluded that Laverton is not suitable for inclusion in either of its preferred options detailed below, and recommends its closure. The site has significant building and site constraints which have been demonstrated in evidence and in architectural survey.
2.81 The site should be sold and funds raised from its sale used to offset the cost of the development of the new State archives facility. The site has been valued at $4.1 million\textsuperscript{16}.

Preferred Options

2.82 The Committee has examined all the options for the storage of the permanent record that, in its view, are both realistic and achievable. It has developed two options for consideration. Both recognise the importance of public access and the potential use of Victoria’s growing electronic network.

2.83 Under both options the Public Record Office would continue to manage storage and access for the permanent record. The Committee believes that this function should not be outsourced as the record represents the history of the State. Storage of archival records is a non-negotiable function of the Public Record Office.

Option One

2.84 The Committee’s first and preferred option for storage of the record is the establishment of a new central repository, which the Committee has termed the Melbourne Public Record Centre, together with a regional archives network.

• Melbourne Public Record Centre

2.85 The Committee recommends closure of the Laverton repository. A new site is required to provide for the storage of the State’s archival record and to allow the public access without undue impediment. This site must have sufficient room for expansion and development as the State’s archival storage continues to grow.

2.86 Submissions received during the Inquiry spoke strongly of the need for the proposed facility to be close to public transport.

2.87 The Committee further believes that the staff of the Office should not be situated in three sites: The Rialto, Little Bourke Street and Laverton. The facility needs to be located solely on one site.

2.88 To ensure that a new site is close to its major clients - government agencies - and to public transport, it needs to be located within approximately 5 km of the Melbourne CBD. The Committee adopted 5 km as a suitable radius as it encompasses all transport networks as well as several sites that may be considered by government. The Docklands and a former State government facility in Salmon Street, Port Melbourne, would be two possibilities.
2.89 The Committee recognises that there would be a significant cost involved in building a new archives facility close to Melbourne, but it believes that, with intelligent design, sufficient savings could be made from the sale of the Laverton site to offset any increased development costs.

2.90 The proposed central repository should use all the interactive computer media that are now available. The Internet, Vicnet and the information kiosks being planned through the Victoria 21 project should all be used to carry the Centre’s services to the community.

2.91 These media would reduce the need for physical access to original records while ensuring that people unable to visit Melbourne have the best opportunity to see commonly available and popular material.

- Regional Access Centres

2.92 A regional network of four to five public access facilities needs to be provided throughout Victoria. Each of these facilities should be able to provide access to the holdings of the proposed Public Record Centre’s databases in Melbourne, using on-line computer technology, and offer popular material in microfiche and CD Rom formats.

2.93 Regional access centres may be located at regional libraries or State offices in regional centres, in conjunction with the proposed Regional Records Management Consultants. Local government library services should be encouraged to set up similar sites, so that over time every Victorian community has access to the Public Record Office. An opportunity exists for such centres to be staffed by user groups, such as local genealogical and historical societies, operating under standards set by the Public Record Office.

2.94 While the Committee has recommended services that can be self managed by users, staff and volunteers at each site need to be trained by the Public Record Office. Training may be delivered by the proposed Regional Records Management Consultants or staff from the Melbourne Office. As this service would rely on the goodwill of regional and local library services in particular, all costs of staff training would have to be met by the Public Record Office.

- Regional Records Centres

2.95 The Committee recognises that if a rural or regional community wishes to retain nominated State and local government records which are of interest to its local community, it may wish to establish a regional records centre.

2.96 Each centre would need the approval of the Public Record Office and be able to demonstrate that the site meets all the conditions necessary to store the permanent record. The Committee notes that the availability of former municipal offices may provide an opportunity for regional centres to develop, similar to the Geelong Historical Records Centre.
2.97 The Ballarat repository, currently funded by the Public Record Office, was considered by the Committee. The repository has 1 km of shelving space and a public access facility.

2.98 The Committee believes that, as only one primary site would be needed by the Melbourne Public Record Centre for its storage requirements, the Ballarat repository should be closed, and its records transferred to Melbourne. Alternatively the site could be retained as a regional access centre or as a self-funded regional repository for the central highlands region.

2.99 The Geelong Historical Records Centre is fully funded by the local community, and the Committee believes it forms an ideal model for other groups to follow.

2.100 The Committee does not recommend that these centres be funded by the government as they are solely for local needs.

Option Two

2.101 The Committee's second option is a variation on its preferred option. The second option recognises that a site may not be available within a 5 km radius and therefore proposes a Melbourne Public Record Centre with a separate permanent records store.

- Melbourne Public Record Centre

2.102 The Melbourne Public Record Centre would provide the same services as proposed in Option One but without the permanent storage facility. All Public Record Office staff would be located at the Centre with public access facilities and reading room. For people seeking access to original records, a courier service would be provided between the Centre and the permanent records store.

- Permanent Records Store

2.103 The permanent records store would need to be located within a reasonable distance of the central site to allow a suitable response time for access requests. The Committee believes that 60 to 90 minutes would be a suitable period. No public access facilities would be required.

2.104 Regional Access Centres and Regional Records Centres would be as described in Option One.

Storage of Permanent Records

2.105 The Committee has recommended that a new facility be constructed to house the staff of the Public Record Office and to provide storage and access for the State's public record.
2.106 The major element of this Centre would be an archives repository. The Committee believes that, as a result of the inspections in Australia, the United States and Canada, a new shelving system needs to be considered.

2.107 Recently constructed archives facilities, using the traditional shelving height, were inspected by the previous Committee. The Committee found that the cost of construction did not relate to the amount of storage space provided. Sites inspected by the Committee were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Storage Facility</th>
<th>Storage Capacity (Kilometres)</th>
<th>Year of Construction</th>
<th>Cost $A million</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian Archives-Burwood</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Archives-Caberra</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>1980</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland State Archives</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingswood-17 New South Wales</td>
<td>160 (40)</td>
<td>1974-1994 (1994)</td>
<td>n/a (4.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Park-Washington USA</td>
<td>837</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gatineau Project Ottawa, Canada</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>1995-1996</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.108 The Committee believes that the new repository should not continue with traditional storage methods for archival records, using single height compactus shelving between 2.4 m and 2.7 m high on separately constructed concrete floors.

2.109 The Committee believes, based on interstate and private sector experience, that a high rack system is desirable.

2.110 The Committee inspected private storage facilities in Victoria, the United States and Canada. Each of the facilities stored temporary records, using 9 m to 11 m high rack shelving systems with steel mesh mezzanine floors at every 2.4 m to 2.6 m. This system offers greater storage capacity at a lower cost.

2.111 Records with high rates of access are placed at the lower levels of storage racks. All commercial sites had implemented management systems to record information, and access information on records due for disposal. Site management was a key priority, as storage space represented a further business opportunity.

2.112 Fire control was installed in each of the private sites inspected by the Committee. Several sites had established modules by constructing floor-to-ceiling walls which could be closed in an emergency. All sites provided fire sprinkler systems within the storage bays to minimise the potential for water damage.
2.113 The Committee found a very low use of mechanical retrieval as it used valuable floor space and introduced dust fumes and increased fire risk.

2.114 The Public Record Office did not oppose the use of high rack systems in its submission to the Office of Major Projects for a 'Joint Arts Repository' Functional Brief in 1994. Depending on the type of building construction, a financial comparison would need to be established between the traditional use of a compactus system and high racking.

2.115 The submission indicated that the building construction would be:

The project has been costed using the most basic suitable building construction, of concrete slabs, steel frames with sandwich panel walls and roof. Allowance has been made for fire separation within the building and all appropriate building services.

2.116 The shelving system recommended by the Committee for consideration would appear in the following format:

2.117 The Public Record Office is currently developing an electronic warehouse management system to establish the turnover of its records stock at a box or item level. This system needs to be implemented from the time of occupancy of any new centre to allow file series having low rates of access to be placed high in the shelving system and high use records to be placed nearer ground level.
2.118 The Committee believes that the new repository should be constructed using modules that could be successively added as storage needs increase over coming years. The current situation of insufficient space, and the need to relocate the archives, must be avoided. Any new site must allow for future expansion.

2.119 To ensure ease of construction, the Committee supports the use of cement tilt slab construction as proposed in the 'Joint Arts Repository' Functional Brief.

2.120 One of the major failures of the Laverton repository, poor air conditioning, must be resolved in any new facility. Each module should have its own independent series of services, including air conditioning.

2.121 The main environmental factors of moisture and temperature variation could be adequately controlled in Victoria's mild climate. In Canada, for example, a harsher climate requires individual air conditioning and heating systems.

2.122 The Committee believes that the atmospheric equipment required for both the traditional shelving and high stack options would be of the same order but final cost would depend on whether a modular or open floor plan system was used.

2.123 The Public Record Office has endorsed the following environmental standards. These standards can be applied to each option.20

| Temperature       | Summer 18°C DB, Winter 16°C DB  
|                   | Thermostat mid set point is 17°C  
|                   | Thermostat control band +/- 1.5°C  
|                   | Temperature rate of change 0.5°C/hour maximum |
| Humidity          | Summer & winter 50% RH  
|                   | Humidistat control band +/- 5% RH  
|                   | Humidity rate of change 5% RH per hour maximum |
| Air Quality       | Pre filter and commercial high efficiency particle filter shall be used to filter the supply air.  
|                   | Sulphur dioxide content reduced to 50 microgram per cubic meter.  
|                   | Allowance shall be made for future installation of gaseous pollutant filtering. |
| Plant Operation   | 24 hours |

2.124 It was demonstrated in New York to a sub-committee of the former Committee that storage was a 'real estate'21 function. To be competitive, suppliers have to minimise costs to attract customers whilst protecting records in their care. The Committee believes that the same attitude should be reflected by the government in its approach to this issue.
2.125 In the United States, construction costs for storage facilities similar to those proposed by the Committee were estimated to be half the cost of traditional shelving and compactus systems. The Committee considered evidence in camera which demonstrated similar cost savings in Australia to commercial suppliers, and no reason exists to suggest that similar savings could not be achieved by government. To confirm the potential for savings, the Public Record Office needs to initiate an open tender process based on the high rack shelving system and modular construction methods.

2.126 Any site that may be selected for the proposed Melbourne Public Record Centre therefore must provide for an ongoing expansion over many years. The Public Record Office proposal for a building to take the existing holdings of the Laverton repository plus a growth factor of 20 years is not satisfactory. The Committee believes that the site and its design should allow growth of at least forty years, or until paper has been superseded by the electronic environment.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee recommends that:

2.1 the Public Record Office manage the storage of, and public access to, the State's permanent record;

2.2 government agencies manage the storage of all active, inactive and temporary records to the standards set by the Public Record Office;

2.3 the Public Record Office immediately conduct a comprehensive survey of all agencies to determine the amount of records and rate of records growth as part of the planning process for a new archives facility;

2.4 all records of the State be held in conditions which meet the current storage and preservation standard of the Public Record Office. The Chief Executive or principal officer of each agency be held accountable for this requirement;

2.5 the Financial Reporting Act 1994 and any other relevant legislation be amended to require every agency to report annually on its level of compliance with the standards set down for the care of the public record;

2.6 a new site for the storage of the State's archival record be established within five km of the Melbourne CBD, to contain the archival record, all staff of the Public Record Office and public access facilities. That this site be called the Melbourne Public Record Centre and that it be supported by the development of a regional archives network;

2.7 the government, when developing the functional brief for the construction of the new storage facilities, investigate the use of high rack
shelving systems and module based construction methods that allow a site life of forty years;

2.8 the Laverton repository be closed as it does not meet the standards for the long term storage of permanent records;

2.9 the cost of establishing the new facility be met in part from the sale of the Laverton site;

2.10 the Public Record Office establish, on an annual basis, the anticipated storage requirements for government records for the next five year period, and

2.11 the Public Record Office immediately conclude the sentencing and disposal of all unsentenced records held at the Laverton repository.

2 Mr R. Gibbs, Director, Public Record Office,
3 'Joint Arts Repository', Functional Brief, Sweetnam Godfrey and Ord Pty Ltd, undated.
4 Dr M Vertigan, Secretary, Department of Treasury and Finance, Submission 6, November 1995, p.1.
5 Ibid, p.2.
6 Sub-committee tour of inspection, The United States and Canada, January 1996
7 Mr F King, Deputy Secretary, Department of Treasury and Finance, Transcript of Evidence, 27 November 1995, p.72.
8 Mr R Gibbs, Submission, 17 November 1995, p.10.
10 Dr M Vertigan, Submission, 6 November 1995, p.1.
11 Mr R. Gibbs, Director, Public Record Office, Submission, p.2.
12 Ibid, p.11.
15 Ibid
16 Mr R Gibbs, Request for Information Number Three, 2 January 1996, p.2.
17 This figure is for stage 3 which was for 40 km of shelving. Opened in 1994.
18 'Joint Arts Repository' Functional Brief, p.6.6.
19 Ibid, p.4.1.
20 Ibid, p.5.5.
21 Mr N J. Brodski, CitisStorage, New York, January 1996.
3. **Electronic Records**

3.1 The Committee has been asked in its terms of reference to examine how the government and the Public Record Office can re-engineer the records management process to meet its storage, preservation and access responsibilities for the State’s electronic records.

3.2 The Committee believes that this reference seeks to establish how commonly accepted records management practices can be applied to an environment other than paper.

3.3 Evidence has suggested that ‘technology’ has held back and confused the development of simple strategies to save important computer records. No single or final answer can be developed so early in the application of new technology.

3.4 Any suggestion that a single solution needs to be implemented should be vigorously opposed as the plethora of strategies and discussion papers that have been released on electronic records management to date have not resulted in any common standard that can be applied across the wide range of needs found in government agencies in Victoria.

3.5 A series of sensible practices should be developed immediately to retain the majority of the public record, practices that can move to a more complete system over time. The Public Record Office needs to develop a strategy that may be used in advancing this issue.

**Current Position**

3.6 The use of electronic record keeping systems in the public sector has occurred in an uncoordinated manner. This has allowed many vendors of hardware and software to supply systems that do not interact with each other or are incapable, due to technological obsolescence, of transferring records from one system to another. Many of the electronic records which have been products of this environment may be regarded as potentially lost to the State.

3.7 The growing maturity of the personal computer (PC) has seen its growth as a viable business tool within government. In many cases the PC has, through relatively simple networks and proprietary software, taken over the role of the mainframe computing system. PC users may, through the Internet and E-mail systems, transact business electronically on issues that are vital to the history of the State.

3.8 No State standards have been established for the users of these systems and how their vital records should be retained. This was seen by agencies as both of vital importance to, and a significant failing of, the Public Record Office.
3.9 The Committee believes that the issue of electronic records has been complicated by archivists and others who saw ongoing problems without developing realistic methods of solving them.

3.10 A shift from rhetoric to practical solutions must occur in this period of rapid organisational and technological change as records managers can no longer wait for a one-off electronic records management solution.

3.11 Considerable information has been published on this issue and many potential strategies for the future have been outlined. The Committee does not intend to document the wealth of material available, but it is aware of the technological developments in this area and has taken them into account in developing its recommendations.

3.12 The Committee has listed a sample of recent publications on the management of the electronic record at Appendix Two.

3.13 The Public Record Office is preparing an electronic records management strategy which has not yet been released. The Committee is therefore unable to comment on its direction.

3.14 The archivist and the records manager need to play more prominent roles in organisational change as records are being created in forms that are no longer paper-based.

3.15 This strategy was put forward by Mr David Roberts, Manager, Records Management Office, Archives Authority of New South Wales, who said in evidence:

... the role of record keeping professionals to a great extent must be to define record keeping regimes for organisations and their employees, acting as consultants and establishing and monitoring standards, rather than deciding about specific records in specific record keeping systems or creating extensive documentation about them.¹

3.16 The Federal government's 'Office of Government Information Technology' is unique in that it has developed a view that electronic record keeping may not be required in every government agency. It observed that an organisation might use one of three approaches to the issue:²

- fully electronic document management;
- parallel electronic and paper systems; or
- continued reliance on paper.

3.17 Many agencies will only need to select one option as the size or dispersed nature of their business will make the appropriate choice clear. The Committee does not recommend that any agency be required to retain its records in an electronic form unless there are clear advantages.

¹ Inquiry into the Public Record Office, Victoria
3.18 One problem is the lack of a simple strategy that can be applied to the treatment of electronic records. The Committee makes a number of recommendations to move this issue forward without attempting to suggest a single, once only, one-answer solution.

Proposed Changes

- **Common Handling Procedures**

3.19 The first and simplest policy direction that can be taken is to regard the electronic record on the same basis as the paper record. Each government agency should have a records management and archival plan that can be applied on the same basis to any medium. It is the information that is of value, not how it was recorded.

3.20 This simple step forward has been mentioned by most discussion papers, before being buried under the weight of more abstract concerns.

3.21 Common management principles should ensure that the records required to run the organisation are described and maintained using the same recording tools and disposal strategies. If a paper record is found on file ADM PRO-1 then a simple strategy would be to file the electronic reply on a computer based file called ADM PRO-1.

3.22 Simple networks and log-on procedures would only allow access to that part of the electronic filing system that relates to the officer's duties. When ADM PRO-1 is due for transfer to archives or for destruction under a records management plan, the files could be easily matched to ensure that the process takes place.

3.23 Most low cost records management systems offer this flexibility.

- **Standards for the Electronic Environment**

3.24 The Committee has called for the development of records management standards in the electronic environment to link the electronic and paper media, including the new communication systems such as E-mail and Internet transactions. All records must be accessible when required.

3.25 These standards must be flexible, hardware and software independent, and concentrate on developing a range of acceptable outcomes. The standards process should not be developed ad hoc by the computer industry, according to their perception of what is required, as this is rightly the role of government.
3.26 The Public Record Office should establish the minimum criteria for sound records management practices that must be met by the information technology industry when it sells equipment and software to the government. An opportunity exists for Victoria to set electronic record management standards that recognise directions being taken in all other States so that, in time, an Australian standard may be developed.

- Accredited Records Management Systems

3.27 Government agencies at this time may buy or develop individual electronic records management systems. No assurance is given that any of these systems will meet the needs of government or standards set by the Public Record Office.

3.28 A quality assurance program needs to be initiated between the Public Record Office and the government to develop a list of accredited records management software programs that meet the standards that have been established by the Public Record Office. Government should then ensure that government agencies only select from the accredited list of suppliers.

3.29 The Committee believes that the accreditation program should be initiated following the completion of the electronic standards and the development of the model records management systems described by the Committee in Chapter Four. This process should allow any supplier to put forward their product for accreditation at any time after commencement of the program.

3.30 The Committee is aware of a push for the selection of one records management package as the preferred option for all agencies in Victoria. The Committee strongly opposes the selection process being put forward without the development of key operating standards, a tender brief approved by all users and an open tender and evaluation process.

3.31 In the view of the Committee, a 'whole of state' approach to the selection of a records management system should not be pursued in Victoria, due to a lack of standards establishing acceptable outcomes in almost every aspect of the records management function.
• Managing the Record from Creation

3.32 The Committee has emphasised throughout this report the need to manage records from the point of creation. Documents must be assessed when they are created to decide if they are to be a permanent record, requiring care in their long term management, or a temporary record, which will be disposed of when they are no longer of value to the business process.

3.33 In the paper environment, this function is easily carried out by opening common files. Different subjects are held on separate files and the documents are manually placed on the appropriate file. The file becomes an entity with its own overall classification which can be treated as either a permanent or temporary record.

3.34 In the electronic environment, control of the record can be easily lost. Unless a formal records management system is in place, the agency may allow its officers to keep electronic records anywhere from an individual's computer hard disk, a file server linked to a number of individual computers or taken off the system and placed on a diskette. Back up procedures may not occur or may be incomplete. Recovery of the record becomes a gamble, particularly if the creating officer leaves the government agency.

3.35 Professor David Bearman and Professor Richard Cox of the University of Pittsburgh met with a sub-committee of the PBRC in January 1996 to discuss their concepts of the management of the electronic record. The meeting considered a wide number of alternatives, several of which were far beyond the present capacity of the Public Record Office and agencies to consider at this time.

3.36 One of their suggestions provided a practical and achievable solution to ensure the capture of the electronic record.

3.37 The proposal was that the word processing package would open with a series of icons which would represent the types of records normally created by an officer. Examples include reports, routine or specific letters or databases. Each of the icons would be assigned with a broad retention category based on the log-on code for the user.

3.38 A person who manages the network would be required to set up each user when they commence duties on the network, taking into account the type and archival status of records he or she would be creating. All the user would be required to do is place each document in the relevant electronic file.

3.39 The Committee is of the view that a public officer should not be required to be a records clerk in addition to their normal duties, and so supported the professors' concept as a practical method of capturing the electronic record.
3.40 The Committee believes that this approach should be examined by agencies which wish to simplify the electronic record management function. No specific recommendation has been made on this strategy the concept needs to be further developed and tested.

- **Security of the Record**

3.41 The security of the electronic record is of world-wide concern. Electronic documents can be constantly accessed and changed many times. Therefore a record of today may not truly reflect a record created some years ago.

3.42 The Committee believes that this argument is difficult to sustain as agencies routinely run daily or weekly backup and archive programs. The standards that need to be developed by the Public Record Office for the electronic record need to reaffirm this basic security practice.

3.43 No backup processes exist for the paper environment. If a document is never filed, it is on the wrong file and cannot be located, or has been removed, the information is lost.

3.44 No matter what the type of record, if a person wishes to destroy, alter or replace data, it can be done. The issue of records security and integrity relates to good house keeping practices, a problem that is not unique to the electronic record. The Public Record Office needs to develop basic protocols in this area.

3.45 Illegal or improper access to and use of records is an issue which only management of an organisation can address. If its practices are weak or deficient, then management has the responsibility to fix them.

- **System Obsolescence**

3.46 The greatest risk to the long-term validity of an original record is the rapid obsolescence of software packages. It is not uncommon for software to be obsolete when sold and for a new version to be released every two to five years.

3.47 Professors Bearman and Cox have developed two views on this issue.

3.48 The first is that all electronic records should be retained in a readable form by migrating them every time a government agency upgrades either its hardware or software. This strategy places the responsibility for managing the electronic record with every government agency.

3.49 The second view is that each electronic record should be held as an ‘encapsulated metadata file’. Metadata is a concept developed by Professors Bearman and Cox that requires information on how each electronic record has been attached to that record. The electronic record would hold ‘metadata’ which may be the following type of information:
• the text of the document;
• information on the software package and its version, the operating system and its version;
• hardware on which the record was created;
• details as to the font/s used within the document;
• details of any imbedded package in the document such as spreadsheet and all of its software details; and
• when the electronic record was created.

3.50 This strategy would not require agencies to constantly update their electronic records. The encapsulated metadata file would provide the information that would be necessary for anyone seeking to recreate a record as it first appeared.

3.51 Not all of the archival profession accept this view, and many feel that this strategy would not ensure that historical records were retained but only documents that could be read by the current electronic systems of an office. Little is known about the longevity of the computer medium and it cannot be assured that in 100 year’s time that the medium will be able to be read or that the computers of that time will allow conversion to take place.

3.52 The Committee believes that there are four options that agencies and the Public Record Office may pursue:

• print all electronic records onto paper and place the data on appropriate paper files, or
• update electronic records through each increment of software packages and any hardware migration programs so that the structure and appearance of the record is maintained, or
• store files as encapsulated metadata files. Using this information, the user may decide to read the record in ASCII text or recreate the record in its original form, or
• convert each record to a flat file or ASCII text, a format where the record will lose all of its attributes. This view assumes that it is the data that is important, not how it is presented.

3.53 Of the four options, the Committee believes that the second option is the most realistic. Each government agency would be required to convert semi-active and permanent records through the successive increments of their software packages. The Committee received evidence that this process is not expensive, and most PC based systems currently have this feature.
• Custody and Access

3.54 The question before the Committee was whether the government agency or the Public Record Office should hold each electronic document when it becomes an archival record and eligible for transfer to the Office.

3.55 The Committee believes that the Public Record Office cannot hold the electronic record. It is not the function of the Public Record Office to invest considerable resources and skills into converting electronic records into readable format from the myriad of computer packages and versions if and when they are required, nor should it be a museum for old and obsolete computer systems.

3.56 All electronic records should remain in a readable, secure form held in perpetuity by the creating office or its successor. This process is known as ‘distributed custody’, and is being advanced in other States, particularly New South Wales, and the Australian Archives.

3.57 The Public Record Office needs to establish protocols for electronic access to archived records held by agencies. The Committee does not support the public having direct electronic access to archived computer records held by a government agency.

3.58 The Committee envisages a system of public access that requires the cooperation of the Public Record Office and the agency. As part of an agreed records management plan, each agency should be required to advise the Public Record Office of records held in the electronic form. An index of the agency’s electronic records would be prepared, using an agreed format to transfer the data to the Public Record Office.

3.59 From this database, people seeking access may determine if a document exists and its details, such as its record number. The document could then be ordered from the agency by the Public Record Office in printed or electronic form, and made available to the person seeking the record. The Committee further believes that a suitable charge should be made for this service, and discusses this issue further in Chapter Five of this Report.

3.60 The Public Record Office described in its evidence to the Committee a project it wishes to pursue, known as the ‘Victorian Electronic Records Centre’ Project.4 The proposal envisages a centre at Ballarat for the storage, preservation and retrieval of all archived electronic records and imaged documents of the Victorian government.

3.61 The Committee does not support this proposal, particularly when the Public Record Office needs to focus its resources on developing records management standards for all parts of the records process, a function from which there should be no diversion at this time.
• **Leading Edge Planning**

3.62 Many of the issues identified by the Committee have arisen as a result of the Public Record Office not being a proactive body. The Office has been responding to crisis rather than foreseeing needs and possibilities. The Committee believes that this report should advance the thinking and positioning of the Public Record Office and involve it in the development of leading edge planning programs which have a direct impact on effective records management and maintenance of the State's archival record.

3.63 The government has committed itself to a large multimedia communication project, *Victoria 21*. Part of this project involves improving the electronic flow of information within the public sector through the Victorian Government Electronic Messaging Service (VGEMS), and the release of information and cultural material to the community through information kiosks, Vicnet, and the Internet. The Public Record Office is not part of the design and implementation team for this project - a project that reflects a fundamental change in the way the government does business.

3.64 *Victoria 21* projects will be influencing every government agency, and the implications for the information highway across the government need to be anticipated by the Public Record Office at the design stage, so that any problems in retaining the State's historical record can be met.

3.65 The Committee believes that the Public Record Office must be an integral part of the *Victoria 21* project and the implementation of any state-wide information technology strategy.

• **National Standards**

3.66 The responsible Minister should meet with his/her State and national colleagues to foster the development of a national electronic records management strategy. This action is required so that government *per se* can provide an incentive to software producers to develop records management systems that meet State and national standards without the payment of a premium.

3.67 Any software packages need to be supported by a long term development path as the needs of users, government and people seeking public access to the public record constantly change. A national standard will provide the incentive to computer software developers to make this long term commitment and to constantly develop the best packages for government agency.
RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends that:

3.1 electronic records be considered on the same basis as the paper record;

3.2 the Public Record Office urgently conclude development of an electronic records management standard that is hardware and software independent, capable of being implemented across the whole of government;

3.3 agencies be required to continually convert all electronic archival records in their care to the current software and operating systems of the agency so that they can be accessed by the Public Record Office;

3.4 agencies seeking to implement an electronic records management system be required to select software that has been accredited by the government to meet standards established by the Public Record Office;

3.5 the responsible Minister meet with ministerial counterparts in other States and Territories to foster the development of a national electronic records management strategy, standard and protocols; and

3.6 the Public Record Office be part of the development, design and implementation team of any statewide information technology policy.

1 'Documenting the Future', Mr D Roberts, Archives Authority of New South Wales, p.29.
2 'Improving Electronic Documents Management', Commonwealth Office of Government Information Technology, p. IX.
4 Mr R Gibbs, Director, Public Record Office, Submission, 17 November 1995, p.5.
4. **Records Management**

4.1 The Committee's third term of the reference requires it to identify strategies that may be used to manage the increasing quantity of records being generated by government in Victoria.

4.2 The Committee does not endorse any process by the public sector that would arbitrarily determine which records, the amount of records or the medium in which records are kept, in an effort to reduce the volume of records being created.

4.3 The strategy identified by the Committee to address this issue is fundamental. It is simply that every government agency must practise sound records management techniques.

4.4 Determining what records are required for the business process remains the preserve of each agency. Records must be kept to conduct, and provide evidence of, the business of government. At the appropriate time, records which are accountable or historical must be directed to the Public Record Office, while those no longer required are destroyed.

4.5 Good records management practices will save the government money. In 1994, the Public Record Office estimated that $6.1 million\(^1\) in annual rent charges could be saved. During that year, government departments transferred 4.4 km of records to the Office and destroyed a further 16.72 km under an approved destruction program. This strategy would need to be continued every year to maintain the cost savings that can be achieved.

4.6 The Committee calls throughout this report for comprehensive records management standards to be developed to manage all records from the point of creation, well before the Public Record Office need be concerned with the receipt of them.

4.7 To carry out this task, each agency must have a sound records management program that reflects its business focus.

4.8 Guidance is required by most government agencies in determining what constitutes sound records management. As only 1% to 10% of all records become archival documents, each agency must have the skills and information to make that judgement.
Survey of Government Agencies

4.9 A survey of records management practices was conducted by the Committee in November and December 1995 through the then eleven major departments of the government. The departments were requested to distribute the survey to all agencies that reported, or were responsible, to them, and to coordinate their responses to the Committee.

4.10 The survey sought to establish the types of records management systems in government agencies, and the status and involvement of records management personnel in the development of the business practices of each office. The survey further sought information on the management of paper and electronic records as well as an assessment of the size of records holdings and the maintenance of holdings. A copy of the survey is at Appendix Five.

4.11 Ninety agencies responded. No survey was conducted of outer sector budget government agencies, such as individual state schools and hospitals. Small agencies, such as rural water boards and drainage and sewerage trusts, ambulance services and local government, also were not surveyed. A list of the respondents appears as Appendix Six.

4.12 From the ninety responses to the survey, the Committee found:

- fifty-five offices had an established records management system.
- five different computer operating systems were used.
- in sixty-seven cases, agencies did not have an agreed records management disposal schedule with the Public Record Office.
- 25.7 km of current files, 29.3 km of inactive files, and 24.5 km of permanent or archival files are stored within government agencies. Seven agencies were unable to determine how many records they held. Many others were only able to determine the total amount of records they held and were not able to differentiate between current and inactive or historical records.
- forty agencies were unable to determine the true cost of records management. From the forty-six agencies that were able to estimate the cost, it represented $7,028,004 per year to the government.

4.13 The survey confirmed that records management continues to have a low status, particularly when compared to computing and information technology. There seems to be little understanding that records management and information management are the same function, and that the medium is the only point of difference.
4.14 Many agencies have instituted a positive approach to records and information management. The question before the Committee is what action should be taken by the government or the Public Record Office to make this a universally held attitude.

4.15 The Committee believes that every agency needs to work through 'best practice' principles within the following structure to achieve the optimal position for government:

- all public records should be created and managed to standards set by the Public Record Office
- model records management systems need to be prepared and released by the Public Record Office
- a disposal plan should be entered into between every agency and the Public Record Office
- state education programs need to be instituted for all record and information managers
- sound records management is a shared responsibility between each government agency and the Public Record Office
- the Public Record Office needs to institute a field advisory service
- regular reviews of records management in each department and its agency must be initiated.

4.16 This broad range of action is necessary to answer public sector criticisms received by the Committee. Public officers complain that they are required to establish and maintain records management systems, but the government and the Public Record Office do not provide any real support and advice. Records managers therefore must seek advice from the commercial suppliers of records and information systems, often at significant cost. The fact that the Public Record Office has not developed model records management systems with integrated standards has been and continues to be a major cost to government.

4.17 Many agencies have never reached agreement with the Public Record Office on what records should be kept. No simple range of documents has ever been prepared to advise records managers, particularly those in smaller and remote agencies, on how they should institute a sound records management system. Disposal schedules do not in themselves provide guidance to records managers.
4.18 Agencies need to receive a more developed range of information that gives guidance, specifies standards to be met and suggests a model system showing how an agency should identify records to be kept. This information must also recommend registration, document handling, public access, storage and, ultimately, disposal techniques.

**Required Action**

- **Records Management Standards**

4.19 All records should be created and managed to standards set by the Public Record Office.

4.20 The Public Record Office can only be effective in the long term if effective records management occurs across the public sector.

4.21 To initiate better practices in the public sector, the Committee calls repeatedly throughout this report for the development of a comprehensive series of standards that cover all aspects of the records management process.

4.22 Each of the eight government departments must ensure that a standard covering their functional responsibilities is prepared with the Public Record Office, and that it is used by the agencies that report to it. A number of standards based on each department’s business function may be required to recognise the wide diversity and size of agencies within each portfolio.

4.23 This diversity would require the Public Record Office to undergo a short period of intense activity to prepare records management standards and general and specific disposal schedules, and to reach agreement on use of the standards with every agency.

4.24 The Committee believes that this is the most effective method of ensuring that the State retains, over time, records that account for the actions of government and ensures that historical documents are preserved in perpetuity.

- **Model Records Management Systems**

4.25 The Committee believes that the Public Record Office needs to provide records managers with model records management systems that integrate all parts of the standards process.

4.26 A comprehensive survey by the Public Record Office is required to determine the different needs of the public sector before any models can be developed. This survey would need to determine the different business functions of government and the needs of each agency.
4.27 A wide range of models may be required in order to recognise the paper, paper and electronic, and purely electronic records environments found in agencies. The diversity of business and the size of government agencies are of key importance in this development process.

4.28 The models are required to enable records and information personnel to either implement a model system, develop their own system based on the model or evaluate any commercial software package that may be proposed for an agency.

4.29 Small government agencies do not have the resources to go through an extended development process, and the model system may be an effective mechanism for implementing sound records management.

4.30 The Committee has noted in its review of the electronic record the concept being considered by several States, including Victoria, of adopting a ‘whole of state’ approach through the selection of an electronic records management package.

4.31 The Committee does not see the introduction of one commercial package as an appropriate model. An electronic package may form part of an overall records management system that is required to implement the standards set by the Public Record Office, but it should not become, in itself, the quasi standard. More than one commercial package may meet the standards set by government.

- **Agreed Records Disposal Practices**

4.32 Disposal schedules must be established in every agency.

4.33 No system is in place at this time to ensure that agencies are aware of disposal schedules or dispose of their records in accord with general or specific schedules prepared by the Public Record Office.

4.34 The Committee recommends that the Public Record Office ensure that every agency implements records management and disposal plans that meet established standards. This process would need to be established through negotiation, using agreed departmental standards, which result in a written performance agreement between the Office and each agency.

4.35 This agreement must clearly establish the basis on which a government agency may dispose of unwanted records. Whilst the Committee does not support a records disposal accreditation program suggested by several departments during the Inquiry, the written agreement process should allow for it to be considered in the future. This issue has been discussed further in Chapter One.
State Education Programs

4.36 State education programs should be instituted for all records and information managers. The program should be structured to the broad needs of every agency.

4.37 It could be argued that records management has not received the status it deserves. Provided a person could access a paper file when required, records management has been seen as a function to be staffed at little cost by people of little experience. It is seen as being of low priority, with little or no education standards in records and information management being required by agencies.

4.38 This is no longer satisfactory as the emerging use of technology, the increasing use of litigation against corporations, freedom of information legislation and the sheer volume of material being handled and stored by many agencies has forced managers to reassess the role of records management. The concept of the records manager has developed, and capable, tertiary educated staff have been appointed by some government agencies to manage records. Eighteen agencies, responding to the Committee's survey, indicated that they required staff with some form of qualification or experience in records management.

4.39 Tertiary institutions offer academic courses in archival and records management which are often associated with library studies.

4.40 However, most academic courses do not relate to the daily records management practices of government, nor is an academic background necessary for the small filing and records management systems that are used by most government agencies.

4.41 The Committee believes that all people in control of the records or information of an organisation must have a minimum level of records management training. Training needs to focus on the skills required to manage public records effectively and to apply standards developed by the Public Record Office. Minimum education standards should not be seen as an imposition on employees.

4.42 A structured education and training system needs to be developed. The type of system envisaged by the Committee would be delivered by an external provider during work hours, paid for by the agency. Course material should be directed towards a better understanding of records management and the building of the skills base. The aim of the government and the Public Record Office should be to develop over time 'best practice' standards in the management of the State's records.

4.43 Although tertiary courses are currently available, this degree of competence is not necessary for most agencies. The Office of Training and Further Education needs to work with universities, TAFE colleges and the Public Record Office to prepare course material to educate potential and existing records

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managers and their staff to a level of competence that is relevant to the agency.

4.44 The Committee has developed an education matrix of positions it has termed State Records Manager. When an officer has completed qualification for, or is appointed to, an agency that requires a level of competence, he or she may qualify as State Records Manager Level One, Two, Three or Four.

**State Records Manager**

**Education Matrix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Attributes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>Records and Information Manager</td>
<td>Persons in large agencies responsible for the implementation of records management and information technology systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>Records Manager</td>
<td>Persons in medium sized agencies responsible for the management of large or complex records management systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Records Clerk</td>
<td>Persons in a small or medium sized agency using a mix of paper and electronic filing and retrieval systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>Records Clerk</td>
<td>Persons in small agencies using a paper based filing system.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.45 The course material required to be delivered at each skill level needs to be established by a working party consisting of representatives from the eight departments, a cross-section of all agencies, from the smallest to the largest, and the Public Record Office. Representatives from the Office of Training and Further Education should continue to be involved in order to develop mechanisms for the delivery of the course content.

4.46 Consideration needs to be given to having every officer reach a certain skill level before the officer can be a records manager or work in a records office. Academic qualification from tertiary institutions should be recognised in the education matrix but the Committee believes that the State's own standards in training need to be met by everyone working as a record management professional in the public sector.
4.47 The Committee is not recommending that training be mandatory. This action should be taken only if the executives, records managers and staff of government agencies do not act to improve the standard of records management in the public sector.

- Mutual Responsibilities

4.48 Implementing sound records management should be shared among the government departments and the Public Record Office. The Public Record Office must be assisted by each department if it is to ensure that all agencies are aware of their responsibilities.

4.49 Each department should be required to appoint a senior officer, skilled in archives and information management, to implement, within every agency in the department, an effective records management system. This officer should also act as the department’s point of communication with the Public Record Office on policy issues, to enable decisions to be made and implemented more uniformly in every government agency.

4.50 The Department of Education and the previous Department of Human Services are seen as models for the liaison process.

- Field Advisory Services

4.51 The Public Record Office needs to institute a field advisory service through a redistribution of central office resources known as Regional Records Management Consultants. This action has been called for in Chapter One of this report.

4.52 The Public Record Office must take its services to government agencies throughout the State if it is to meet its major role of ensuring that the State’s archival record is correctly maintained.

4.53 Regional Records Management Consultants should be located where they are required, including rural Victoria. Their role would be to help government agencies meet standards developed by the Public Record Office and to apply a records management system that meets agencies’ business needs.

- Performance Review

4.54 Regular review of records management in each government agency needs to be instituted.

4.55 The Committee calls for the introduction of an audit process to ensure that appropriate procedures are carried out, and that the State’s archival record is being properly maintained in government agencies before it is transferred to the Public Record Office. The performance review function is outlined in Chapter One of this Report.
4.56 The Committee considers that these proposals will enable all agencies to manage more effectively the daily increasing level of public records. Education of records management staff is essential, as they will be required to implement standards to be developed by the Public Record Office. The government must work to raise the profile and competence of the profession.

4.57 The Committee believes that the following recommendations will provide for the more efficient management of records being created in Victoria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends that:

4.1 the State manage its public record through the development of ‘best practice’ procedures;

4.2 the Public Record Office develop standards for the care of each record from creation;

4.3 model records management systems, integrating the standards process, be prepared and released by the Public Record Office;

4.4 a disposal schedule be agreed between each agency and the Public Record Office as a matter of urgency;

4.5 the government develop, with the Office of Training and Further Education and the Public Record Office, an education program for all public sector records and information managers. That the program be structured to the broad needs of every government agency, from the largest to the smallest;

4.6 responsibility for implementing sound records management practices be shared between agencies and the Public Record Office, and

4.7 each agency be required to appoint a senior officer, skilled in archives and information management, to implement an effective records management system.

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1 Mr M. Tinsley
5. Public Access

5.1 Public access to Victoria’s historical record must continue. Access needs to be facilitated through the continuation of reading room facilities at the proposed Melbourne Public Record Centre, through a regional archival network and the use of the information highway which is being developed by the government through the Victoria 21 project.

5.2 Access to the State’s historical record must be part of the archival management process which the Committee believes is the fourth priority of the Public Record Office. It will be the Office’s responsibility to meet the needs of users with available resources whilst managing its other responsibilities.

5.3 Private submissions to the Inquiry called for the retention and expansion of this service. Ease of access was sought by most individuals, genealogical and historical groups who made submissions to the Inquiry.

5.4 The fourth term of the Committee’s reference requires comment on how the government and the Public Record Office can better meet the increasing demand for access to the State’s archival records.

5.5 The Committee believes that this can be achieved through public access programs that allow people seeking information to self-manage their requests. Self-management requires the government and the Public Record Office to provide the information tools through different media. In addition, the business hours of the State’s archives facilities need to be driven by user demand.

5.6 This will be essential if the Public Record Office is to redirect its resources to achieving the Public Record Office’s first and second priorities. The first two priorities that require immediate attention are:

- Standards Development
- Monitoring Records Management Performance

5.7 When the Public Record Office has completed these two tasks, public access should be as popular in the next decade as it is at this time, because the appropriate records will have been retained to document the history of the State.

A Popular Resource

5.8 The following table has been repeated from Chapter One of this report to demonstrate the number of people accessing the resources of the State’s public record. Victoria led Australia with the highest number of visits in 1993/94, and in 1994/95 this trend continued with visits growing by a further 4.7%.1
Number of Research Visits

1993/94 Financial Year
Source: Australian Council of Archives

5.9 The seven most popular records series inspected by the public over the last year were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VPRS 28</th>
<th>Probate and Administration Files</th>
<th>Original</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>VPRS 7591</td>
<td>Wills</td>
<td>Original</td>
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<tr>
<td>VPRS 525</td>
<td>Register of Wills</td>
<td>Microfilm</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>VPRS 1920</td>
<td>Index to Inquest Deposition Files</td>
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<tr>
<td>VPRS 3990</td>
<td>Index to Assisted Immigrants</td>
<td>Microfiche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VPRS 7310</td>
<td>Register of Assisted Immigrants from UK</td>
<td>Microfiche</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Who are the Public Users?

5.10 A boom in genealogy and local history has encouraged the high level of interest in the holdings of the Public Record Office. The Office constantly seeks information from users of the public search room on the type of research that they wish to undertake. Mr Ross Gibbs advised the Committee:

*We know from observation, which is confirmed by the statistical data, that the majority of our visitors to all three search rooms are women, over 55, who are undertaking family history research.*
5.11 Many users have time to offer the Public Record Office, and this has led to
the development of a valuable pool of volunteers who are actively developing
tools to access their areas of interest. The pursuit of self-help should be
couraged, provided that it does not dominate the limited resources available to
assist the wide range of other users.

5.12 Currently there are 60 volunteers indexing material from the 19th century,
predominantly for genealogical purposes. Managing the resources provided by
the volunteers is a direct cost to the Public Record Office. Based on the duties of
the staff of the Office, the Committee found that this absorbed the equivalent of
90% of one officer's time at the cost of $40,650 per year. Despite this commitment
by the Public Record Office, only $3,000\(^4\) per year is expected to be recovered from
the sale of the material that has been developed.

5.13 The use of volunteer help has allowed the development of indexes for
records series to assist the public. Many records series, especially those created last
century, do not have a useable index. The use of volunteers has allowed many of
those records to be indexed for the first time.

5.14 Media in the City, Laverton and Ballarat search rooms include microfiche
and microfilm readers and printers. CD Rom, printed indexes to holdings and
other finding aids. Staff are available to answer customer questions on accessing
the holdings and to manage the use of the original records retrieved for access.

5.15 Charges are made for any copy from a microfiche reader, photocopier and
any publication. All photocopies of an original record must be made by a staff
member of the Public Record Office. Each copy costs fifty cents. Members of the
public may take a print on a microfiche printer for seventy cents. Both copies are
made on archival quality photocopy paper.

5.16 The average number of photocopies taken for each request at Laverton is
thirty-one pages. The City search room averages sixteen pages. All photocopy
services are paid for in advance and, on average, take three to five days to
complete. The photocopying service is fully costed and the fee per copy meets the
cost of providing the service. The question of charges is addressed later in this
Chapter.

5.17 Publications or microfiche that are available for purchase include:

- Summary Guide to the Public Records of Victoria $38.00
- Digest of Public Records of Victoria - September 1990 $15.00
- Historical Records of Victoria (six volumes) per volume: $ 39.95
- Register of Inward Shipping and Index 1846-1852 $40.00
• Un-Assisted Passenger Lists 1852-1879
  • Index 1852-1859 $40.00
  • Passenger Lists 1852-1859 $100.00
  • Passenger Lists 1860-1869 $90.00
  • Passenger Lists 1870-1879 $80.00

5.18 Recent publications have included My Heart is Breaking on Victoria’s aboriginal people, and Eureka-From the Official Records, the story of the Ballarat uprising in 1854. The production of these publications and extensive finding aids has meant that the public can find documents more easily than ever before. An opportunity now exists to take these documents from paper and microfiche into the electronic environment, resolving the complaint made in most public submissions from rural Victorians that records held at Laverton are difficult to reach.

5.19 Original records are sought by most people visiting Laverton and the Ballarat office. People using the City search room depend on microfiche copies or order original records to inspect at a later date.5

5.20 Several records series are fragile and have been closed by the Keeper of Public Records. In this situation, the Committee’s proposal for public access must use different access media if these records are to be kept available for the community.

5.21 The Committee believes that it has evidence to demonstrate that it is the information contained in the record, not access to original records or media, that is of prime importance.

Expanding Access Opportunities

5.22 Four methods of facilitating public access to all Victorians have been developed by the Committee:
  • Public Reading Rooms
  • Regional Archives Network
  • The Information Highway
  • Sale of Popular Material

• Public Reading Rooms

5.23 The first option is the continuation of the traditional public reading room. This facility should be located at the Public Record Office primary site, the proposed Melbourne Public Record Centre.
5.24 Public access facilities must only be provided when an adequate number of people want them. This may require the Public Record Office moving away from business hours based on the traditional public service model of 9 am to 5 pm. If someone works some distance from the Public Record Office and cannot meet these hours, they miss out. The Laverton facility opens one Saturday per month, and this frequency could be expanded if the usage rate justified an increase in the weekend service.

5.25 The Committee believes that an on-going survey of users must determine the business hours of the Melbourne Public Record Centre. Later opening hours and later closing hours, in the early evening, would appear as one option.

• Regional Archives Network

5.26 The second access strategy is the development of a network of regional archives. A regional archives centre could be established by a local community to contain records of local significance, close to the point of their creation and to the need for access. The Committee fully supports this concept.

5.27 The Public Record Office need only ensure that it has a listing of the records held at each regional archives and that each facility meets storage standards set for the permanent record.

5.28 These sites would be ideal to provide the finding aids to records held by the Public Record Office. Finding aids determine the location of a record and on which medium it is held. If it is necessary to inspect an original record, an on-line system could be established with the Public Record Office to enable people to pre-book records they wish to see for a day they will be in Melbourne.

5.29 A regional archives network would represent an ideal location to provide access to the information highway, a strategy that takes full advantage of remote site computing.

• The Information Highway

5.30 The third access strategy would require a more innovative approach. The information highway, the Internet and modem links all provide opportunities for remote computing. These technologies could be used to provide on-line access to popular material in the Public Record Office in every Victorian community without the need to visit a central Melbourne site.

5.31 Access could be provided through regional library services, schools and tertiary institutions to reach the holdings, finding aids and indexes to the records held by the Public Record Office. Documents that become popular as communities' interests change over time can be scanned onto a WORM (Write Once, Read Many) database system to allow people from Mildura to Mallacoota to view material without leaving their local environment.
5.32 The advantages of an integrated computer environment can only encourage greater community awareness of the State’s rich heritage, raise awareness of the role of the Public Record Office and, most importantly, reduce wear and tear on original records.

5.33 The Public Record Office has a limited amount of data on the Internet. Its home page is http://www.vicnet.net.au/~provic/ The Committee viewed the level of information on that facility and found it has significant potential. This program needs to be taken from the experimental stage to a fully fledged component of the activities of the Public Record Office, with continuous resourcing.

5.34 New skills will be essential if the proposed Melbourne Public Record Centre is to manage the computer environment. Archival skills and customer service skills will need to be part of a new interactive computing environment.

5.35 A large portion of staff time at the proposed Centre would then be required to deal with inquiries received electronically rather than over the counter.
5.36 Many aspects of this program may be delivered by the Victoria 21 project, and the Public Record Office should commence negotiations on gaining the necessary skills to deliver this service. The Office should investigate if this project could be outsourced in full or in part to the Victoria 21 project, or another supplier, if the Office does not have the resources required.

• **Sale of Popular Material**

The fourth access strategy is the sale of material.

5.37 The Committee believes that, as popular material is prepared for placement onto the electronic access network, it also must also be developed for sale to interested users and groups.

5.38 Popular material is being sold by the Public Record Office on paper or microfiche. In the view of the Committee this limits the market for the material. The growth of the personal computer and more recently low cost CD Rom technology would indicate an opportunity to make popular material available on the electronic medium.

5.39 An opportunity exists in this medium which cannot be provided on either paper or microfiche. The opportunity is to provide a small 'front end' software program to assist the user in accessing information on computer disk or CD Rom.

5.40 'Front end' software would allow the user to define what information he or she is looking for and, in doing so, to search material and find what they want. Larger institutions may have a central computer system, and a second version that can run on a central network would need to be developed. In both cases the information would be in a WORM format.

**Role of the Keeper**

5.41 An active marketing program should be a part of any public access program.

5.42 The Committee is aware that under Section 8 of the Public Records Act 1973, that the Keeper may:

\[(a)\] prepare and cause to be published articles concerning the activities of and the facilities provided by the Public Record Office; and

\[(b)\] arrange for the publication, upon any terms and conditions he thinks fit, of any public record under his control or of any articles prepared therefrom.

5.43 The Committee believes that this section may allow either a paucity or an over-supply of information because the function remains at the Keeper's discretion.
5.44 To continue the appropriate and balanced development of public access publications, the Keeper needs to determine that this function will not reduce the resources available to his or her primary task of assisting government agencies.

5.45 A marketing and publication program needs to be established on a business basis, with the costs of development, preparation of material and production included in the sale price. Therefore, the Committee believes that Section 8 of the Act needs to be rewritten to provide the direction and power that successive Keepers will need.

5.46 The Committee recommends that Section 8 of the Act be amended to read:

8. The Keeper of Public Records shall:

(a) prepare and cause to be published articles concerning the activities of and the facilities provided by the Public Record Office;

(b) arrange for the preparation and publication of any public record series under his or her control in a variety of mediums as indicated by demand; and

(c) ensure that costs associated with the preparation, publication, promotion and sale of any records series, indexes, or other user documents are recovered.

5.47 The Committee envisages that this mix of public access options would take the services of the Public Record Office to the user in such a way that all Victorians would be able to use the facilities of the Office. No person should need to travel to a Melbourne site to access popular records.

Touring Displays

5.48 As noted in Chapter One, a current emphasis of the Office is on the production of single interest publications and touring displays.

5.49 The Committee does not support the continuation of specialist tour programs as it is outside the purpose and core function of the Public Record Office, particularly whilst the Office has other more pressing functions to carry out.

5.50 The Committee believes that, whilst these programs are attractive in the short term as a public relations exercise, they divert scarce resources from the development of programs and material that ensure that the record of the past remains accessible to all Victorians.

5.51 The Committee further believes that the use of special tours and displays of archival material should be considered as specific projects that may be outsourced when they can be funded independently of the Office.
5.52 The Committee believes that corporate sponsorship or bequests should be sought to publicise specific issues. The recent grant of $55,000 from the Commonwealth government's 'Visions of Australia' National Touring Exhibition\(^6\) serves as an appropriate example.

**User Fees**

5.53 Realistic search fees should be charged to access the original record. The Committee believes that these fees should not be seen as a tax but as means of recovering from users a pool of funds that can be continually turned over into increasing the amount of popular material on the Public Record Office database, microfiche or CD Rom format.

5.54 The Committee recognises that to charge for access to the original record may be unpopular. However the Public Record Office offers a range of services like any other public body, and the costs of continually expanding the range of accessible material should be recovered from the users rather than the public at large.

5.55 The fee structure would need to be resolved by the government and take into account that academic researchers and students may require extensive access to original records.

5.56 The Committee is of the opinion no fees should be charged for a person using the computer databases, microfiche and CD Rom material held in the reading room at the proposed Melbourne Public Record Centre and any regional archives.

5.57 The photocopying service needs to be continued on a full cost recovery basis.

5.58 To decrease the average waiting time for photocopies from the present three to five working days\(^7\), the Public Record Office should examine the fee structure in order to increase the number of machines and operators. The service is partly operated by contract, and the contract could be expanded to reduce waiting time to the same day for requests under 20 copies and one to two days for larger volumes.

5.59 A methodology on which to base a scale of access fees was developed by the Committee. The Committee believes that three fee scales are required:

- retrieval of the original record
- consulting fees
- access to the electronic record
• Retrieval of the Original Record

5.60 The Public Record Office should set a retrieval fee when access to the original record is required. The fee should meet all or part of the cost of this service. If a large volume of documents is required, a sliding scale of access fees should be developed.

5.61 The Committee recommends that the Public Record Office enter into agreements with universities so that academic researchers and libraries can have access to original records for agreed access fees.

5.62 When additional services are required, the individual, not the public in general, should meet the additional cost. Access to original documents is a personal choice.

5.63 A retrieval fee would be essential for records held on a site separate from the public access facility. This would occur if the Committee's second option for a new archival centre in Victoria is implemented.

5.64 To facilitate a more controlled access to the original record, particularly if a separate storage facility was implemented, the Committee believes that the Public Record Office must reassess its 'at call' philosophy. The Public Record Office currently allows four items to each individual from the archives each half-hour. At the end of that period, all of these items may be returned and a further four items selected.

5.65 To provide for better management of the retrieval process, people seeking access to the original record should be required to pre-book documents they wish to inspect at least a day in advance. Through the proposed electronic network, the Public Record Office would be providing finding aids to help people to select the documents they need in advance.

5.66 One of the key advantages of this proposal would be the ability for the Office to control the number of original records that may be retrieved as part of a daily fee structure. Fees could be structured to reflect the volume of each request.

5.67 This would ensure that the original record is not over-handled, particularly by users who browse through large volumes of associated records rather than identifying the small number of specific records that they require through the use of the finding aids. Individuals would be able to use the consultant program discussed later in this chapter to assist them in defining their requests.

5.68 Staffing of the repository could be minimised and excess resources diverted to the first two functions of the Public Record Office. If additional staff resources were required, they could be estimated the day before on the receipt of the public access requests.
5.69 What is more important, the Public Record Office could implement warehouse management techniques that draw records from the archives in an ordered way. This practice would reduce the need to use the storage area on a random basis. Access would be required the day before a record is to be used and, on its return to storage, the day after it has been used.

5.70 Warehouse management techniques would also allow the Public Record Office to minimise service costs, particularly in maintaining the atmospheric environment of the store at a consistent level.

• **Remote site electronic access**

5.71 The Committee is also of the view that no fees, other than communication costs, should be charged when off-site computer access to the holdings of the proposed Melbourne Public Record Centre occurs from an individual, regional library service, school or tertiary institution.

5.72 People using off-site computer access should be able to print documents that they have viewed. These documents would not be certified copies as the user would be retrieving, printing and storing the record in an unstructured way.

5.73 To ensure that the range of material on the Public Record Office database continues to grow, the Office must constantly review the usage patterns of the physical record at the proposed Melbourne Public Record Centre. If the number of persons wishing to access the physical record increases or records are put at risk due to over-handling, the Office should make a decision as to their potential to become part of its on-line database.

• **Consulting Fees**

5.74 Staff of the Public Record Office provide consulting services to assist the public in the conduct of their research. These services can take the form of simply advising people where to start their inquiries or a more comprehensive development of a research program.

5.75 It was apparent to the Committee that this advice process was diverting limited staff resources in search rooms as people tended to use the skills of the archivist to find their records, rather than developing an understanding of the finding aids system.

5.76 The Committee supports the use of archival staff in this role but recognises the fine line between routine assistance and undertaking research. In the event that a person needs assistance over and above instruction in the use of the finding aids, the Public Record Office offers a consultant program and charge for the service.

5.77 The program could be situated in the public access facility, and members of the public and researchers needing extended advice and assistance could make an appointment to see a consultant.
5.78 This service could commence on a weekly basis. Members of the public would make appointments to see a consultant to work out the research method that they would need to follow at the Public Record Office.

5.79 The Committee recognises that academic researchers and libraries may require extensive assistance in locating relevant material held by the Public Record Office. The Committee recommends that the Public Record Office negotiate with universities an appropriate scale of fees that would accommodate the need for consulting services.

Access to the Electronic Record

5.80 Elsewhere in the report, the Committee has recommended that government agencies retain their electronic records and that they not be held by the Public Record Office. This recommendation is to ensure that agencies continue to bear the responsibility for records migration between successive software versions and operating systems. The diversity of software packages and operating systems makes any suggestion that archived electronic records be held by the Public Record Office at the proposed Melbourne Public Record Centre unrealistic.

5.81 Public access to the Public Record Office database can be provided 24 hours per day. This concept is not new to the information technology industry, and it would allow persons and institutions to access the information at their leisure.

5.82 Every government agency would need to provide to the Public Record Office an index of its electronic records held as archives. This information would become part of the Office database which could be accessed and searched by the public. There would need to be a simple identifier within the database to designate whether a record is a physical record held by the Public Record Office or an electronic record held by the government agency.

5.83 The Committee does not support any member of the public being given electronic access to the archival records and, therefore, the operating system of any government agency.

5.84 To provide for public access to the electronic record, the Committee believes that there are only two secure methods.

5.85 The first is to allow the public to approach each government agency directly to obtain a copy of the electronic record in printed form, under a similar access structure to the Freedom of Information legislation.

5.86 The second method of gaining access to the electronic record held by government agencies would be to use the Public Record Office as an intermediary. This represents the Committee's preferred option as it continues the premise that all public records should be under the control of the Public Record Office.
5.87 A request for access would be handled by the Public Record Office. The Office would contact the government agency to arrange for either a paper or electronic copy of the record to be sent by facsimile or by electronic transfer to the Office.

5.88 This transfer process would be best performed overnight when user activity on the Public Record Office database is low and the cost of telecommunication time is reduced. These practices are well established in the information technology industry.

5.89 The record would have to be in an agreed format. Given the number of government agencies, this may result in some of the enhanced features of the record being lost on electronic transfer. It may be acceptable to most users to retrieve the information and not be concerned that font style, bolding and indenting are missing from the flat file provided.

5.90 Requests for a copy of an electronic record issued on paper could be easily posted to the person who sought the record. People who have sought a computer file would need to access the Public Record Office database to retrieve the record from a ‘mailbox’ that could only be opened by using an individual password. Passwords would be issued by the Office when an administrative fee had been paid or a monthly account arranged.

5.91 A schematic diagram of such a system is:

REMOTE SITE ACCESS

PUBLIC OFFICES

PRO

MILDURA
MT BEAUTY
WHITTLESEA
NHILL
PYRAMID HILL
ORBOST
MALLACOOTA

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5.92 This system would allow individual requests for access to electronic records held by government agencies to be easily managed, particularly for people in rural Victoria. The information highway and use of electronic records, whilst a very small component of the State’s archival history, needs access structures which are simple and available 24 hours per day. The Committee believes that its public access recommendations provide the direction for the future.

Volunteer Network

5.93 The use of volunteers at the Public Record Office is recognised by the Committee. Their work has allowed the continued indexing of records so that they may better pursue their interests. The work of a few has benefits for a larger group, and the Committee, through its recommendation that access fees to the original record be charged, does not wish to discourage the volunteer body from assisting the Office’s staff.

5.94 The question of access fees to the original record could be easily overcome by the Public Record Office offering a form of direct credit to volunteers working at the proposed Melbourne Public Record Centre.

Retention of revenue

5.95 All fees recovered for services provided by the PRO should be retained by the Office and dedicated to increasing the amount of popular material in computer format, to encourage its popularity and to reduce the need to access the original record. It cannot be overlooked that the popularity of many records will result in the slow destruction of original records through over-handling.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends that:

5.1 the Public Record Office provide public access programs that require the public to ‘self-manage’ their personal access requests;

5.2 the primary facility for public access be the Melbourne Public Record Centre;

5.3 the Public Record Office increase access opportunities for all Victorians by providing on-line electronic facilities through regional library services, schools and tertiary institutions to the holdings, finding aids and indexes available at the proposed Melbourne Public Record Centre;

5.4 section 8 of the Public Records Act 1973 be amended to define better the authority of the Keeper to recover the costs of the development, preparation and production of any publication or record series made available to the public;

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5.5 fees be charged (a) to access the original record, (b) for consulting services;

5.6 the revenue from fees be retained by the Public Record Office and dedicated to increasing the amount of popular records available for public access on the Public Record Office database, microfiche or CD Rom format;

5.7 regional library services, schools and tertiary institutions that provide electronic access to the Public Record Office be permitted to recover any administration costs from users;

5.8 the Public Record Office negotiate with universities an appropriate scale of fees that would accommodate the need of academic researchers for (a) access to original records and (b) consulting services;

5.9 the Public Record Office constantly review its permanent holdings to determine the potential for converting its physical records into an electronic or microfiche medium to maximise the opportunities for public access;

5.10 popular documents that can be made available on the electronic or microfiche medium be sold to users on a full cost recovery basis;

5.11 the Public Record Office provide a gateway to the electronic record held by government agencies under a secure password arrangement and that an administrative fee be charged for providing this service;

5.12 persons seeking access to the original record be required to book documents that they wish to view in advance;

5.13 the opening hours of the proposed Melbourne Public Record Centre be determined by user demand;

5.14 the Public Record Office encourage the use of volunteers in indexing of popular material that may be made available through the electronic medium and that these services be recognised by a credit scheme that directly reduces any access charge that may be incurred by the volunteers, and

5.15 travelling programs of archival material be carried out only when specific funding has been provided by budget, grant or request.

2 Mr R Gibbs Director, Public Record Office, Response to Request For Information Number Four, 19 January 1996, p.4.
3 ibid, p.3.
4 Request for Information, Number 5, Public Records Office, 14 February 1996, p.4.
5 ibid, p.2
6 Mr R Gibbs, Memorandum to the Hon. Haddon Storey, QC, MLC, 15 November 1995.
7 ibid, p.3.

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APPENDICES
Appendix One

Definitions Contained in the Public Records Act 1973

"Public Office" means-

(a) any department branch or office of the Government of Victoria;
(b) any public statutory body corporate or unincorporate;
(c) any municipal council; and
(d) any other local governing body corporate or unincorporate.

"Public record" means-

(a) any record made or received by a public officer in the course of his duties; and
(b) any record made or received by a court or person acting judicially in Victoria;

but does not include -

(c) a record which is beneficially owned by a person or body other than the Crown or a public office;
   or

(d) a prescribed record held for the purpose of preservation by a public office to which it was transferred before the commencement of the Arts Institutions (Amendment) Act 1994 by a person or body other than the Crown or a public office;
   or

(e) a record, other than a prescribed record, held for the purpose of preservation by a public office to which it was transferred, whether before or after the commencement of the Arts Institutions (Amendment) Act 1994, by a person or body other than the Crown or a public office.
## Appendix Two

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<th>Publication</th>
<th>Author</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Documenting The Future</strong></td>
<td>Mr David Roberts</td>
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<td>Policy and Strategies for Electronic Recordkeeping in the New South Wales</td>
<td>Manager, Records Management Office</td>
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<td>Public Sector</td>
<td>Archives Authority of New South Wales, July 1995</td>
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<td><strong>Improving Electronic Document Management</strong></td>
<td>Office of Government Information Technology</td>
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<td>Edited by Stephen Yorke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 1994</td>
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<td><strong>Managing Electronic Records</strong></td>
<td>Australian Archives Office</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Governments: An Introduction</strong></td>
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<td><strong>The Management of Electronic Records in the Electronic Work Environment</strong></td>
<td>Information Management Standards and Practices Division, National</td>
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<td>Exposure Drafts</td>
<td>Archives of Canada, May 1995</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Connection, Community, Content. The Challenge of the Information</strong></td>
<td>Final Report of the Information Highway Advisory Council</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Highway</strong></td>
<td>Canada, September 1995</td>
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<td><strong>VGEMS: Victorian Government Electronic Mail System</strong></td>
<td>Public Record Office, Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 1995</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix Three

Submissions made to the Inquiry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position/Organisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arkley, Mr L</td>
<td>Journalist, Asia-Pacific News Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baragwanath, Mr C</td>
<td>Auditor-General, Victorian Auditor-General’s Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bates, Mrs P</td>
<td>Secretary, South Gippsland Genealogical Society Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beggs Sunter, Ms A</td>
<td>Hon. Secretary, Buninyong and District Historical Society Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beggs Sunter, Ms A</td>
<td>Lecturer, School of Social and Behavioural Sciences and Humanities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carey, Mr R</td>
<td>University of Ballarat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooke, Mr S</td>
<td>Postgraduate Student, University of Melbourne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darragh, Mr T</td>
<td>Vice-President, Australian Council of Archives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divola, Mrs J</td>
<td>Secretary, East Gippsland Family History Group Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwyer, Ms R</td>
<td>Wimmera Association for Genealogy Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edwards, Ms J</td>
<td>Secretary, Castlemaine Historical Society Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felstead, Ms J</td>
<td>Head, Department of History, University of Melbourne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisher, Mr L</td>
<td>Secretary, Surrey Hills Historical Society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ford, Mr F</td>
<td>Secretary, Sunshine &amp; District Historical Society Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frost, Professor A</td>
<td>Head, Department of History, La Trobe University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glover, Mr J</td>
<td>Wimmera Association for Genealogy Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goulding, Ms J</td>
<td>Secretary, Castlemaine Historical Society Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crimshaw, Professor P</td>
<td>Head, Department of History, University of Melbourne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hall, Ms J</td>
<td>Secretary, Surrey Hills Historical Society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haralambies, Mr C</td>
<td>Director, Cabinet and Legislation Systems Department of Premier &amp; Cabinet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harlow, Ms G</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Harrington, Mr M</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Harris, Mr D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvey, Mrs J</td>
<td>President, Australian Institute of Genealogical Studies Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hookey, Mrs M</td>
<td>Secretary, Department of Arts, Sport &amp; Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hore, Dr D</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hume Baker, Mrs J</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hunter, Ms J</td>
<td>President, Avoca &amp; District Historical Society Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones, Mr A</td>
<td>Chartered Engineer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joy, Mrs S</td>
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</table>

Inquiry into the Public Record Office, Victoria
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position/Organisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kaczynski, Ms R</td>
<td>State President, Records Management Association of Australia, Victoria Branch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirby, Mr P</td>
<td>Secretary, Department of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyle, Ms A</td>
<td>Faculty of Arts, Monash University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynes, Mr E</td>
<td>President, Central Highlands Historical Association Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maiuto, Ms R</td>
<td>Records Manager, Municipal Association of Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Markus, Assoc. Professor A</td>
<td>Head, Department of History, Monash University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin, Professor W</td>
<td>Head, Department of Information Management &amp; Library Studies Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell, Dr A</td>
<td>Manager, Records and Archives Services, Monash University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murray, Mrs H</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nunn, Mr H</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osborne, Mr M</td>
<td>Vice-Chancellor, La Trobe University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paterson, Dr J</td>
<td>Secretary, Department of Health &amp; Community Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perlstein, Mr G</td>
<td>Hon. Secretary, The Coburg Historical Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reed, Ms B</td>
<td>Senior Lecturer, Department of Librarianship, Archives and Records Monash University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reilly, Ms D</td>
<td>La Trobe Librarian, State Library of Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reynolds, Mr G</td>
<td>President, The Genealogical Society of Victoria Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rich, Ms D</td>
<td>Secretary, Maryborough &amp; District Genealogical Group Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roberts, Ms B</td>
<td>President, The Southern Peninsula Genealogical Society Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ronayne, Professor J</td>
<td>Vice Chancellor, Victoria University of Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salmond, Professor J</td>
<td>President, The History Institute, Victoria, Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaw, Professor A</td>
<td>Councillor, Royal Historical Society of Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steele, Mr D</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strachan, Ms M</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taylor, Mr M</td>
<td>Secretary, Department of Agriculture, Energy &amp; Minerals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thompson, Mr A</td>
<td>Secretary, Department of Conservation &amp; Natural Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upward, Mr F</td>
<td>Senior Lecturer, Department of Librarianship, Archives and Records Monash University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertigan, Dr M</td>
<td>Secretary, Department of Treasury &amp; Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whittle, Mrs J</td>
<td>President, Ballarat &amp; District Genealogical Society Inc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams, Mrs L</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young, Mr D</td>
<td>Manager Corporate Services, Baw Baw Shire Council</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inquiry into the Public Record Office, Victoria
Appendix Four

Public Hearings

List of organisations and witnesses who gave evidence at Public Hearings.

Melbourne Public Hearing
20 November 1995

Records Management Association of Australia, Victoria Branch
Ms R Kaczynski, State President
Mr S Arnold, Vice-President
Mr P White, Branch Councilor

Keeper of Public Records, 1973-81
Mr H. Nunn, OAM

Public Record Office, Victoria
Mr R Gibbs, Director

Public Records Advisory Council
Mr P. Kirby, Chairman
Mr B McInerney, Secretary

Melbourne Public Hearing
27 November 1995

Department of Health & Community Services
Mr P White, Information Manager, Information and Records Services
Mr C Temple, Manager, Archival Services

Department of Education
Mr V Duggan, Assistant Director,
Ms K Owen, Manager, Records Management
Ms R Ross, Archivist

Department of Treasury & Finance
Mr F King, Deputy Secretary, Business Services Division

Office of Local Government
Dr A Ward, General Manager, Policy Legislation

Department of the Parliamentary Library
Mr B Davidson, Librarian

La Trobe University
Professor A Frost, Head, Department of History

Inquiry into the Public Record Office, Victoria
Melbourne Public Hearing  
27 November 1995

Monash University  Ass. Professor A Markus, Head, Department of History
University of Melbourne  Ass. Professor J Lack, Chair of Archives Advisory Board, Department of History
Monash University  Ms B Reed, Senior Lecturer
                      Mr F Upward, Senior Lecturer,
                      Department of Librarianship, Archives and Records

Melbourne Public Hearing  
4 December 1995

Australian Council of Archives  Ms J Ellis, Executive Officer
The Genealogical Society of Victoria Inc.  Mr G Reynolds, President
Royal Historical Society of Victoria  Professor A Shaw
                      Mr A Lemon
                      Ms S Priestley
The History Institute of Victoria, Inc.  Professor J Salmond, President
Australian Institute of Genealogical Studies  Mrs M Hookey, President
                      Mr J Idle, Secretary
                      Dr B Blackhall, Member
Municipal Association of Victoria  Ms R Maiuto, Records Manager
Records Management Association of Australia  Mr S Arnold, Vice President, Local Government Chapter

Inquiry into the Public Record Office, Victoria
Melbourne Public Hearing
11 December 1995

Australian Bureau of Statistics          Mr B Pink, First Assistant Statistician
Department of Premier & Cabinet          Mr M Harrington, Director, Cabinet
                                        and Legislation Systems
                                        Mr R Straw, Assistant Director IT
                                        Policy Division
                                        Mr J Benson, Senior Consultant IT
                                        Policy Division

Price Waterhouse                 Mr D Moldrich, Director, Image and
                                          Document Management

Victorian Auditor-General’s Office    Mr J Manders, Assistant Auditor-
                                        General
                                        Mr J Kehoe, Assistant Auditor-General

Ombudsman                                 Dr B Perry

Melbourne Public Hearing
26 February 1996

Public Record Office, Victoria         Mr R Gibbs, Director
Appendix Five

Records Management in the Public Sector

Records Management Survey

(Pages 1 to 14)
(Please complete or tick box - when appropriate)

Organisation: __________________________________________

_____________________________________________________

Address: ____________________________________________

_____________________________________________________

Primary Activity: _______________ Number of Staff: ______

______________________________

Contact Person/s: __________________________________________

_____________________________________________________

Telephone: ( ) _____________

______________________________

Purpose

1. This survey seeks to determine:

* What records management policies are being used within the Public Sector;

* What standards are being applied to the creation, management and storage of paper records;

* The standards being applied to the creation, management and storage of electronic records.

2. To provide your organisation with an opportunity to comment on the services provided by the Public Record Office.

Scope

Your response should cover:

* All correspondence, internal reports and memorandum that are received from or sent to the public and other government agencies;

* All Facsimile, E-Mail, Internet transactions, reports and other images transmitted through and stored in the electronic environment; and

* All internal operating files and ongoing files series eg client files.

Do not include transaction based information systems such as payroll and accounting records.
Records Management Policies

1. Why does your organisation keep records? Is it to meet the conventions of:

☐ Accountability

☐ Legislative responsibilities

☐ Business practice

☐ History of Government

☐ Other (please nominate)

2. Are these conventions contained in a policy that elucidates this principle to the people you service and to the staff of your organisation

Yes ☐ (Please provide a copy with your reply)

No ☐

3. Looking to the future, what records should be kept. Should these records be only:

☐ Policy Documents (Why did we make that decision)

☐ Operation records (How was the policy implemented)

☐ Personnel Case Files

☐ Financial Data (Accountability)

☐ Other (Please specify)

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Records Management Standards

1. How does information flow around your organisation. Is it predominantly:
   - [ ] Paper based using traditional individual files
   - [ ] Electronic, accessed through a computer network
   - [ ] Mix of both mediums
   - [ ] Other (please describe)

2. Is this information base supported by a records management system that is applied across the organisation?
   - Yes [ ] Please move to question 3
   - No [ ] Please move to question 5

3. What Officer/s in the organisation has effective control of the records?

4. Does your Department or agency require a skill level, such as qualifications in records management for staff who have the responsibility to maintain the records of the organisation?
   - Yes [ ] Qualifications required.
   - No [ ]
   
   Please move to question 6

5. If your organisation does not have a records management system:
   5.1 How are the organisation’s records structured?

   ____________________________
   ____________________________
   ____________________________
   ____________________________
5.2 Who maintains the records?

☐ The originating officer

☐ an administrative officer as a part of other duties

☐ a mix of both staff

☐ other (please describe)

5.3 Do you propose to implement a records management system?

Yes ☐ Please move to question 5.4

No ☐ Please move to question 14

5.4 When will this occur?

Please move to question 14

6. Is the records management system in a documented form and provided to all staff of the organisation?

Yes ☐ Please provide a copy with your response

No ☐

7. Does the system include an integrated records disposal schedule?

Yes ☐

No ☐ Please move to question 14

8. Has the schedule been approved by the Public Record Office

Yes ☐

No ☐ Please move to question 10

9. When was the schedule approved?

Please move to question 11
10. When do you propose to have a records schedule approved by the Public Records Office?

11. During the preparation of the records disposal schedule, who nominated the documents to be retained and those that may be destroyed?

- [ ] Chief Executive
- [ ] Section Head
- [ ] Originating Officer of the material
- [ ] Records Manager
- [ ] File Clerk
- [ ] Public Record Office

12. Do you regularly review the operation of the Records Management system against your established standards?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

In which year was it last conducted? ___

13. What was the outcome of the review? Did it establish that:

- [ ] All records were being maintained to the set standard
- [ ] Some records were being maintained to the set standard
- [ ] No records were being maintained to the set standard
- [ ] Other (please describe)
14. If an accrual accounting method was used, what did it cost to maintain the records of the organisation in the 1994/95 financial year:

$ .................

Response Checklist:

☐ Staff salaries including oncosts
☐ Depreciation allowances for Computer hardware, software and system support costs
☐ Specialist records management training
☐ File equipment, covers clips etc
☐ Utilities eg: electricity and air conditioning charges
☐ Depreciation allowances on capital equipment eg: compactus and shelving
☐ The market value for each square metre of floor space used for file and records storage
☐ The cost of external resources eg: offsite storage and consultants

15. Please describe in lineal metres the amount of records by the department based on the following classes of documents:

(A quick method of calculating lineal metres appears on the last page of survey)

Site Location: _________________________________

Documents in active use:

Retained for legislative reasons:

Documents awaiting sentencing:

Permanent records:

Total Holdings:

*Please append any additional sites to your reply*
16. What was the rate of records growth in lineal metres for each class of documents in the 1994/95 financial year:

- Documents in active use:
- Retained for legislative reasons:
- Documents awaiting sentencing:
- Permanent records:

Annual Growth:

17. How many requests for public access were received in 1994/95 financial year for documents held in each of the following classes?

- Documents in active use:
- Retained for legislative reasons:
- Documents awaiting sentencing:
- Permanent records:

Total:
Electronic Records Management

1. Do you have a records management policy for records created in the electronic environment:

   Yes  □

   No   □ Please move to question 6

2. Are the policies for electronic and paper records integrated?

   Yes  □

   No   □

3. Does this policy require the capture of all electronic records such as E-Mail and Internet transactions:

   Yes  □

   No   □

4. Does the electronic records policy require staff to:

   □ convert electronic letters and documents to a paper document at the time of creation to be physically stored in files

   □ transfer the electronic letters or documents to an electronic file with an index structure matching the paper file

   □ make an individual decision as to whether the document should be retained

   □ other

5. How does your policy ensure that electronic records retain an ability to be read over time? Do you:

   □ convert electronic records to current versions of software and hardware when it is purchased

   □ retain obsolete software and hardware to maintain access
transfer the electronic data to a central agency or commercial bureau to hold and retrieve the data if it is ever required.

Other mechanisms (please describe)

6. How do you ensure that a document that has been created electronically remains a true and accurate record.

7. How do you provide access to records open to the public that are held in an electronic format:

- Allow public access to the corporate data base and records system through terminal or Internet facilities

- Require a specific request that nominates the records required for transfer to a secure computer file

- Copy the material required to a paper format to meet the request

- Transfer the material in an electronic form to the Public Record Office to allow them to manage the request for access

- Other mechanisms (please describe)
8. Do you use a computer based records management programme within your agency.

Yes □

No □ Please move to question 12

9. Is the records management programme installed on a:

□ Stand alone system

□ Computer network

□ Other (please describe)

[Space for description]

10. Is this programme a:

□ 'Off the shelf' commercial package

(Package name........................................ Version ............)

□ Custom version of a commercial package

(Package name........................................ Version ............)

□ Unique software written solely for your organisation

(Software House........................................ Version ............)

□ Part of an Information Technology package supplied by others

(Software Package........................................ Version ............)

11. Is it available to:

□ All staff through the computer network for inquiry purposes

□ Selected administrative staff to inquire on records and enter new data

□ Records staff only
12. If you do not use a computer based records management system what method is used:

☐ Card index system

☐ Mix of card index and computer data bases

☐ Other (please describe)

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

13. What computer operating system is used for the routine administration of the organisation:

☐ DOS  (Version ________________)

☐ UNIX  (Version ________________)

☐ MAINFRAME  (Version ________________)

☐ MACINTOSH  (Version ________________)

☐ OS/2  (Version ________________)

☐ Other (please describe)

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

__________________________________________
14. Is this operating system the common platform for all electronic functions of the organisation:

Yes ☐

No ☐ Please move to question 15

15. What functions are separate?

☐ Finance

☐ Personnel and Payroll

☐ Transactional databases eg driver licence details

☐ Other (please describe)

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________
The Public Record Office

Please take this opportunity to comment on the services provided by the Public Record Office to the public sector and its agencies.

Approved By: ____________________

Position: ________________________

Date: .... / .... / ....
How To Determine A Lineal Metre Of Records

You may care to use the following standard measurements when completing your estimates:

- 1 standard lateral shelving bay found in a Brownbuilt or Compactus shelving system usually equals 0.9 of 1 metre
- 1 standard filing cabinet drawer usually equals 0.6 of 1 lineal metre.
- 1x2 draw filing cabinet may hold 1.2 metres of records
- 1x4 draw filing cabinet may hold 2.4 linear metres of records
- 1 filing cabinet takes approximately 0.73 of 1 square metre of floor space
# Appendix Six

## Records Management Survey

The following is a list of Departments and Public Offices that responded to the Committee's survey on records management in the public sector.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ministry</th>
<th>Public Office</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department of Agriculture, Energy &amp; Minerals</td>
<td>• Daratech Pty Ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Gippsland Region</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Melbourne Market Authority</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Murray Valley Citrus Marketing Board</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• North East Region</td>
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<td>• North West Region</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Northern Irrigation Region</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• South West Region</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• State Chemistry Laboratory</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Tomato Industry Negotiating Committee</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Veterinary Board of Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Victorian Broiler Industry Negotiation Committee</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Victorian Dairy Industry Authority</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Victorian Dried Fruits Board</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Victorian Institute of Animal Science</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Victorian Meat Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Arts, Sport &amp; Tourism</td>
<td>• Arts Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Australian Grand Prix Corporation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Film Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Geelong Performing Arts Centre Trust</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Greyhound Racing Control Board</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Harness Racing, Victoria</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Information Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Melbourne &amp; Olympic Parks Trust</td>
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<td>• Museum of Victoria</td>
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<td>• National Gallery of Victoria</td>
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<td>• Office of Library Services</td>
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<td>• Sport &amp; Recreation, Victoria</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• State Film Centre of Victoria</td>
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<td>• Tourism Victoria</td>
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<td>• Victorian Arts Centre Trust</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Victorian Casino &amp; Gaming Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>Department of Education</td>
<td>• Department Response</td>
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<td>• Department Response</td>
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<td>Department of Premier &amp; Cabinet</td>
<td>• Office of the Governor</td>
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<td>• Office of the Public Service Commissioner</td>
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<td>• Ombudsman</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Victorian Ethnic Affairs Commission</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Department of Business & Employment | • Construction Industry Long Service Leave Board  
|                                       | • Employee Relations & Employment  
|                                       | • Employee Relations Commission of Victoria  
|                                       | • Exhibition Trustees  
|                                       | • Health & Safety Organisation  
|                                       | • Industrial Compliance & Information Services Division  
|                                       | • Liquor Licensing Commission, Victoria  
|                                       | • Office of Small Business  
|                                       | • Office of Trade Measurement  
|                                       | • Office of Youth Affairs  
|                                       | • Small Business, Victoria  
| Department of Conservation & Natural Resources | • Alpine Resorts Commission  
|                                               | • City West Water Ltd  
|                                               | • Environment Protection Authority  
|                                               | • Melbourne Parks & Waterways  
|                                               | • Melbourne Water  
|                                               | • Royal Botanic Gardens Board  
|                                               | • South East Water Ltd  
|                                               | • Trust for Nature (Victoria)  
|                                               | • Victorian Institute of Marine Sciences  
|                                               | • Victorian Plantations Corporation  
|                                               | • Yarra Valley Water Ltd  
|                                               | • Zoological Board of Victoria  
| Department of Justice | • Equal Opportunity Commission  
|                            | • Guardianship & Administration Board  
|                            | • Land Titles Office & Registrar-General’s Office  
|                            | • Magistrates’ Court of Victoria  
|                            | • Registry of Births, Deaths & Marriages  
|                            | • Victorian Community Council Against Violence  
| Department of Planning & Development | • Building Control Commission  
|                             | • Docklands Authority  
|                             | • Land Conservation Council  
|                             | • Office of Major Projects  
|                             | • Office of Building  
|                             | • Office of Housing  
|                             | • Office of Planning & Heritage  
|                             | • Plumbers Gasfitters & Drainers Registration Board  
|                             | • Urban Land Authority  
| Department of Transport | • Marine Board, Victoria  
|                           | • Melbourne City Link Authority  
|                           | • Port of Geelong Authority  
|                           | • Port of Melbourne Authority  
|                           | • Public Transport Corporation  
|                           | • Roads Corporation (VicRoads)  
|                           | • Tow Truck Directorate, Victoria  
|                           | • Victorian Channel Authority  
|                           | • Victorian Taxi Directorate  
| Department of Treasury & Finance | • Department Response  

Inquiry into the Public Record Office, Victoria