



STATE RECORDS COMMISSION  
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

# STATE RECORDS COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2001/2002



State Records Commission of Western Australia  
Perth, Western Australia  
October 2002

## INTRODUCTION

This Report describes the operations of the State Records Commission during its inaugural year, 2001-2002. The Report outlines the year's highlights and comments upon the nexus between the Commission and the State Records Office under the *State Records Act 2000*. The Report also comments on several matters that pertain to the operations of the State Records Office.

The Report is available on the State Records Office website at:  
**[www.sro.wa.gov.au/src/ar2001.html](http://www.sro.wa.gov.au/src/ar2001.html)**

Note: The State Records Commission is not accountable through the *Financial Administration and Audit Act 1985*. Administrative support for the Commission is provided by the State Records Office, whose 2001-2002 financial report forms part of the annual report of the Library and Information Service of Western Australia, this being the last year in which the State Records Office's appropriation has been included with that of the Library Board of Western Australia. A narrative report for the State Records Office forms part of the 2001-2002 annual report of the Department of Culture and the Arts. From 1 July 2002 the State Records Office's funding will form part of the appropriation of the Department of Culture and the Arts.

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### OUR MISSION STATEMENT

The State Records Commission mission is to *'promote excellence in recordkeeping, for today and tomorrow'*.

## HIGHLIGHTS 2001-2002

- Compilation and launch by the Commission of recordkeeping principles and standards in accordance with section 61 of the *State Records Act 2000*.
- Commission recordkeeping plan finalized.
- New website launched for the Commission and the State Records Office.

## ABOUT US

The State Records Commission was established in July 2001 in accordance with Part 8 of the *State Records Act 2000* (the Act). The Commission comprises four members: the Auditor General, the Information Commissioner, the State Ombudsman, and an appointee with recordkeeping experience from outside Government. The Governor appoints the fourth Commissioner for a three year term.

The Commissioners are:

Mr Des Pearson, Auditor General and Chair of the Commission;  
Ms Bronwyn Keighley-Gerardy, Information Commissioner;  
Ms Deirdre O'Donnell, State Ombudsman; and,  
Ms Kandy-Jane Henderson, Archivist, John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library.

Mr Murray Allen was the State Ombudsman when the Commissioners were first appointed in July 2001, and in that capacity attended the first two meetings of the Commission. After Mr Allen ceased duties as Ombudsman in September 2001, the Acting Ombudsman, Mr Alex Errington attended Commission meetings until Ms O'Donnell commenced duties as State Ombudsman in March 2002.

The Commissioners met formally on seven occasions during 2001-2002. The meeting dates are noted under '**Key Events of the Year**' on page 7.

## WHAT WE DO

The Commission's functions are set out in Part 8 of the *State Records Act 2000* and include:

- monitoring the operation of and compliance with the Act;
- monitoring compliance by government organizations with their recordkeeping plans; and
- inquiring into breaches or possible breaches of the Act.

Under section 61 of the Act the Commission must establish principles and standards for the governance of recordkeeping by government organizations, and guidelines for the compilation of recordkeeping plans by those organizations. The plan must specify the agency's recordkeeping systems, disposal arrangements, policies and practices. If certain records are to be retained permanently as State archives the plan should indicate whether and when the records are to be transferred to the State Records Office, and recommend whether those records are to be treated as restricted access archives. For more information about recordkeeping plans please see the section entitled '**The State Records Act 2000**' on page 10.

Section 62 of the Act establishes a committee of the Commission to assist with the records disposal component of the recordkeeping plan approval process. This body, which is called the State Records Advisory Committee, makes recommendations to the Commission on the retention and disposal components of recordkeeping plans including those records that are to be retained permanently as State archives.

In addition to approving and monitoring agency recordkeeping plans, the Commission is empowered to act as a Special Inquirer (under sections 21 and

13 of, and Schedule 4 to, the *Public Sector Management Act 1994*) when inquiring into known or suspected breaches of the *State Records Act 2000*. The Commission was not required to assume this role during the year under review.

## OUR OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

Under the *State Records Act 2000* the Commission has responsibility for raising the standard of recordkeeping in 280 government agencies, statutory organizations and other bodies. The Commission has a similar responsibility regarding the recordkeeping programs of 143 local governments. Altogether these agencies employ in the order of 110,000 people. All these Government employees produce records in a variety of formats, ranging from conventional paper files, through microfilm and cartographic plans to electronic records.

## OUR CLIENTS

The Commission's clients consist of:

- The people of Western Australia, who, having access to information held in official records, are the ultimate benefactors of the principles and standards by which State archives are selected from the large quantity of records created by Government;
- WA public sector agencies;
- Local governments; and
- a range of statutory offices from the Governor's establishment, through ministerial offices to commissions and committees of inquiry.

## CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWORD

The State Records Commission was established at one of the most critical times in the history of information management. In this environment, the challenges to recordkeeping posed by the predominance of electronic records require innovative approaches to the delivery of traditional recordkeeping and archival services. The power of this technology, to cite a simple application, is illustrated by the availability of the Commission's abridged minutes on its website, thus giving transparency about its deliberations as soon as possible after its meetings. For similar reasons, the Commission's recordkeeping plan, too, is on the website.

The broad strategy proposed by the Commission for the medium-term management of electronic records envisages a distributed archive model, whereby each government agency will be responsible for ensuring that its own archival electronic records are maintained over time and migrated over successive technologies so as to ensure their continued preservation and accessibility. Under this strategy the State Records Office (SRO) will act as a central registry for the State's archival records, rather than simply a repository, becoming in effect a portal through which clients may access the information they require.

Access to the State's distributed electronic archive will be made available to the general public via the internet with clients being given the ability not only to search the collection database, but to directly access records online. Open access electronic archival records will be accessible through the collection database via secure links to the various distributed Departmental servers on which the records will reside. Combined with the ongoing digitisation of existing heritage documents the general public will be provided with an unprecedented level of access to the State's archives collection. This anticipated shift in focus towards electronic archival service delivery will necessitate the provision of improved electronic access within the SRO Search Room to ensure equitable access for clients.

The impetus for greater management of electronic records will be driven by the increasing proportion of e-born records - those electronic records which only ever exist within the virtual realm, being created and eventually destroyed without ever being produced in a hardcopy format. Ensuring that these records are captured within agency recordkeeping systems will require the development and implementation of automated point of production capture systems within government agencies.

The Commission recognises that issues such as storage space for physical records will persist. There will be a gradual shift in the proportional distribution between traditional paper based records and electronic records requiring the development of specialised digital storage facilities. The digital storage repositories will link directly with the point of production capture systems to provide for the secure capture of archival value electronic records directly into the State archives collection.

In the context of this scenario the view that must be taken in addressing the storage needs for the State's archives in the future is one whereby capital funding secured for the purpose will be applied to storage in the widest sense – for both conventional and electronic records. That scenario will need to be responsive to the fact that Government organizations will see it as a critical responsibility under the *State Records Act 2000* ultimately for the State Records Office to develop the capacity to accommodate State archives in all physical formats, in one central location.

## **ACHIEVEMENTS UNDER KEY PERFORMANCE AREAS**

The Commission's planning activities identified four key performance areas with appropriate strategies required to ensure the full implementation of the *State Records Act 2000*.

The strategies identified by the Commission are incorporated in the 2002-2003 operational plans for the State Records Office, as the SRO is responsible for the operational aspects of their implementation.

This year's achievements under the above Key Performance Areas are:

### **1. User Friendly Accessibility**

The State Records Office website was formally launched on 6 March 2002. The site includes agenda and minutes of Commission meetings and current reporting on Commission activities in the SRO newsletter, *State of the Record*, at [www.sro.wa.gov.au](http://www.sro.wa.gov.au). This newsletter was first issued in July 2001 and is only accessible online. Future issues may be made available in a hard copy format.

### **2. Sound Recordkeeping**

Following the publication of the Standards, staff of the State Records Office conducted twenty explanatory seminars where they advised government agency staff on how to implement the Standards, particularly with respect to the compilation of recordkeeping plans. Seven of the seminars were held in metropolitan Perth and the remaining thirteen in major regional centres, with a total of 950 attendees.

### **3. Reliable Records Management Systems**

Under section 61 of the *State Records Act 2000* the Commission is required (inter alia) to establish and publish principles and standards governing recordkeeping by government organizations.

In late August 2001 the Commission distributed a draft recordkeeping plan and principles to the heads of 809 client organizations. Comment was received from 3% of these agencies circulated. The Commission then established a client consultative group that contributed to the content of the final draft of the six Standards (and the accompanying Principles). At its December meeting the Commission endorsed the final draft and also authorized the publication of the Standards in the *Government Gazette*. The Standards were gazetted on 5 March 2002 and launched with the website on the following day by the Minister for Culture and the Arts, the Hon Sheila McHale. The Standards have been accessible on the SRO's website since their launch date. Also a loose-leaf bound copy is available for purchase through the website.

### **4. Effective disposition**

At its seventh meeting on 13 June 2002, the Commission considered and endorsed recordkeeping plans for the State Records Commission and the State Records Office. Both the Commission and the SRO were required to compile draft recordkeeping plans within six months of the Act's commencement. Following the June meeting the Commission's recordkeeping plan was submitted to the Minister for Culture and the Arts for final approval, under section 25 of the *State Records Act 2000*.

The *State Records Act 2000* requires all other government agencies that were in existence on 30 November 2001 to submit a draft recordkeeping plan to the Commission (via the Director of State Records) within two years of the publication of the Standards, i.e. by close of business 5 March 2004. By 30 June 2002 the Director of State Records had received draft recordkeeping plans from two agencies: the South West Area Health Service and the Totalisator Agency Board of Western Australia.

## THE YEAR IN REVIEW

In the year under review it became clear to the Commission that:

- **Online Register of State Archives**

There is a need for a whole of government database that will provide information about all State archives, whether in the State archives collection at the State Records Office or still held by Government agencies.

Section 73 of the *State Records Act 2000* requires the Director to establish a Register of State archives. Currently about two thirds of the records held by the SRO in the State archives collection are identified and listed on an in house system. It is imperative that the existing SRO system be overhauled and upgraded to enable online access and become the archives Register. The creation of the Register in an electronic format will make all State archives, irrespective of their location, much more accessible by Government agencies and the community.

The National Archives of Australia, State Records in NSW, the Queensland State Archives and the Public Records Office of Victoria all maintain electronic finding aids to their archival collections. Researchers, nationally and internationally have online access to the collection database of all of these archival authorities.

The Commission is concerned that this coverage and functionality is not available for records in the State archives collection at the State Records Office. National initiatives are moving towards an Australia wide gateway to library, museum and archival data. Until Western Australia's own official archives become available in a front-end environment, the State Records Office will not be able to contribute to such a national database.

- **Storage for State Archives**

Since July 2001 the State Records Office has not accepted new transfers of archival records. Agencies have been asked to make alternative arrangements for the storage of their archival records until the SRO secures additional accommodation.

Until the State Records Office is able to accept transfers of



government archives from agencies, all levels of Government will face the financial burden of paying for extra records storage for an indefinite period. It should also be appreciated that the current situation breaches the spirit of section 32 of the *State Records Act 2000*, which requires the Director to accept custody of State archives that are more than 25 years old.

It is the Commission's view that the issue of archival storage should be addressed as a matter of priority, and looked at in the context of the wider storage implications posed by electronic records and the means by which they may be captured for posterity and made available through the national gateway system mentioned above.

- **Conversion of State Archives to a digital format**

The State Records Office plans to convert many of the frequently used records series held in the State archives collection to a digital format. This format conversion will enable both the community and Government to consult and use State archives through the Internet and other online systems. This will overcome the 'tyranny of distance' that prevents many clients from obtaining access to State archives. The Commission will support current and future initiatives by the Director of State Records to establish a comprehensive and ongoing program to digitize records in the State archives collection.

## **KEY EVENTS OF THE YEAR**

**July 2001** Proclamation in part of the *State Records Act 2000*, 31 July 2001, including Parts 8 and 9, which established the State Records Commission and the office of Director: State Records.

Appointment of Kandy-Jane Henderson as the fourth Commissioner.

**August** Inaugural meeting of the Commission, 14 August 2001.

**September** Second Commission meeting, 26 September. At this meeting the Commission resolved the name and composition of the State Records Advisory Committee, which has since replaced the Library Board's Standing Committee on Public Records. Mr Murray Allen's final attendance as a Commissioner.

**October** Third Commission meeting, 30 October. Mr Alex Errington, Acting State Ombudsman, to attend this and subsequent meetings pending the appointment of a new State Ombudsman.

**November** All sections of the *State Records Act 2000*, and the *State Records (Consequential Provisions) Act 2000* proclaimed on 30 November. The recordkeeping provisions of the *Library Board of WA Act* now repealed.

**December** Fourth Commission meeting, 18 December. Final draft of the Recordkeeping Principles and Standards endorsed, in accordance with section 61 of the *State Records Act 2000*.

On 20 December the Library Board of WA endorsed the recommendations of the final meeting (29 November) of the Board's Standing Committee on Public Records. A formal handover ceremony was held the same day to mark the symbolic transfer to



the Commission of statutory powers formerly exercised by the Library Board with respect to government recordkeeping.

**March 2002** Official launch of the Commission's Recordkeeping Principles and Standards and the joint State Records Commission / State Records Office website. Both achievements were celebrated at the same venue on 6 March.

Fifth Commission meeting, 14 March. First attendance as a Commissioner by Ms Deirdre O'Donnell, State Ombudsman.

From March to May 2002 twenty training sessions were held in metropolitan and regional venues by State Records Office staff to introduce the principles and standards to agency staff. The training sessions attracted 950 attendees.

**April** Sixth Commission meeting and planning day, 24 April 2002.

**May** First meeting of the Commission's State Records Advisory Committee, 29 May 2002. The Committee considered and endorsed four records retention and disposal authorities submitted by Government agencies.

**June** Seventh Commission meeting, 13 June 2002. The minutes of the inaugural meeting of the State Records Advisory Committee were endorsed. The recordkeeping plan for the State Records Office was approved. The Commission's recordkeeping plan was endorsed by Members and referred to the Minister for her approval.

On 3 June (Foundation Day) Commissioner Keighley-Gerardy accepted from the Premier, the Rt Hon Dr Geoff Gallop, a set of the 1971 State Cabinet papers on behalf of the people of Western Australia. This ceremony was the inaugural annual commemoration of the official release of Cabinet papers that are thirty years old.

## **SPREADING THE MESSAGE**

The following presentations on the implementation of the *State Records Act 2000* were given by the Commissioners and SRO staff during the year:

*'State Records Act 2000'*

Presentation by Mr Murray Allen to members of the Records & Information Management Liaison Group (Perth).

Held at Alexander Library Building. 21 August 2001. 80 attendees.

Presentation by Mr Des Pearson to members of the Records Management Association of Australia (WA Branch).

Held at Matilda Bay Restaurant. 27 February 2002. 120 attendees.

*'State Records Act & Implications for Government Agencies'*

Presented by Ms Anne Gill to records staff of Edith Cowan University.

Held at Edith Cowan University. 11 July 2001. 15 attendees.

*'Winning in Western Australia: WA's First Recordkeeping Act'*

Paper presented by Mr Chris Coggin to Joint National Conference of the Australian Society of Archivists and the Records Management Association of Australia.  
Held at Hotel Grand Chancellor, Hobart, Tasmania. 4 September 2001.

*'Electronic Document Management'*

Presented by Ms Isabel Smith to members of AURISA (Australian Urban and Regional Information systems Association) at their annual general meeting.  
Held at Curtin University of Technology. 25 September 2001. 25 attendees.

*'The State Records Act 2000'*

Presented by Ms Isabel Smith to officers of Department of Planning and Infrastructure.  
Held at Albert Facey House. 24 October 2001. 20 attendees.

*'State Records Act 2000'*

Presentation by Mr Chris Coggin to members of the Perth chapter of the Records and Information Management Liaison Group.  
Held at Alexander Library Building. 7 December 2001. 20 attendees.

*'Electronic Document Management and the State Records Act 2000'*

Presented by Ms Isabel Smith to WALIS (WA Land Information System) group.  
Held at Leeuwin Centre, Floreat. 18 January 2002. 60 attendees.

*'State Records Act 2000'*

Presentation by Mr Chris Coggin to members of the Records & Information Management Liaison Group (Mid West).  
Held at Geraldton TAFE. 24 January 2002. 12 attendees.

*'Government Recordkeeping and the Public Interest'*

Presentation by Mr Chris Coggin to Institute of Public Administration of Australia.  
Held at TAFE. 26 March 2002. 75 attendees.

*'Compliance with the State Records Act 2000'*

Presentation by Ms Isabel Smith to SPIRIT program (sponsored by the Department of Industry and Technology).  
Held at Department of Health. 14 May 2002. 300 attendees (over two sessions).

*'State Records Act & Implications for Government Agencies'*

Presented by Ms Anne Gill to officers of Development Commissions.  
Held at Hotel Ibis, Perth. 21 May 2002. 5 attendees.

*'State Records Act 2000'*

Presentation by Ms Isabel Smith to NGIS (National Geographical Information Society).  
Held at Acacia Hotel. 22 May 2002. 15 attendees.

## **OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE STATE RECORDS OFFICE**

The Director of State Records reports to the State Records Commission on all matters relating to the operation of the *State Records Act 2000*, and to the Director General, Department of Culture and the Arts, on other matters pertaining to the administration of the State Records Office.

The Director is the Commission's Executive Officer and in that capacity attends all of its general meetings. The State Records Office's Team Leader: Recordkeeping Services is the Commission's Executive Secretary.

All draft recordkeeping plans compiled by Government organizations are submitted to the Director and evaluated by SRO staff before the final version is referred to the Commission for approval. The plans are assessed by SRO staff against a consistent matrix, a report is written about them, and the resulting documentation is passed to the Commission for consideration.

The Director may refer the records retention and disposal component of these plans to the State Records Advisory Committee, which makes recommendations on the retention periods for the records of the agency in question. The Director is the chairperson of this Committee, while other State Records Office staff provide secretarial support.

### **Support for SRO funding proposals**

The Commission gave its support for funding proposals to be submitted by the Director of State Records as part of the 2002-2003 budget process, for the following cases seen as addressing critical areas of need:

- The urgent need for archival storage rental accommodation to enable the State Records Office to fulfill its statutory obligations under section 32 of the *State Records Act 2000*, and,
- the need to complete the organization and documentation of those records of the WA Inc Royal Commission that were transferred to the SRO's custody in 1999.

The Cabinet's Expenditure Review Committee, while acknowledging the merit of the case for archival storage, reported that it was unable to progress it in the "current fiscal environment". Funding of the second proposal, i.e. the WA Inc Records Project, was supported as being "in line with Government's commitment in respect of fair, open and accountable Government".

## **THE STATE RECORDS ACT 2000**

The *State Records Act 2000* and the accompanying *State Records (Consequential Provisions) Act 2000* received the Governor's assent on 28 November 2000 and were proclaimed in the *Government Gazette* on 30 November 2001. Both Acts supersede the recordkeeping provisions of the State's previous archival legislation, the *Library Board of Western Australia Act 1951-1983*.

Part 8 of the Act establishes the Commission as an independent statutory authority with standards setting, auditing and reporting responsibilities. The Commission is accountable directly to Parliament.

Under the Act, a State record is defined as any record of information created, received or maintained in any form by a government organization or Parliamentary Department. State records can exist in any format on which information is stored, including plans, photographs, films, magnetic and optical media.

A cornerstone of the legislation is an instrument of accountability called the recordkeeping plan, which is a document that every Government organization must formulate. Each plan must identify, all records created by the organization, how those records are to be managed in the context of the organization's functions and for how long the records are to be kept. The plans will be submitted to the State Records Commission for approval.

Part 9 of the Act establishes the position of Director of State Records. Under the Director's leadership the State Records Office serves as the operational arm of the State Records Commission. The Director and staff of the SRO provide advice, assistance and training to government organizations, in particular on the preparation of, and compliance with, recordkeeping plans. The SRO also provides information about, and public access to, records held in the State archives collection. The Director is required by the Act to create and maintain a register of all State archives, including those not held in the State archives collection.

The *State Records (Consequential Provisions) Act 2000* was enacted to amend relevant clauses in other State legislation affected by the principal Act, and also to establish transitional provisions that would ensure the orderly transfer of State archives held by the Library Board to the custody of the Director of State Records.

## **THE STATE RECORDS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

In accordance with section 62 of the *State Records Act 2000* the Commission has established a State Records Advisory Committee to provide it with advice regarding;

- those State records that should be archives;
- retention periods for those State records that are not to be State archives; and
- associated matters.

At each meeting the Committee considers the records retention and disposal component of recordkeeping plans, and makes recommendations to the Commission on the disposal of records described in these plans.

Normally the Committee is to meet four times a year. The new Committee met once this year, on 29 May 2002 when it considered four disposal authorities.

Under section 62 (2) of the Act, the Advisory Committee's membership must include 'representatives from the Public Service and bodies concerned with recordkeeping'. In accordance with terms of reference established by the State Records Commission, members and deputy members are appointed to the Committee for either two years (in the case of former members of the previous body who have been reappointed to the Advisory Committee) or three years in the case of new members.

Members of the State Records Advisory Committee (SRAC) during 2001-2002 were:

### **Chair**

**Mr Chris Coggin**

Director: State Records

## **Members**

**Ms Jenny Edgecombe** (deputy **Dr Karen Anderson**)  
Australian Society of Archivists (WA) Inc

**Ms Dale Bacon** (deputy **Ms Sue Beverley**)  
Department of Indigenous Affairs

**Professor Geoffrey Bolton** (deputy **Ms Robyn Taylor**)  
Historical Interests representative

**Ms Gaynor Deal** (deputy **Mr Brian Soares**)  
Institute for Information Management Ltd (WA)

**Mr Michael Sonter** (deputy **Mrs Prue Griffin**)  
Law Society of Western Australia

**Mr Mike Smith** (deputy **Ms Noelene Jennings**)  
Local Government Managers' Association

**Ms Shirley Conway-Mortimer** (deputy **Ms Janet Farrell**)  
Local Government Records Management Group

**Mr Greg Joyce** (deputy **Mr Brian Bradley**)  
State Government CEO Representative

**Ms Julie Bright** (deputy **Mr Roy Watkins**)  
Records & Information Management Liaison Group

**Ms Josette Mathers** (deputy **Ms Gail Murphy**)  
Records Management Association of Australia (WA)

NOTE: Deputy members fill in for members when the latter are unable to attend Committee meetings.

## **Executive Secretary**

**Ms Isabel Smith**

Team Leader: Recordkeeping Services, State Records Office

## **Secretary**

**Mrs Karen Eichorn**

Administrative Assistant: State Records Office

## CONTACT INFORMATION

The State Records Commission operates through the State Records Office of Western Australia. All enquires for the Commission, whether in person, by telephone, by fax, or in writing should be directed through the State Records Office.

### **State Records Commission of Western Australia**

Alexander Library Building  
Perth Cultural Centre  
Perth WA 6000  
Mon - Fri : 9.00am - 5.00pm  
**phone:** (08) 9427 3426  
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### **State Records Office of Western Australia**

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### **Chairman: State Records Commission**

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### **Director of State Records & Executive Officer to the State Records Commission**

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