

CONTRIBUTION TO THE PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION SUBMISSION ON NOT-FOR-PROFITS

The Australian Society of Archivists (ASA) is a professional association comprising archivists and records management professionals. The professional interests of the ASA's 850 members cover the records and related activities of governments and their agencies, business organisations, universities, schools, service organisations, and non-profit bodies. Further information is available on our website at www.archivists.org.au

In the context of society as a whole, records and archives are part of the 'glue' that holds it together and allows it to prosper. The significance of records can, for example, be to:

- the history of families and individuals;
- the background and history of migrant communities;
- furtherance of the interests and welfare of indigenous communities; and
- protection of the legal rights of individuals and groups.

Professional associations such as the ASA do not by their nature or size provide government services or large-scale community services. The services that they do provide are largely made by volunteers in small groups or as individuals and with no financial recompense for their time and rarely for their expenses. As such, and as noted by the Inquiry, these contributions to society are not readily discernible let alone quantifiable. However, given the sheer size of the sector the contribution must be significant.

The ASA for its part does significant work on a non-profit basis to assist community groups to collect, manage, and preserve records of value. For example, the ASA:

- Conducts workshops on the management and preservation of records for volunteers from community organisations such as local museums and historical societies;
- Provides advice to indigenous and migrant groups on how to approach the management of their records; and
- Makes a financial commitment to these aims by promoting community records-related interests. For example, the ASA sponsors a university scholarship for an Aboriginal to study archives and recordkeeping.

It is noted from the Terms of Reference that while cultural activities are listed, they effectively are not seen as being a high priority for the Inquiry. But we would argue that in terms of community engagement and health generally, the cultural aspects should not be ignored. This is particularly apparent with indigenous and migrant communities.

The problem for the ASA—and no doubt for other cultural and professional associations—that it has reached the limit for what it can do 'externally' in terms of the funding required. This is because, inter alia, the ASA:

- is small and specialist purposed;
- has its funding for activities dependent on member subscriptions;
- relies on volunteers to undertake its activities; and
- receives little in the way of sources for external funding to support its community activities.

The funding that is available from government for the non-profit sector is largely directed to front-line community organisations to deliver nominated, on-going services on a regular basis.

From the ASA perspective and perhaps for the majority of cultural associations, the ability to access funding to effectively develop and deliver programmes for the community would go a long way to meeting that Impact desired from the Inquiry, namely the *Connectedness to others*. In this context, to develop programmes which have value but are not readily quantifiable in terms of impact as they will be directed at the longer term outcomes.

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Kind Regards

Jackie

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