

# RECORDS

## TERRITORY

### Northern Territory Archives Service Newsletter

February 2000 No. 20

A Division of the Department of Corporate and Information Services

#### FROM OUR DIRECTOR

In farewelling the 1990s it is fitting that we provide our readers with a new look newsletter signalling the start of a new era for the Northern Territory Archives Service (NTAS).

The completion of the RecordsConnect project at the end of 1999 was a major milestone for the NTAS, which now faces the challenge of seeing that the corporate recordkeeping system is managed and supported effectively across the NT Government.

At the end of 1999, the NTAS had achieved its full complement of staff, which is now eager to proceed with revitalising the archives transfer program, implementing a new archives management system and spreading the word across government about recordkeeping policies, standards and responsibilities.

A happy new year to all, and we look forward to doing business in 2000.

**Greg Coleman**  
Director NTAS

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#### NT HISTORY AWARDS FOR 2000

All prospective applicants for the NT History Awards for 2000, please note that application forms will be available from the NTAS in March. We congratulate former History Award recipients, Jim Cameron and Diane Clark, for completion of research projects for which they received assistance from the History Awards program.

The Historical Society of the NT has recently published *Letters from Port Essington 1838-1845*, which was compiled and edited by J.M.R (Jim) Cameron. This is a fascinating collection of letters which were written by residents of Port Essington, the third British settlement on Australia's northern coastline. The letters in the collection were gathered from private and official collections in Australia and the United Kingdom.

*The Ngaliwurra-Wuli Aboriginal Association's Environmental Health Story* was completed this year by Diane Clark. This is a story as told to Diane by Ngaliwurra-Wuli community members in the region we know as Timber Creek. It is hoped that this work may be published in the near future.



## CONTRACTS FOR RECORDS STORAGE AND DISPOSAL SERVICES

In the previous issue of Records Territory (No 19, September 1999), we advised of the issue of contracts for the storage and disposal of secondary NT Government records. The contractors are Pickfords Records Management in Darwin and Centralian Records Management in Alice Springs.

The Alice Springs facility has been operational since mid-1999 and is an impressive purpose-built facility in Hele Crescent. The contractor provides a good storage and retrieval service to agencies in the Central Australian region, and this is a safe and inexpensive alternative to the practice of storing records in basements, sheds, and the like. The danger in some instances is not merely that valuable records may be damaged, or even lost for good, but that individuals accessing the records may be subject to physical harm because of the totally inappropriate storage conditions currently being utilised. The monetary cost of storing records also has to be taken into consideration and often it is less expensive to utilise the services of the contractor.

Pickfords has all but completed its facility at Berrimah just south of Darwin. The structure is ready and all that remains for it to be operational is for the shelving to be installed (which should have happened by the time this Newsletter is distributed). A visit to the facility on a typically hot, December, build-up afternoon was a pleasant experience as the airconditioning plant was being tested.

While the facility will be unable to store permanent value NT Government records, the airconditioning is sufficient for the storing of long-term temporary secondary records, even those that may not be destroyed for up to fifty or so years (in the case of personnel records for example).

Both contractors are able to assist with listing, boxing and destroying records; their services are not limited to storage and retrieval alone.

Centralian Records Management Building



Contacts for the respective facilities are:

Alice Springs  
Mr Drury Pyper  
Centralian Records Management  
12 Hele Crescent  
Alice Springs NT 0870  
Phone: 8953 3566 Fax: 8953 4474

Darwin  
Mr Les Bullard  
Pickfords Records Management  
889 Stuart Highway  
Berrimah NT 0828  
Phone: 8932 5999 Fax: 8932 5033

Procedures for utilising both services are available from the above or from the NTAS.

Contact Barry Garside on ph: 8924 7494 or email: [barry.garside@nt.gov.au](mailto:barry.garside@nt.gov.au) for further information.

## STAFF NOTES

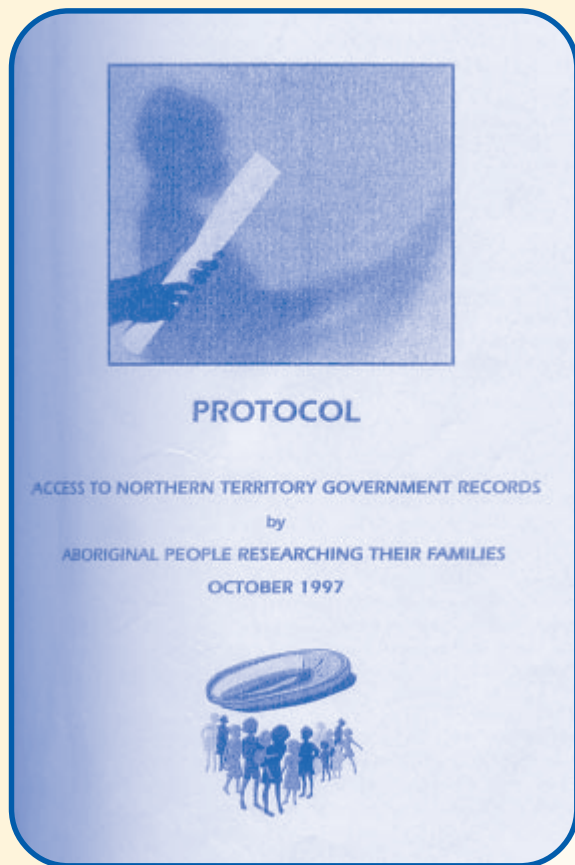
We are very pleased to have filled a new permanent part-time position in the Oral History Unit – the **Oral Records Officer**.

Anita Angel was appointed to the position on 1 November 1999, having worked with the Oral History Unit, on a contract basis, between March and July 1999.

Anita is responsible for analysing the contents of transcripts of oral history recordings lodged with NTAS, drafting summaries and contents listings, compiling documentation about these records and maintaining 'registers' on the Oral History collection which enable its effective administration and ensure continuing community access.



## ABORIGINAL ADVISORY GROUP AND PROTOCOL



The Aboriginal Advisory Group established to oversee the *Protocol on Access to Northern Territory Government Records by Aboriginal people Researching their Families* had its last meeting for 1999 on December 2nd.

As the *Protocol* has been in operation since October 1997, the advisory group decided to spend a large part of the December meeting reviewing the *Protocol*. Recommendations for changes to the *Protocol* will be taken by the members of the Advisory Group to the organisations and communities that they represent for endorsement.

The researcher accreditation process that has been put in place has meant that there are now five people who have been successfully accredited to conduct family research, using Northern Territory Government records, on behalf of Aboriginal people seeking information about their families. These people have research skills, an understanding of the nature of the Stolen Generations research and disclose information in a sensitive and confidential manner.

In an attempt to improve the communication from this advisory group (and the National Archives of Australia (NAA), Darwin Regional Office Advisory Group) to all the Stolen Generations people in the Northern Territory, we intend to pursue the possibility of a joint newsletter with the NAA.

Contact Greg Coleman or Cathy Flint for further information.

## FOUNDING DOCUMENTS WEBSITE Documenting Democracy - Australia's story



Work is nearing completion on this national collaborative project that was outlined in our last newsletter *Records Territory* (No 19, September 1999).

More recently, we have been working on the Northern Territory related dates in the timeline component of this website and seventeen images have been selected to be incorporated into this section.

A date for a simultaneous launch around Australia is still being finalised, but it will be some time in 2000.

Contact Cathy Flint on  
ph: (08) 8924 7347 or  
email: [cathy.flint@nt.gov.au](mailto:cathy.flint@nt.gov.au)  
for further information.

The sample pictured left is one of the images that will appear in the Northern Territory-related sections.



## ORAL HISTORY: CONFERENCE NOTES

Since our last newsletter Francis Good, Archivist, Oral Records has done some travelling both interstate and overseas. Francis attended two conferences and presented papers at both. Here are his comments:

In September 1999 the Oral History Association of Australia (OHAA) held its four-day biennial National Conference in Melbourne, hosted by OHAA's Victorian Branch. Celebrating the 21st anniversary of OHAA's formation, *Tales of the Century* aimed to reflect on historical events shaping the century, to explore the power of narrative, and to review the development of oral history in Australia and internationally.

Presenters came from around Australia, together with several from the UK, New Zealand, South Africa and the USA. Alistair Thomson, from the University of Sussex, in the keynote address, provided an excellent global overview of the development and state of the discipline (see the OHAA's *Journal*, No 21, 1999, which includes many of the papers presented).

His summary of the event and its outcomes (copy available from the NTAS) noted impressive attendance of recent and current students, and of others relatively new to oral history.

Apart from students and academics, there was input from heritage and museum staff, archivists and librarians, government officials and heritage workers, community historians, freelance writers and media workers.

Arising from my work at the NTAS over the years, I presented *Voice, Ear and Text: Words and Meaning*, focusing on what happens to the orality of interviews when translated to print, and the rationale underlying editorial decisions. Looking at approaches recommended in methods-manuals and sources such as the E-mail listserv of the US-based Oral History Association (OHA)-provided contrasts in factors

influencing what is and is not included, and why.

In October, I attended the annual meeting of the OHA in Anchorage, Alaska: *Giving Voice: Oral Historians and the Shaping of Narrative*. Topics covered by over 250 participants included preservation and intellectual property, interpretation and public agencies, recovering silenced voices, ethnic and gender identity, community history, sharing narrative authority, and editing for public use.

Importantly, the setting also provided an exciting context for presentation of oral history work by Alaska Natives, and First Nations oral historians from Canada. Special events included a tour

of the Alaska Native Heritage Centre, performances of Tlingit stories by Robert Sam of the Sitka Tribe of Alaska, and music and dance from Pamyua, a Yup'ik/Doo-Wop group blending their Eskimo and African-American heritage.

There was a small contingent from Australia, including Terry Whitebeach from Alice Springs and Barbara Erskine from Townsville. In keeping with indigenous themes of the conference, I presented a paper, *War and Peace in the Outback: the Voice and the Record*, which contrasted several approaches in published oral history with Northern Territory Aboriginal people, and archival interview work in NT bush communities.



Totemic figure, Alaska Native Heritage Centre, Anchorage

# IMPLEMENTATION OF NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT THESAURUS

The implementation of the Northern Territory Government Thesaurus has, without doubt, been the most challenging aspect of the new approach to government recordkeeping. Northern Territory Government agencies have made a tremendous effort, within very tight time frames, to put the thesaurus in place as part of the RecordsConnect/TRIM implementation, and have made significant inroads in addressing records retrieval issues through the use of the new titling conventions.

As records are converted to the new recordkeeping standards, including thesaurus titling, it is clear that there is still much to be learned, and thesaurus development work will need to continue for some time.

The Northern Territory Archives Service is planning to release a new version of the Corporate Thesaurus early in the year 2000 to address some of the gaps that have been identified in the current version. Some new standard documents aimed at making the thesaurus more friendly to end users, including an alphabetical listing in Microsoft Word format that can be created automatically from a TRIM Thesaurus export, will also be released early in the new year, along with thesaurus maintenance training for thesaurus managers.

Feedback from lead agencies, including a number of large agencies, indicates that the effort invested in thesaurus titling is already beginning to pay off. These agencies report that thesaurus titling encourages the identification of records through classification, and enables more accurate and efficient retrieval of records through the use of the controlled vocabulary.

The key to the success of the thesaurus in any agency is training. It is essential that all employees who create or use government

records have an understanding of the thesaurus terms relevant to those records. The NTAS plans to include thesaurus development and management training in the learning opportunities regularly offered across government. Training opportunities for end users in the use of agency specific thesauri should be pursued through the agency records management unit.

For further information, please contact the Records Policy Coordinator, Beth Moloney.

## RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

Researchers have recently utilised the resources available in the NTAS Search Room for the following research projects:

- PhD thesis: An examination of the interaction between Christian missionary endeavours and the development/implementation of Aboriginal Affairs policy in the Northern Territory from 1911-1982. *Bernard Gabbott (University of New England)*
- PhD thesis on:
  - a. A history of the Commonwealth Government school system in the Northern Territory between 1973 and 1979 with particular reference to the development of the policies implemented in 1973.
  - b. The Commonwealth Teaching Service in the Northern Territory 1970-1979. *Graham McGill (University of Newcastle, e-mail: edgjmc@cc.newcastle.edu.au)*
- Background research for an oral history project involving a number of elderly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Top End. *Peg Havnen (NT Writers' Centre)*.
- Photographic research for a publication on Fannie Bay Gaol by NTU Press, *Inside Out*, and a recently mounted exhibition on two women on nineteenth century Darwin opening 3 December, *Palmerston Paraphernalia*. *Dr Mickey Dewar, (Curator Territory History/Regional Museums, MAGNT)*
- Russian peanut farmers of Katherine. *Sue Harlow (MAGNT)*
- Heritage assessment of select sites at Galiwinku (Elcho Island) *Bob Alford*
- Drowning of Low Kim Fook (aged 5 yrs) at Yam Creek 1904. *Eric Lee*
- Tribute to Mounted Constable H. H. Deviney for Camooweal Drivers' Camp. *Perry Morey*
- Essay on the town planning history of Bullocky Point. *Thomas Mitchell (NTU)*
- History of Royal Darwin Hospital. *Amanda Jones (THS)*

## MAXWELL CARTWRIGHT

Our condolences go to the family and friends of Max Cartwright from Alice Springs who passed away in October 1999. Max, a recipient of two NT History Awards and a keen user of archival resources at the NTAS, is fondly remembered by NTAS staff.

## COMPLETION OF PROJECT IS AN AUSTRALIAN FIRST

The RecordsConnect project wound to a halt in December. Implementation of the TRIM records management system has now taken place across the NT Government, achieving an Australian first, i.e. full implementation of a mandated whole-of-government system.

This was achieved through the efforts of a dedicated and persistent team of people which included the RecordsConnect project team and representatives from IBM and its partners. The success of the implementation is also due to the

cooperation and support provided by records managers and administrators in agencies.

The banner has now been passed to the NTAS which is establishing a work unit to manage, maintain and provide support for the corporate system to all agencies.

A special thanks must be made here to Heather Norris and Jeanette Collins to whom much of the achievement of RecordsConnect is owed.

## THE RECORDS MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA (RMAA)

16<sup>th</sup> National Convention, Darwin, 29 August to 1 September 1999

The 16<sup>th</sup> National Convention for the Records Management Association of Australia was held at the Darwin Entertainment Centre at the end of August/early September. The theme for the convention was "Records Management – Whose Territory" and it attracted a good audience (some 322 delegates, almost twice as many as when the event was previously held in the Top End in 1991) and a wide range of speakers from Australia, New Zealand and the USA.

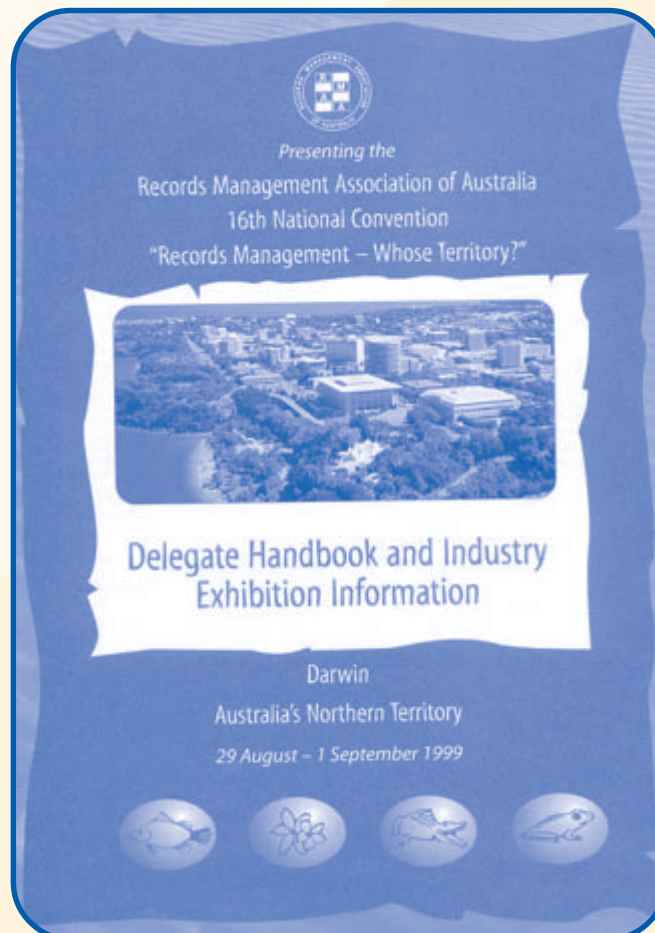
Staff at the NT Archives Service were instrumental in bringing this convention to Darwin and running it. Heather Norris, the Project Manager for NT Archives Service RecordsConnect project, presented a paper. Naturally, her topic was Whole-of-Government Records Management in the Northern Territory. You may call me biased, but I believe this was one of the most well-received presentations at the convention. In her inimitable way, Heather delivered an account of the RecordsConnect project and the joys (or

otherwise!) of implementing a records management system across the whole of the NT Government. The rousing reception her presentation received bears witness to the effort she put into the preparation and delivery of her paper.

Other papers were almost as good. These included: Redefining the Document and How to Manage it; Recordkeeping as a People's Resource; Imaging in the Legal Profession; E-Recordkeeping is E-ssential to E-Commerce; Building Partnerships, Demolishing Barriers, Constructing the Future. There was some lively discussion towards the end of the convention as to exactly whose territory records management is – the consensus seemed to be that it is now everybody's territory, with a PC on every desk, electronic documents, networking, and so on.

Copies of the proceedings from this convention cost \$30.00 and are available by contacting

Barry Garside on ph: 8924 7494 or email: [barry.garside@nt.gov.au](mailto:barry.garside@nt.gov.au).





## SPOTLIGHT ON...

## WILLIAM BLOOMFIELD DOUGLAS' DIARY

A recently rediscovered treasure at NTAS is a copy of William Bloomfield Douglas' 1872 diary, which was added to our collection in 1984. Bloomfield Douglas was the Northern Territory's first Government Resident from 1870 to 1873. The original diary is housed in the Rhodes House Library, Oxford University.

Andrew Pitt (Archivist Information Access)

Bloomfield Douglas' 1872 diary is important for at least two reasons:

1. It gives a good insight into Douglas' complex personality
2. It fills an important gap in the records. By 1872, Douglas' difficulties were beginning to overwhelm him and, in contrast to 1870 and 1871, he sent few general reports south.

Professor. Jack Cross, University of South Australia

Presented here is a page from Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> April 1872. Andrew Pitt, has supplied a draft transcript for those finding reading the original somewhat difficult. As you can see there are a few words even Andrew couldn't decipher.

NTRS 541 PC 5 Photocopy of diary kept during Douglas' term as Government Resident 1872.

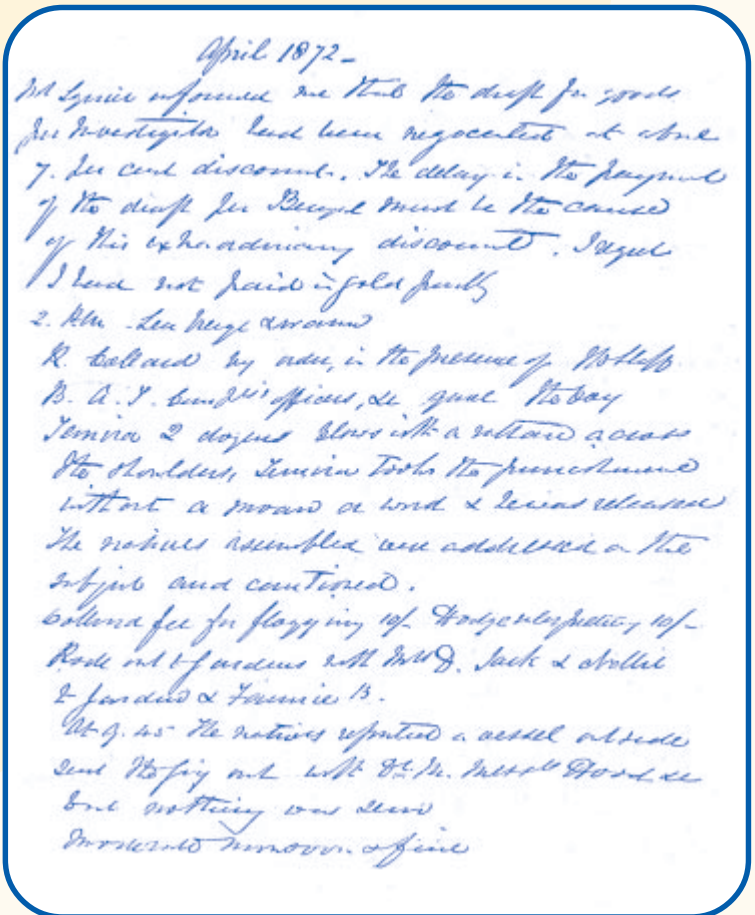
### Draft Transcription

April 1872

Mr Squier informed me that the draft for goods for Investigator had been negotiated at above 7 per cent discount. The delay in the payment of the draft for Bengal must be the cause of this extraordinary discount. I regret I had not paid in gold partly (?).

2-p.m. Sea breeze & warm

R. Collard by order in the presence of Nottleff (?) B.A.T. Compy's officers & c., gave the boy Temira 2 dozen blows with a rattan across the shoulders, Temira took the punishment without a moan or word & he was released. The natives assembled were addressed on the subject and cautioned.



Collard fee for flogging 10/- . Hodge interpreting 10/- . Rode out to Gardens with Mrs D. Jack & Nellie To Gardens & Fannie B.

At 9:45 the natives reported a vessel outside. Sent the jig out with Dr M. Messrs Hood & c. but nothing was seen.

Moderate monsoon & fine.

## GOOD RECORD KEEPING NOW POSSIBLE

as Whole of Government Records Management Policies Approved

In January 2000 the Executive of the Coordination Committee approved, in principle, the whole of government records management policies and guidelines submitted by the NTAS.

These policies set a framework for good recordkeeping across the Northern Territory Government, and establish the standards upon which every NT Government Agency can work towards developing agency specific goals and objectives for recordkeeping.

In addition, the policy documents offer some practical guidelines

and examples of the kinds of practices that will ensure compliance with recordkeeping principles and offer operational efficiencies.

While the current focus is on paper based records, the policies and guidelines also highlight and address the recordkeeping challenges posed by the increasing volume of records created and received electronically.

For further information, please contact the Records Policy Coordinator, Beth Moloney.

## WHO'S WHO

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## WHY DISPOSAL

One of the fundamental components of any recordkeeping regime, be it small or large, is the "disposal" process. But what is disposal? I'll address this question in two ways – "disposal" the word and "disposal" the concept.

**Disposal the word:** In many ways "disposal" is an unfortunate term in recordkeeping because of its connotations. If, like me, you're an avid James Bond fan, you'd know that when Blofeld orders his henchmen to "dispose" of Agent 007, he doesn't mean they are to examine him, work out who has used him and for what purpose (a very tricky one in this example!), seek a legal opinion as to his admissibility in a court of law, establish his value, and consign him for storage. What the arch-villain really means is that they are to eliminate him, to destroy him. And this latter term is the one that most people think of when disposal is mentioned in a recordkeeping context – the words "disposal" and "destruction" are often used interchangeably when talking about records, and this can be a big mistake.

Our North American colleagues use the word "disposition" instead of "disposal" and this is not strictly correct, either. A letter from my boss advising of a pay rise will be a record with a happy disposition, but one advising that my services are no longer required would be a record with a decidedly morbid disposition!

Unless and until we import a word from another language with a more precise definition (similar to the way the Spanish word "macho" is used in the English language today – and I'm not suggesting there's anything macho about records management, this is just an example!), the word "disposal" will be with us for a while.

But what about "disposal" the concept? Sure, destruction is a part of disposal – many people's preferred option! – but what about the rest of it? *The Australian Standard for Records Management,*

*AS4390*, defines disposal as: "... a range of processes associated with implementing appraisal decisions. These include the retention, deletion or destruction of records in or from recordkeeping systems. They may also include the migration or transmission of records between recordkeeping systems and the transfer of custody or ownership of records". (*Part 1: General, Section 8.3, p 10*).

The recently approved Northern Territory Government Records Policies and Guidelines state: "Effective records retention and disposal standards and procedures assist with maintaining cost-effective records management programs in agencies and help to ensure that relevant evidence of government business is maintained." [*RM10 – Records Retention and Disposal*]. This is where a properly implemented disposal regime assists government (and the private sector) in its overall management of recorded information. By analysing the business function, it establishes what records should be created, how they are used, what their value is and, of course, when they should be destroyed – if, indeed, they can be destroyed.

There are many instances of the effects of the non-existence of an adequate records disposal regime. Some are very recent and close to home, and include the inability to identify information required in court and the expenditure of funds to house records that should have been destroyed long ago. While many see the establishment of such a regime as time and resource consuming, it may only be the fear of the unknown that has precluded many agencies from tackling this issue – and reaping the obvious benefits – before now.

If you are in a Northern Territory Government agency and wish to begin establishing a disposal regime for your records please contact Barry Garside, the Records Standards Coordinator at the NTAS on ph: 8924 7494 or email: [barry.garside@nt.gov.au](mailto:barry.garside@nt.gov.au).