

Queensland Government response to the  
*Report of review of the  
Public Records Act 2002*





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## Acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traditional Owners and Elders of the lands and seas on which we meet, live, learn and work.

We acknowledge those of the past, the ancestors whose strength has nurtured this land and its people, and who have passed on their wisdom.

We acknowledge those of the present for their leadership and ongoing efforts to protect and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures.

We acknowledge those of the future, the Elders not yet born, who will inherit the legacy of our efforts.

We recognise it is our collective efforts, and responsibility as individuals, communities and governments, to ensure equality, recognition and advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders across all aspects of society and everyday life.



## Message from the Minister

The Queensland Government is committed to ensuring Queenslanders can trust the way public records are stored, maintained, preserved and accessed. The *Public Records Act 2002* plays a critical role in managing Queensland public records to ensure the story of Queensland's culture and history can be preserved for future generations.

Continuing our commitment to trust and transparency in government, the Queensland Government established an Independent Panel in May 2022, led by the Honourable John Byrne AO RFD, to conduct a crucial review of the *Public Records Act 2002* to modernise and strengthen the legislative framework.

The *Public Records Act 2002* review was designed to create a more comprehensive and inclusive legislative framework that reflects contemporary digital and societal practices, following an increasingly digital approach to public records. There are an estimated 500 public authorities operating under the *Public Records Act 2002*.

The review focused on important items, including recognition of First Nations perspectives, opportunities to increase accountability and transparency of government, the functions and powers of the Queensland State Archivist, efficiencies about scope of records, the management and preservation of digital records and emerging technology, the interaction of the *Public Records Act 2002* with other important matters such as right to information and privacy legislation and the broader recordkeeping legislative frameworks across other jurisdictions.

On behalf of the Queensland Government, I would like to express my thanks to the Independent Panel members who have delivered this report, and to the Queensland community who were involved in the consultation processes.

The Queensland Government will implement all 27 recommendations made by the Independent Panel after careful consideration. Implementation of these recommendation will continue our work strengthening and reforming our public records legislative environment, and delivery of operational improvements for Queensland State Archives and public authorities under the *Public Records Act 2002*.

Implementation efforts will be considered alongside several intersecting operational and legislative reviews to ensure consistency and transparency.

I am pleased to present the Queensland Government's response to the *Public Records Act 2002* review.

**The Hon. Leanne Enoch MP**

Minister for Communities and Housing  
Minister for Digital Economy and  
Minister for the Arts



## The Review

The *Public Records Act 2002* (the Act) was reviewed to ensure the legislative framework supports the contemporary management and preservation of digital records and emerging technology impacts on public authorities.

The Act establishes Queensland State Archives and ensures public records are made, managed, kept and preserved for current and future generations. It ensures that public access to records is consistent with the principles of the *Right to Information Act 2009* and the *Information Privacy Act 2009*. It applies to an estimated 500 public authorities.

The Act has not been reviewed since it commenced in 2002. The Queensland Government established a review to ensure it:

- remains relevant
- meets community expectations
- supports our governance and decision-making processes
- delivers public information and records management best practices.

The Independent Panel commenced its review of the *Public Records Act 2002* in May 2022. The Honourable John Byrne, AO RFD chaired the panel, supported by panel members Professor Bronwyn Fredericks, Mr David Fricker CdoAL GAICD, Adjunct Professor Linda O'Brien and Dr Katie McConnel.

Panel members brought expertise around law, education, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, archival regulatory frameworks, information systems, data management and Queensland history and cultural heritage.

In June 2022, consultation was undertaken across Queensland to inform the review, through an online survey, stakeholder forums, written submissions and direct interviews with stakeholders.

## The Independent Panel's report

The Independent Panel provided its report on 31 August 2022. Recommendations of the report were informed by consultation with stakeholders across Queensland and examination of legislative frameworks across other Australian jurisdictions and New Zealand.

The report makes 27 recommendations with a critical focus on:

- First Nations peoples
- digital technology advances and impacts
- community expectations for accountability and transparency of government
- diversity of public authorities under the *Public Records Act 2002*.

The Independent Panel was clear that public records matter. Good recordkeeping supports effective and efficient business practices and improves government accountability. Records provide evidence of the actions and decisions of government and are central to a government's ability to protect the community, provide goods and services and demonstrate delivery on its commitments.<sup>1</sup>

Further, records management requires decisions about when and how to create, capture and control records. Good records management supports improved productivity because it enables easy access to the information needed to make the right decisions at the right time. The benefits of good records management should be clear. However, the realities of operational and budget restrictions mean that business cases for implementing records management programs are often unable to compete with other organisational priorities, including frontline service delivery.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Report of the review of the Public Records Act 2002, page 19  
2. Report of the review of the Public Records Act 2002, page 19



**skullduggery** by **Judy Watson**, 2021. As part of the First Wars Project, internationally acclaimed Waanyi artist, Judy Watson, has created an artistic response to truth telling by using records from Queensland State Archives in a multi-media and textile exhibition.

## Our response

The Queensland Government welcomes the Independent Panel's report and supports or supports-in-principle all 27 of the Independent Panel's recommendations.

An improved public records legislative and operational framework will provide all Queenslanders with access to significant records about Queensland's history and culture and preserve those records for future generations. It will also ensure the legislative framework reflects community expectations and represents the Queensland community, including First Nations peoples.

The Independent Panel's 27 recommendations cover both legislative change and operational change. These two aspects will work together to provide a robust system for recordkeeping by public authorities.

### Governance, monitoring and evaluation

The Queensland Government is committed to ensuring accountability and transparency in the implementation of the Independent Panel's recommendations. Effective governance, monitoring and evaluation will be essential to ensure robust and effective change is achieved in delivering our response.

An implementation plan has been developed to guide delivery of the recommendations, including measures to monitor and evaluate outcomes.

Governance mechanisms are already in place for the review, and these will carry forward to the delivery phases. Governance will be further embedded by establishing a steering committee, Queensland State Archives and whole-of-government working groups, regular reporting into the Director-General to ensure delivery is on track and in scope, and Ministerial oversight on the achievement of key milestones.

This approach will ensure accountability and transparency in delivering a strong and effective legislative and operational framework that supports best practice recordkeeping and management of public records for all Queenslanders.



State Library of Queensland languages workshop hosted at Queensland State Archives.

# Response to specific recommendations

This table provides a line-by-line response to the specific recommendations made by the Independent Panel in their report.

Recommendation	Government Response
<p><b>1</b> Legislative</p> <p><b>New Purposes for the <i>Public Records Act 2002</i></b></p> <p>There be additions to the main purposes stated in Part 1 of the Act to acknowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. the value of Queensland’s public records:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. to economic development, innovation and research</li> <li>ii. to good government</li> <li>iii. in sustaining the integrity and accountability of public authorities</li> <li>iv. in supporting the rights of the people of Queensland, and</li> <li>v. in preserving the history of Queensland.</li> </ul> </li> <li>b. the importance of public records for First Nations peoples (see <i>Recommendation 3</i>).</li> </ul>	<p><b>Supported</b></p> <p>The Queensland Government supports Recommendation 1 a. Consultation will be undertaken to confirm appropriate wording and subsequent amendments to the Act.</p> <p>The Queensland Government supports Recommendation 1 b. Consultation will be undertaken to confirm appropriate wording that is consistent with the Queensland Government’s Path to Treaty process and subsequent amendments to the Act.</p>
<p><b>2</b> Legislative</p> <p><b>First Nations</b></p> <p>In implementing the Queensland Government’s commitment to the Path to Treaty process, or otherwise, consideration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. be given to new legislation that would afford due recognition to the special interests and needs of First Nations peoples in relation to Queensland’s public records,</li> <li>b. include evaluation of any potential for concepts of Indigenous Data Sovereignty, Indigenous Data Governance and Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property to contribute to meeting those special needs and interests.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Supported</b></p> <p>The Queensland Government supports Recommendation 2 to consider the concepts of Indigenous Data Sovereignty, Indigenous Data Governance and Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property.</p> <p>Consultation will be undertaken to explore options for new or amended legislation that afford recognition to the special interests and needs of First Nations peoples regarding Queensland’s public records. Legislative outcomes will be consistent with the Queensland Government’s Path to Treaty process.</p>

Recommendation	Government Response
<p><b>3</b> Legislative</p> <p><b>First Nations</b></p> <p>There be added to the main purposes expressed in Part 1 of the Act a statement of the importance to First Nations peoples of the state's public records and ready access to them, in particular in supporting rights and entitlements, in connection with culture and community and in relation to reconciliation.</p>	<p><b>Supported</b></p> <p>The Queensland Government supports Recommendation 3 and recognises the importance of public records to First Nations peoples. Consultation will be undertaken to confirm appropriate wording that is consistent with the Queensland Government's Path to Treaty process.</p>
<p><b>4</b> Legislative</p> <p><b>First Nations</b></p> <p>Amend the Act to provide that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>two of the nine members of the Public Records Review Committee be First Nations persons with relevant expertise or experience,</li> <li>those additional members be nominated by the minister administering the <i>Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003</i> and the <i>Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Act 2003</i> or by another minister.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Supported</b></p> <p>The Queensland Government supports Recommendation 4 and recognises the uniqueness and importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the need for representation. Consultation will be undertaken to identify an implementation pathway and subject to the consultation process, subsequent amendments to the current legislative framework for this recommendation will be made.</p>
<p><b>5</b> Legislative</p> <p><b>First Nations</b></p> <p>Consideration be given to amending the Act to establish an advisory group comprised of First Nations persons to consult with the State Archivist concerning records held by Queensland State Archives relating to First Nations peoples.</p>	<p><b>Supported</b></p> <p>The Queensland Government supports Recommendation 5 and recognises the importance of Queensland's public records to First Nations peoples.</p> <p>Consultation will be undertaken regarding the membership and remit of such a body to effectively guide and support the management of records relevant to First Nations peoples. Subject to the consultation process, subsequent amendments to the current legislative framework for this recommendation will be made.</p>



## 6 Legislative

**Digital transformation**

- a. The definition of 'record' in the Act be replaced with words needed to accommodate the exigencies of dealing with digital material.
- b. The new definition be along these lines:

*Record means information and data, recorded in any medium, that is created or received by an entity in the transaction of business or the conduct of affairs that provides evidence of the business or affairs and includes - anything compiled, recorded or stored, by any means in any form, that is capable of being communicated, analysed or processed whether by a person, a computer or other electronic means.*

**Supported**

The Queensland Government supports Recommendation 6 and accepts the Independent Review Panel's finding of the need for the clarification of a record when dealing with digital material.

Recommendation 9, regarding the provision of training, and Recommendation 14, regarding the issuing of mandatory standards, will support the effective promulgation of this new definition. It is noted that the panel did not propose any change to the definition of a 'public record'.

Consultation will be undertaken to explore what guidance is required to ensure clarity within public authorities regarding when a 'record' becomes a 'public record'. Subject to the consultation process, subsequent amendments to the current legislative framework for this recommendation will be made.

## 7 Legislative

**Protection through transfer**

In the interests of preserving public records from loss or damage, the State Archivist be empowered, by amendment of the Act, to direct any public authority to transfer to Queensland State Archives a public record that is in the authority's possession or power.

**Supported in principle**

The Queensland Government supports in principle Recommendation 7.

It is noted the intent of this recommendation is to preserve public records of significance to the State, including data and information, from loss or damage.

Mandated transfer will help to prevent the loss of history of Queensland by ensuring that at risk records are stored and maintained appropriately.

It is acknowledged that a framework that outlines clear criteria and processes for the Queensland State Archivist to compel transfer will require further assessment and engagement with stakeholders.

Subject to the consultation process, amendments to the current legislative framework for this recommendation will be considered.

## Recommendation

## Government Response

### 8 Legislative

#### Monitor, audit and report

The Act be amended to add, as functions of the State Archivist, to monitor, audit and report on compliance with the Act.

#### Supported in principle

The Queensland Government supports in principle Recommendation 8. This recommendation builds upon the policies, standards and advice the Queensland State Archivist currently issues to promote good recordkeeping across the public sector.

Compliance and monitoring can enable and inform improved processes which have the potential to deliver efficiencies to government and stakeholders.

The proposed increase in functions requires consideration to identify how this could be effectively delivered, taking into consideration the diverse and disparate nature of the range of public authorities subject to the Act.

A consultation process will be undertaken to develop a suitable compliance framework and amendments to the current legislative framework for this recommendation will be considered.

### 9 Legislative

#### Education

Section 24(f) of the Act be amended to add, after 'advice', the words 'assistance and training'.

#### Supported

The Queensland Government supports Recommendation 9.

Subject to the consultation process, implementation issues will be identified and amendments to the current legislative framework for this recommendation will be considered.

As with Recommendation 8, this recommendation provides opportunities for public authorities to achieve efficiencies through improvements to recordkeeping and business processes.

### 10 Legislative

#### Sanctions

The time limit for prosecution of a contravention of section 13 of the Act (unlawful disposal) be increased from one year to three.

#### Supported in principle

The Queensland Government supports in principle Recommendation 10.

Effective compliance frameworks should support beneficial outcomes and it is noted that other Australian jurisdictions reflect longer time limits for similar matters to enable effective compliance management.

Subject to the consultation process, amendments to the current legislative framework for this recommendation will be considered.

## 11 Legislative

**Sanctions**

An offence of unlawful attempted disposal be introduced.

**Supported in principle**

The Queensland Government supports in principle Recommendation 11.

It is noted this recommendation expands the current offence of unlawful disposal and seeks to incorporate the unlawful intentional deletion of material, regardless of whether it can later be recovered or reconstructed.

This reflects the digital ecosystem in which public authorities now operate and the nature of disposal actions related to electronically stored material.

Subject to the consultation process, implementation issues will be identified and amendments to the current legislative framework for this recommendation will be considered.

## 12 Legislative

**Sanctions**

Expand the current definition of 'disposal' in Schedule 2 Dictionary (paragraph a) by adding 'altering' and 'deleting'.

**Supported in principle**

The Queensland Government supports in principle Recommendation 12.

The inclusion of these terms in the definition reflects the dependency on digital systems and the nature of public records being created and managed by public authorities.

Subject to the consultation process, amendments to the current legislative framework to implement this recommendation will be considered.

## 13 Policy/Legislative

**Investigation**

- a. The investigative functions which Divisions 1 and 2 of Part 4 of the Act sustain be given to another agency and those two Divisions repealed.
- b. If that be done, the Act be amended to authorise the State Archivist to:
  - i. Report compliance concerns to the investigative agency and to the minister administering the Act, and
  - ii. Assist that agency in exercising its functions in relation to public records

**Supported in principle**

The Queensland Government supports in principle Recommendation 13.

The value of an ability to undertake effective inquiry of non-compliance across a regulated domain is recognised. There is also a benefit for both public authorities and for Queensland State Archives to distinguish between the recommended monitoring and support role of Queensland State Archives, and the requirement to investigate breaches of the Act.

Implementation of this recommendation would assist in clarifying the role of the Queensland State Archivist in investigating breaches of the Act.

Subject to the consultation process, implementation issues will be identified and amendments to the current legislative framework for this recommendation will be considered.

## 14 Legislative

**Policies, standards and guidelines**

The Act be amended to empower the State Archivist to promulgate records management standards with which public authorities regulated by the Act must comply.

**Supported**

The Queensland Government supports Recommendation 14 and notes the consistency with other national and international archival jurisdictions.

Given the diverse nature of the range of public authorities subject to the Act, consideration is needed regarding the effective implementation and requirements of mandatory standards.

Archival standards that can be adapted to suit their various circumstances will be required.

Consultation will be undertaken to consider implementation issues of this recommendation. Subject to the consultation process, subsequent amendments to the current legislative framework for this recommendation will be made.

## 15 Legislative

**Access**

The Act be amended to make public records accessible to the public according to the following:

- a. A public record transferred to Queensland State Archives is to be accessible at the time of transfer unless the public record contains information which under the *Right to Information Act 2009* or the *Information Privacy Act 2009* would be 'exempt information' as defined in the *Right to Information Act 2009* or contrary to the public interest or have access restricted under another law,
- b. If access to the public record is to be restricted, the responsible public authority must set a restricted access period,
- c. In fixing the duration of the restricted access period, the responsible public authority:
  - i. should be pro-disclosure, restricting access for only as long as giving access to the record would, on balance, be contrary to the public interest
  - ii. is to have regard to:
    - the *Human Rights Act 2019* and
    - the needs and interests of any affected First Nations persons.
- d. The Act authorise the making of regulations, including with respect to the operation and duration of restricted access periods
- e. The Act provide a mechanism for challenging a refusal of access to public records in the custody of Queensland State Archives.

**Supported**

The Queensland Government supports Recommendation 15 (a), (b), (c) and (d).

The Queensland Government is committed to open and transparent interactions with industry and the community, including through open access, as appropriate to public records and other information held by Queensland State Archives.

It is acknowledged that government records include information significant to Queensland's shared history and culture and appropriate access to such information will support the human rights of all Queenslanders.

Consultation will be undertaken to consider implementation issues of this recommendation. Subject to the consultation process, subsequent amendments to the current legislative framework for this recommendation will be made.

**Supported in principle**

The Queensland Government supports in principle Recommendation 15 (e).

Consultation will be undertaken to consider implementation issues of this recommendation. Subject to the consultation process, subsequent amendments to the current legislative framework for this recommendation will be made.

## 16 Policy/Legislative

**Supervision**

- a. The State Archivist remain generally subject to direction by the Minister.
- b. Section 27 of the Act be retained to preserve the independence of the Archivist in respect of a disposal decision.
- c. The same degree of independence be put in place through amendment to the Act in respect of:
  - i. So much of the annual report (required by section 56 of the Act) as relates to compliance by public authorities with their responsibilities in relation to the Act; and
  - ii. A decision in respect of access to the records of a former Minister after a change of government (if access in those circumstances is to be decided by the State Archivist).

**Supported**

The Queensland Government supports Recommendation 16 (a), (b) and (c)(i).

This recommendation reflects the current operational situation, and it is appropriate that this continues.

- i. It is noted that this recommendation aims to provide clarity about the role of the Queensland State Archivist and that it is interdependent with the increased focus on assistance and monitoring outlined in Recommendations 8 and 9. Annual reporting on levels of compliance in public authorities will support increased maturity in public authorities records and information management.

**Supported in principle**

The Queensland Government supports in principle Recommendation 16(c)(ii).

This recommendation will be fully explored during consultation.

Following consultation, amendments to the current legislative framework to implement this recommendation will be considered.

## 17 Legislative

**Supervision**

The Act be amended to provide that a Ministerial direction in relation to the State Archivist's performance of a function or the exercise of a power conferred by the Act be:

- a. in writing;
- b. not inconsistent with the Act;
- c. included in the Archivist's annual report pursuant to section 56 of the Act.

**Supported**

The Queensland Government supports Recommendation 17.

The recommendation is consistent with other archival jurisdictions and statutes in Queensland. Consultation will be undertaken to consider implementation issues of this recommendation. Subject to the consultation process, amendments to the current legislative framework to implement this recommendation will be made.

## 18 Legislative

**Supervision**

The State Archivist be subject to the direction of the chief executive of the department administering Queensland State Archives except in respect of the performance of a function or in the exercise of a power conferred by the Act, and the Act be amended accordingly.

**Supported**

The Queensland Government supports Recommendation 18.

The recommendation complements other recommendations and is an appropriate balance between independence and oversight. The recommendation is consistent with frameworks under other Queensland statutes, such as the *Professional Standards Act 2004*. Following consultation, amendments to the current legislative framework to implement this recommendation will be considered.

## 19 Legislative

**Public Records Review Committee**

If the State Archivist is to decide on applications for access to ministerial records, the Act be amended to provide for a right of appeal against the State Archivist's decision to the Public Records Review Committee.

**Supported in principle**

The Queensland Government supports in principle Recommendation 19.

Consultation will be undertaken to consider implementation issues of this recommendation. Subject to the consultation process, amendments to the current legislative framework to implement this recommendation will be made.

## 20 Legislative

**Notification by gazette**

The process for notification of the selected public authority referred to in section 8(3)(b) and section 15(d) of the Act be changed to publication in the Queensland Government Gazette.

**Supported**

The Queensland Government supports Recommendation 20.

This will reduce the administrative burden of drafting regulations to notify of a relevant and responsible public authority. Legislative amendments to reflect this recommendation will be actioned.

## 21 Legislative

**Local government councillors**

The definition of 'public authority' in the Schedule 2 Dictionary be amended to add local government councillors.

**Supported in principle**

The Queensland Government supports in principle Recommendation 21.

The recommendation is consistent with other archival jurisdictions and confirms the significance of these records as evidence of decision making and for the history of Queensland. Following consultation, amendments to the current legislative framework to implement this recommendation will be considered.

## 22 Legislative

**Local government councillors**

A definition of 'record of a councillor' be added in the Dictionary to exclude a record related to a councillor's 'personal or party-political activities'.

**Supported in principle**

The Queensland Government supports in principle Recommendation 22.

The recommendation confirms the significance of these records as evidence of decision making and for the history of Queensland. It is consistent with other national and international archival jurisdictions and in alignment with the expectations of the community.

Following consultation, amendments to the current legislative framework to implement this recommendation will be considered.

## 23 Legislative

**Local government councillors**

Consequential changes be made to the Act, including to add:

- a. a definition for a record of a councillor in the schedule 2 Dictionary and
- b. a 'record of a councillor' to the definition of public record in section 6.

**Supported in principle**

The Queensland Government supports in principle Recommendation 23.

The recommendation confirms the significance of these records as evidence of decision making and for the history of Queensland. It is consistent with other national and international archival jurisdictions and in alignment with the expectations of the community.

Following consultation, amendments to the current legislative framework to implement this recommendation will be considered.

## 24 Policy

**Whole of Government strategy**

- a. The Government adopt a cohesive approach to the management of its public data, information and records as a valuable and inter-connected asset.
- b. In doing so, consideration be given to clarification of roles and accountability for effective management of government data, information and records.
- c. The State Archivist be requested to provide advice on the selection and implementation of business ICT solutions from a records and information management perspective.

**Supported in principle**

The Queensland Government supports in principle Recommendation 24.

The management of public data, information and records is of critical importance to the Queensland Government.

Queensland State Archives currently provides advice and guidance to support public authorities' decision-making regarding systems and processes for the management of information. This will be further explored to identify opportunities for implementation.

## 25 Policy

**Digitisation**

To investigate savings that might be achieved, the Archivist be requested to prepare a plan, for Government consideration, to address:

- a. Legacy physical records and
- b. Opportunities for digitisation of public records which are not already stored in digital form.

**Supported**

The Queensland Government supports Recommendation 25.

The Queensland State Archives is already delivering significant work concerning the digitisation of records.

Consultation will be undertaken to consider implementation issues of this recommendations. Subject to consultation, the Queensland State Archivist will develop a plan for government consideration.

**26** Policy/Legislative**Ministerial records**

The difficulties that attend the transfer of 'ministerial records' on a change of government and otherwise in connection with the operation of section 8 of the PR Act be addressed by government.

**Supported**

The Queensland Government supports Recommendation 26 and that a clarification of the management and responsibility for records of Ministers following a change of government is required.

**27** Legislative**Alignment with Right to Information and Information Privacy Acts**

The alignment of definitions and concepts in the PR Act with similar provisions in the Right to *Information Act 2009* and the *Information Privacy Act 2009*, including with respect to the practice of outsourcing, be addressed after completion of the review now being conducted concerning those Acts.

**Supported**

The Queensland Government supports Recommendation 27, and those reviews of the referenced legislation are currently underway. This recommendation will be considered further in alignment with the timing of those reviews to ensure consistency across statutes.





## What we are already doing

Recordkeeping within Queensland Government is regulated by the *Public Records Act 2002*. While carrying out the business of government, vast volumes of information and records are produced every day which are valuable assets of government. The Queensland Government is committed to ensuring that the overarching legislative framework for the management of these valuable assets remains relevant and appropriate.

The Queensland Government continues to invest in records and information and systems to manage the most important records of government. Several initiatives have already commenced to strengthen recordkeeping:

### Digital Archive Program

In June 2021 the Queensland Government committed to preserving important digital records of Queensland, with a \$17.3M investment in the Digital Archive Program, a pioneering and innovative program for Queensland and the archival sector. Commenced in October 2021, the project is on track to deliver Queensland's first government digital archive in 2023 that will transform the way communities access and use government digital records.



Will Duncan, Gumeroi/Kamilaroi/Gamilaraay man, scanning microfilm records



## First Nations First

In 2021, Queensland State Archives released its Statement of Intent which announced a commitment to be an archive that supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination and embraces First Nations' worldviews, knowledge and culture. The records at Queensland State Archives tell the government's story of the colonisation of Queensland, the impacts of which still affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

Queensland State Archives *First Nations First Strategy 2022-2025* supports the Queensland Government's Path to Treaty, particularly truth telling, and the Local Thriving Communities reform as well as commitments to the Federal Closing the Gap initiative.

To achieve these goals, Queensland State Archives has appointed a First Nations Archives Advisor and is delivering several key projects including this review, the identification and digitisation of records relating to First Nations peoples, improving the descriptions of these records, along with the First Wars project, and a First Nations Languages Program.

Queensland State Archives is also planning a multi-year program to overhaul its public and online spaces to make sure they are welcoming and culturally safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

## First Wars Project

In support of truth telling, the First Wars Project aims to identify records relating to Queensland's painful shared history of frontier violence. In collaboration with Queensland historian Dr Jonathan Richards and supported by a team of Queensland State Archives' staff, almost 4,000 records have been identified, digitised, and assessed. The assessment of the records includes recording names and locations relevant to First Wars and assigning subject headings to aid with discoverability.

To support the national conversation about truth telling, Queensland State Archives created 'The Australian Wars: Evidence from Queensland' panel event which discussed the value of archival records in truth telling. It is currently available on SBS on Demand.

As part of the First Wars Project, internationally acclaimed Waanyi artist, Judy Watson, has created an artistic response to truth telling by using records from Queensland State Archives in a multi-media and textile exhibition on display at the archives until June 2023.

## Indigenous cultural knowledge, intellectual property and data sovereignty

There are records held at Queensland State Archives about First Nations peoples that include sensitive cultural and personal information. The establishment of a First Nations peoples advisory group, along with consultation with communities, will give voice to First Nations special interests and needs such as Indigenous data sovereignty, Indigenous data governance and Indigenous cultural and intellectual property.



'The Australian Wars: Evidence from Queensland' panelists Rose Barrowcliffe, Judy Watson, Rachel Perkins and Dr Jonathan Richards.



Rose Barrowcliffe answers questions of school group.



Queensland State Archives languages workshop

### Languages Project

The First Nations Languages Program is designed to support language workers, schools and organisations in traditional language revitalisation across Queensland, and to build stronger relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The research stream of the program has resulted in the digitisation of over 50 archival items and the identification of over 70 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. Universal AustLang codes have been applied to the descriptions of these records, enabling easier access for language researchers. These records will also be shared with relevant language workers, through community engagement activities and workshops.

### Digitisation and metadata improvement

The Queensland Government is investing \$4 million over four years to digitise the State's at-risk audio-visual and paper records. This program includes the prioritisation of First Nations records in conjunction with a metadata improvement initiative which will make these records more easily discoverable by enhancing their descriptions.

## Supporting best practice recordkeeping

Recordkeeping is perceived to be a technically complex, compliance driven activity and difficult to implement. To help break down the complexities relating to recordkeeping, Queensland State Archives has developed the Government Records Improvement Program (GRIP) to support government in better recordkeeping practices.

Through the GRIP work program, Queensland State Archives is consolidating and simplifying the recordkeeping advice it provides through its online information and policies to help agencies identify the necessary information relevant to their needs and requirements. Queensland State Archives is working with agencies on complex recordkeeping issues and identifying relevant training, advice and support. GRIP will also support agencies to evaluate business process changes required to leverage the future Digital Archive, and related storage services.

GRIP is providing opportunities to identify potential cost savings for agencies, by reviewing current arrangements about records that are stored and retained beyond the periods required for records whose storage costs exceed their usefulness or significance. Whether these records are being stored on site in government premises or in offsite storage, there are costs being incurred that could be avoided. In addition, Queensland State Archives will review the current framework for the retention and disposal of public records to simplify processes and reduce the volume of records retained beyond business requirements.





**Queensland**  
Government