

**OPENING REMARKS FOR ASA (ACT) SEMINAR ON ACCESS TO
TERRITORY RECORDS
Corroboree Park Hall, Paterson St Ainslie, 24 May 2007 at 0930**

This seminar foreshadows the implementation of Part 3 of the Territory Records Act (No 18 of 2002.) That part of course deals with access to records of the Territory Government and its agencies.

I represent the Territory Records Advisory Council – established by that Act to provide community input to the processes of management of the territory's records.

The Council first met on 29 April 2003 and has met four times a year since then.

Since the passage of the Act and the appointment of the Director, and indeed, I expect, in anticipation of those events, government agencies in the Territory have been engaged in improving the management of records through the development of a comprehensive regime of records disposal schedules – the instruments that allow for the orderly management of records in a legal and intellectually consistent manner.

It is the role of the Territory Records Advisory Council to assist that process by providing community input to the Director.

All draft disposal schedules are scrutinised by the Council and advice is proffered to the Director on each. This can be a time-consuming process as all schedules require item by item perusal.

The Council takes this work extremely seriously and frequently has questions for the Director – questions which not infrequently result in alterations to the schedules before they are finalised.

Today, at this seminar, though, we are considering the question of access – and particularly from the user point of view. I note that the Council first considered the question of access at its second meeting on 13 June 2003. On that occasion the Council, aware that it would be some years before the Part 3 provisions came into operation, asked the Director whether greater use might be made of the FOI provisions to provide access to records.

I am looking forward this morning to hearing from David on where the formal processes are taking us at this stage, and then from a number of people who will recall their own experiences of the use of archives. And remember it is the people who use archives who ultimately make them available to the community in general through the work they do incorporating their archival research.

For many years I have used a quotation from an American source which says that "in the final analysis it is the use of records that makes archives valuable." I think I would alter that slightly now to say that the use of records gives added purpose to the work of records managers and archivists as well as making archives valuable.

Members of the community by their use of archives also demonstrate that the community values archives more than economists and politicians sometimes seem to realize.

I look forward to hearing the speakers at this morning's seminar.

George Nichols
Thursday, 24 May 2007