



COUNCIL OF AUSTRALASIAN ARCHIVES
AND RECORDS AUTHORITIES

CAARA Policy 14

Statement of Principle – Access to records of Indigenous Australians affected by past separation policies

Status: Current
Adopted: 1 April 2004

CAARA acknowledges the traditional custodians of Country and their continuing connection to land, sea and community.

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Purpose of the Statement of Principle

The purpose of this Statement of Principle is to develop a framework for referring enquiries between Council of Federal, State and Territory Archives (COFSTA) institutions about records of Indigenous Australians who have been affected by past government separation policies.

The Statement supports government policy

The Statement is part of an initiative by the COFSTA institutions to implement Recommendation 24 of *Bringing them Home* (Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families):

‘That each government, as advised by its Records taskforce, enter into memoranda of understanding with other governments for dealing with inter-State enquiries and for the inter-State transfer of records and other information.’

The Statement supports professional policy

The Statement is consistent with the Australian Society of Archivists Policy Statement on Archival Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Stakeholders in the Statement

Stakeholders in the implementation of the Statement of Principle are:

- Indigenous Australians
- Council of Federal, State and Territory Archives (COFSTA) institutions, and
- Australian Society of Archivists’ Indigenous Issues Special Interest Group.

The Statement of Principle

COFSTA institutions recognize the importance of and are committed to the appropriate referral of enquiries about records of Indigenous Australians who have been affected by past government separation policies by:

- acknowledging the need to treat with importance the enquiries from Indigenous people affected by past government separation policies
- acknowledging the sensitive nature of many of the records relating to Indigenous people, and
- helping to ensure the protection of that sensitivity.

Statement of Principle is based on rights

The Statement of Principle is based on the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to be:

- respected for their cultures, and
- acknowledged as cultures and people that are diverse, vital, living and changing.

Framework for referrals is part of a greater recognition of the rights of Indigenous Australians

COFSTA institutions recognise the rights of Indigenous Australians to access records that affect them by:

- informing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities of records held by government
- consulting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders on services
- providing access to records that affect them
- ensuring the protection of privacy
- conforming to Indigenous Cultural Protocols and/or Memoranda of Understanding recognised/negotiated by the member institutions, and
- preserving records created by government relating to Aboriginal culture and individual experience for future generations.

How COFSTA will demonstrate a commitment to the Statement of Principle

COFSTA institutions will demonstrate a commitment to the Statement of Principle by ensuring that appropriate and relevant advice is provided to clients:

- giving priority to enquiries referred by other COFSTA institutions about records of Indigenous Australians who have been affected by past government separation policies within the legislative framework and operating environment of the institution that has custody of the records
- treating enquiries in culturally appropriate manner
- ensuring that archival records of sensitive nature relating to Indigenous people are protected, and
- protecting the privacy of the individuals documented in the records within legislative framework and operating environment of the institution that has custody of the records.

Framework to facilitate COFSTA's commitment

To support the Statement of Principle COFSTA institutions will create a framework for enquiries that will include:

- identifying and making known staff members who will deal with enquiries
- identifying and making known access procedures and policies to access records, and
- application of the access procedures of the custodial institution.