

Name: Baiba Berzins

Submission:

Dear Minister Garrett

A knowledge and understanding of history is fundamental to any country's culture and, therefore, to any country's national cultural policy. Historians record, analyse and interpret a country's history; artists, writers, filmmakers, dancers and musicians make creative use of history. Fundamental to the historical enterprise is the work of custodians such as archivists, librarians, museum staff and oral historians as well as the many exhibition, design, IT, administrative and other staff and the many collectors and volunteers who help to keep the collections of these organisations (national, state, local and private) available and accessible to the general public. In some Indigenous and some ethnic communities we have elders who can perform the role of guardian of the collective memory but regrettably that is not the case in mainstream Australia and even in those communities much will be lost unless there is assistance.

It is therefore with great sadness that I write to protest about the curtailment of funding for the Collections Council, about the proposed closure of the National Archives offices in Darwin, Adelaide and Hobart and about the general curtailment of funding for cultural institutions at the Federal government level. I realise that the National Archives matter is not within your portfolio but it is a major tragedy which should not be allowed to happen. Cultural institutions are not like businesses, they do not generate profits. However they do enrich the lives of their communities and that is something that we should all treasure.