

FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETIES INC

G.P.O. Box 1440, Canberra ACT 2601

Website: <http://www.history.org.au/>

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Hon Editor, Dr Ruth S. Kerr

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1) Online availability of Government entities' documents tabled in the Australian Parliament

The Australian National Audit Office has issued a report on tabling of government documents in the Commonwealth Parliament.

http://www.anao.gov.au/uploads/documents/2008-09_Audit_Report_37.pdf

Each year, documents are presented to the Senate, the House of Representatives, or to both Houses of the Parliament for their consideration. The tabling of documents informs the Parliament of Government activities and demonstrates accountability of Government to Parliament and the community. It also provides an important source of information to Senators and Members as well as placing information on the public record.

The objectives of the audit were to:

- determine the extent to which government entities complied with the requirement to publish and maintain documents online that were presented to the Parliament;
- evaluate selected government entities' policies and practices regarding online publishing; and
- assess AGIMO's policy and guidance in support of online publishing.

It recommends:

Recommendation No.1

The ANAO recommends that entities review the accessibility of their online documents against the requirements of the web accessibility standard endorsed by the Australian Human Rights Commission.

Recommendation No.2

The ANAO recommends that government entities that do not have a web presence, table multiple documents in the Parliament each year, and/or have been affected by a Machinery of Government change, implement arrangements to ensure the online availability of their tabled papers in accordance with Australian Government policy.

Recommendation No.3

The ANAO recommends that the Australian Government Information Management Office and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, in consultation with other relevant government entities, review their guidance and clarify the requirements to publish and maintain documents presented to the Parliament.

ALIA will write to ANAO congratulating them on the report and to Australian Government Information Management Office and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to urge them to work on the recommendations as a high priority.

(Source: ALIA aliaaglin@lists.alia.org.au – 27 May 2009)

2) Review of *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976*

The Australian Government has commenced a review of the *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976* and consideration of ratification of the UNESCO 2001 Convention for the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage. A discussion paper was released on Friday 5 June 2009 and is available on the historic shipwreck web pages of the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA).
<http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/shipwrecks/review/index.html>

DEWHA is encouraging community participation. Written submissions are invited and close at COB on 17 July 2009.

The review is looking at the operation of the legislation and whether it is achieving its objectives. The review will also consider whether Australia should amend its legislation to meet international best practice for the management of its underwater cultural heritage.

This is the first time that the *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976* has been reviewed. As the current legislative regime is now over 30 years old and the Australian Government does not have legislation in place to protect other types of archaeological sites and artefacts found in Australian waters, such as aircraft, a review is timely.

The process of considering ratification of the Underwater Cultural Heritage Convention is separate to that of reviewing the *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976*. However both issues are closely related. The current review is therefore considering whether the Act should be amended to align with both the UNESCO Underwater Cultural Heritage Convention and international best practice.

The review of the *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976* will consider the operation of the legislation and the extent to which it is achieving its purpose, the new international framework for managing underwater cultural heritage and current heritage policy needs.

The review is to be completed by 30 October 2009.

Submissions should be directed to

Secretariat to the Review of the Historic Shipwrecks Act, GPO Box 787, Canberra ACT 2601

Or HSreview@environment.gov.au

Submissions will be published on the review website unless marked confidential, at www.environment.gov.au/heritage/shipwrecks/review

Questions about the review may be directed to the Secretariat:

HSreview@environment.gov.au

Phone: 1800 018 903

(Source: asha-bounces@flinders.edu.au – ASHA List Serv – 9 June 2009)

3) Campsie Courthouse, south western Sydney

An owner-occupier has purchased the Campsie Courthouse at 56 Campsie Street, Campsie in south western Sydney for \$1.38 million. The heritage listed building was sold through Knight Frank for the Attorney-General's Department of New South Wales. The building is 448 square metres on a land site of 1892 square metres with frontage to Campsie Street and rear lane access.

(Source: *Australian Financial Review* 21 May 2009)
