



NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF AUSTRALIA – SUBMISSION

Joint Committee on Publications Inquiry into printing standards for documents presented to Parliament

Context

The National Archives of Australia (the Archives) welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission to the 'Inquiry into printing standards for documents presented to Parliament'. The [terms of reference](#) refer to access to parliamentary records in an increasingly online environment, the impact of printing and the level of need for printing standards.

The Archives presents this submission in the context of its legislative role in overseeing the creation, management and preservation of valuable government information, and in leading implementation of the [Digital Continuity 2020 Policy](#) across government.

Key points

The Archives would like to address three main issues in relation to the printing standards:

- the Digital Continuity 2020 Policy;
- ongoing access; and
- paper quality for printing standards.

Digital Continuity 2020 Policy

The Digital Continuity 2020 Policy is a whole-of-government approach to digital information governance. It complements the Australian Government's digital transformation agenda and aims to support efficiency, innovation, interoperability, information re-use and accountability by integrating robust digital information management into all government business processes.

Two key requirements under the Digital Continuity 2020 policy relevant to this inquiry are:

- All information created in digital format after 1 January 2016 is managed digitally; and
- Information is kept in an accessible digital form for as long as it is required.

Parliament is responsible for creating, receiving and maintaining a range of information in both published and unpublished formats, including documents presented to Parliament (eg the Parliamentary Papers Series), the official record of proceedings, the roll of members and senators, and petitions.

In line with Digital Continuity 2020 Policy requirements, all parliamentary records should be created, kept, managed and made accessible in digital formats. This supports business efficiencies, increases engagement with the community and facilitates ongoing and timely access. In an increasingly digital

world, government agencies and the public expect to be able to access key government information online and in digital format. The need for printed copies can be met by using an A4-compatible digital format to enable print-on-demand reference copies to be produced.

Business efficiencies may further be realised by extending the practice of maintaining and publishing Parliamentary Papers digitally to other official and published records, such as Senate Journals, House of Representatives Votes & Proceedings, Senators and Members Rolls, and petitions. This will streamline the business process, reduce costs, and support ongoing access to these records.

Ongoing access

The Archives supports the requirement for all documents (from a Commonwealth agency) that have been tabled in Parliament to be published on the department or agency's website. To support ongoing access in the event of website change as well as [legal deposit requirements](#), these electronic publications should also be lodged with the National Library. The Archives also encourages consideration of a process for 'digital tabling' of parliamentary documents to increase business efficiency and provide a central location for ongoing access to the electronic papers.

Under the *Archives Act 1983* parliamentary records are Commonwealth Records. Under the Digital Continuity 2020 Policy Commonwealth records should be maintained in digital formats. Digital formats, when appropriately maintained, meet ongoing long-term storage, handling, archival, preservation and access needs.

Printing standards

Under the Digital Continuity 2020 Policy, parliamentary records should be created and maintained in digital formats. There is no requirement to create a printed copy for archival purposes, and in fact, this would be contrary to the Archives' policy position.

The current [printing standards](#) include references to the Archives' advice on [paper quality](#). Should these standards be retained, the Archives notes that the references to their advice should be updated as follows:

- Replace the broken link to '[Choosing the right paper \(NAA website\)](#)' with a link to <http://www.naa.gov.au/information-management/managing-information-and-records/preserving/choosing-paper.aspx>
- Remove reference to '(Advice on selecting paper is provided in the National Archives Advice Note 30, *Which Paper?*, October 1998.)'

This advice on paper quality is relevant only to those limited instances where a printed copy may be required, for example under the [Library Deposit Scheme](#).

Recommendations

The Joint Committee on Publications notes the:

- requirement under the Digital Continuity 2020 Policy for all government information to be maintained in digital formats;
- preference for digital formats to support ongoing public access; and
- amendments to the existing advice on printing standards.

About the National Archives

The Archives was established under the [Archives Act 1983](#) (Archives Act) and is an Executive Agency of the Australian Government.

Its role is to:

- preserve Australia's most valuable government records and information and support its use; and
- promote good information management by Australian Government agencies.

National Archives collection: access and use

The Archives collects, preserves and provides access to Australian Government information and data reflecting our history and identity. Much of the information was created and kept by government agencies since Federation in 1901, comprising millions of items in digital and other formats.

The Archives Act provides for access to records after 25 years (reducing to 20 years by 2021), subject to exemptions for materials with continuing sensitivity, including personal, defence, security and international relations.

Information management

Under the Archives Act, the Archives sets standards and provides advice to Australian Government agencies to support good information management. The Archives Act governs disposal, including long-term retention of all Australian Government information, the requirement to transfer the most significant information to the Archives for ongoing preservation and access, and authorisation of the destruction of records.

In October 2015, the Archives issued the [Digital Continuity 2020 Policy](#) to integrate robust digital information management into all government business processes to support efficiency, innovation, interoperability, information re-use and accountability.