

## ACCESS POLICY IN THE QUEENSLAND ARCHIVES

Dear Sir,

The publication of *Women in Australia, an annotated guide to records*, edited for the National Research Program by Kay Daniels, Mary Murnane and Anne Picot, is a welcome addition to the literature on source material for women's history. The authors are to be congratulated on their work.

However, I would like to draw the attention of your readers to one particular aspect of the book. The brief discussion of the access policy of Queensland State Archives given in the general introduction on page 1 of volume 2 (and repeated in the review of the book by Margaret Jennings in *Archives and Manuscripts*, Vol. 7, No. 2—Feb. 1978) is very misleading. The conditions regarding access to public records are defined in the Public Records (access) Regulations, 1976. Basically this provides for the vast majority of records held by Queensland State Archives under part IV of the *Libraries Act, 1943-1977* to be available to the public thirty years after the date of their creation. Although no statistics have been compiled on this matter, my impression is that between eighty and ninety per cent. of records held would fall into this category. Of the remainder, the majority would be staff files and case history type files where the issue of the individual's right to privacy is involved. The decision to close records (apart from staff files) for more than 30 years is only rarely taken as it is felt that a thirty year closure is adequate in most circumstances.

In any case where records of any age are restricted, the researcher can contact the permanent head of the Department concerned (or the relevant court official in the case of court records) stating what records are involved and giving reasons for his or her request for access. Where such written permission has been obtained the records would normally then be made available to the researcher by the Archives.

Under the Public Records (Access) Regulations, 1976, the responsibility for determining the access provisions rests with the head of the department which created the records or his administrative successor. In practice, the State Archivist makes a recommendation concerning public access on each series of records received, and in the vast majority of cases this recommendation is accepted.

On the whole, I feel that the Regulations and the way that they are applied are a fair balance between the needs of the researcher, the needs of the agency which created the records and the need to protect the privacy of the individuals involved.

P. D. Wilson,  
State Archivist.