

## BOOK REVIEWS

# The Edwards Report

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Robert Edwards. *Museum Policy and Development in South Australia: Final Report*. June 1981. \$10. Available from State Information Centre, Grenfell Centre Plaza, 25 Grenfell St., Adelaide, SA, 5000

Amongst the quaint attractions of Adelaide is the interesting row of institutions on North Terrace, one of the main roads in the City. Along the north side of this 'cultural boulevard' within a kilometre are the Constitutional Museum, State Library (including the South Australian Archives which holds government and non-government archives), Museum, Art Gallery and Botanic Garden interspaced by Parliament, Government House, University of Adelaide, Institute of Technology (a C.A.E.) and the Royal Adelaide Hospital.

The Library, Museum and Art Gallery, all within a stone's throw of each other, have a history of close administrative links as well as geographical links. Until 1939, they were administered by the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery Board; since then, three separate Boards have been in operation.

In 1979, the Museum was in the now defunct Department of Community Development, the responsible Minister being John Bannon. The Museum's administrators and others had been crying out for some time about the atrocious conditions in the Museum, therefore in April 1979, Bannon commissioned Robert Edwards, Director of the Aboriginal Arts Board, Australia Council, to prepare a report on the problem of work and storage conditions, accommodation, et cetera and on the future role of the Museum.

In June 1979, the *Interim Report* was published. The crux of it was that the Museum, contrary to a proposal several years ago, should not move to another site two kilometres from the City. Instead the Museum is to remain on North Terrace as part of a revitalised 'North Terrace

Cultural Complex'. The ramifications of the *Interim Report* were great because Edwards was no longer dealing solely with the future of the Museum but with the futures of the Library, Archives and Art Gallery too. This was not in accordance with his brief but was a result, first of the decision on the Museum's accommodation needs affecting the other institutions, especially the Art Gallery, and secondly, Edwards proposing what he considered to be logical or desirable changes albeit outside his brief. The Art Gallery had had its eye on the Museum building as the area for expansion but with the decision to let the Museum remain, another solution to the lack of accommodation had to be found by Edwards. And as for the Library and Archives, they were effected by the proposal to establish a History Centre in the Jervois Wing, a building presently occupied by a section of the Library; obviously, accommodation had to be found elsewhere for that section. The Archives was effected because Edwards was fumbling with the idea that South Australia should separate the '... material associated with the State's early history (papers relating to colonists, explorers and the establishment of the State) and the records of Government departments'.<sup>1</sup> Also, all of the agencies mentioned above were affected by a proposed State Conservation Centre which would take in the existing conservation resources thereby benefiting from economies of scale, pooling of the specialist skills of conservators and a higher administrative profile.

The *Interim Report* stirred up a storm of argument, debate and assorted humbug because of its effects, for better and for worse, on North Terrace. This was exacerbated by the fact that the Government widened Edwards' brief so that he could pursue the concept of a Cultural Complex and meet the institutions' accommodation needs for the next twenty years. Nor is the Edwards Report likely to be shelved for it has the backing of the Labor and Liberal Parties; redevelopment of North Terrace quickly became the Government's main project to celebrate the State's sesquicentenary in 1986.

The *Final Report* was released in August 1981. The following are some of the main points.

State Centre for the Restoration of Cultural Property. Edwards recommends that the Centre be housed in a purpose-built building on a site behind the Museum and Art Gallery. The staff will consist of conservators currently working in the Archives, Library, Museum and Art Gallery. The most contentious point has been over who will control the Centre. The *Interim Report* placed it under the Art Gallery much to the concern of the other institutions and according to the *Final Report*, the Art Gallery is still planned to be in control. A Head Conservator will be

appointed to oversee the staff and liaise with the Directors of the institutions it services. Also, Edwards sees a role for the Centre in servicing "regional and specialist museums, libraries and galleries". Considering the demands that there will be for the Centre's services and its limited resources, I suspect that the job will be more suited to a Kissinger than a technocrat.

History Centre. The Centre is to house the collections acquired by the Museum and Art Gallery which, to Edwards, are peripheral to their 'normal' work. The Centre is also to house a sound archives and will be involved in display and education activities. The suggestion in the *Interim Report* that part of the Archives be transferred to the Centre has been dropped.

History Trust of South Australia. To administer the History Centre, the *Final Report* recommends the establishment of a History Trust. Amusingly, this is one of several recommendations which were implemented well before publication of the *Final Report*. How often are recommendations of government reports implemented at all let alone before their publication? The History Trust was established following proclamation of the History Trust of South Australia Act in March 1981. The Act gives the Trust wide functions and powers. Two of these, for example, are to 'carry out or promote, research relevant to the history of the State' and "to accumulate and care for objects of historical interest". Specifically, the Trust controls the Constitutional Museum (opened in 1980; the last of a line of Don Dunstan pet projects) and the Birdwood Mill Museum (a folk museum which grew quickly, floundered for want of direction and money, was financially rescued by the Government coffers and hopefully will be put on the right track by the Trust). Additionally, the Trust in the next eight years will assume control of the Performing Arts Collection, several historic homes (for white elephants), a proposed Military and Police Museum and a proposed Ethnic Museum. The two museums will be in renovated buildings behind the Library and Museum. An Information Centre will act as a publicity and information centre for the North Terrace Complex and may well become invaluable as a signpost to the eventual multitude of museums, institutions and collections of interest to researchers and visitors.

Two points stand out in regard to the Trust. Firstly, in a wider context, it will become yet another institution to reside on North Terrace. (And presumably, the Archives will also establish its own identity in the eyes of the public and government departments when it is administratively separated from the Library.) Secondly, the Trust will be given an astonishingly large number of buildings to look after on North Terrace

and elsewhere. Its responsibilities are great for it will have to make such museums as the Constitutional Museum and Ethnic Museum goers even though such types of museums are relatively new and untried.

South Australian Museum. The Museum will have a dynamic future. Edwards sees a change of role for such a museum. No longer will the Museum be an ossified relic but will present its knowledge and holdings to the public in an imaginative and bold way. It will not only satisfy curiosity but will also engender it.

It is planned that the redevelopment will proceed over the next eight years. Undoubtedly, many departures from the *Final Report* recommendations will be made during that time but I expect that Edwards' vision of the North Terrace Cultural Complex will come to fruition unscathed. It is a pity that at the start, Edwards was not given a brief to look at all of North Terrace instead of just the Museum. The way the Edwards Report spread out from the Museum to encompass the other institutions led to too many misunderstandings and therefore to rivalry and bitterness which have marred the proceedings so far and what otherwise appears to be a bright future.

#### FOOTNOTE

1. Robert Edwards. *South Australian Museum Study: First Interim Report*. June 1979 p.15.

# Guide to Queensland Land Records

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QUEENSLAND STATE ARCHIVES, *Guide to the Records of the Crown Lands Office, 1842-1875, and the Crown Lands Commissioners' Office 1842-ca1900*, Brisbane, 1981. Available for \$2.00 from the State Library of Queensland, William Street, Brisbane, 4000.

The *Guide to the records of the Crown Lands Office, 1842-1875, and the Crown Lands Commissioners' Offices 1842-ca1900* is the second in the series to be published by the Queensland State Archives. The first, describing the records of the Colonial Secretary's Office 1859-1896, appeared in 1976.

The *Guide* is in three sections: an Introduction, followed by a description of the records, and a number of appendices. The Introduction traces the history of land settlement in Queensland from the 1840s when depasturing licences were issued by the New South Wales Government for districts which became part of Queensland when the two colonies were separated in 1859. The pattern of settlement followed the same trend as in New South Wales with squatters moving their herds into new areas in advance of any legal title to do so; and the situation becoming more formalised as the legislation and bureaucracy caught up with them. Naturally this early period is much less well documented than the later one when government agencies had been established.

The earliest officials were Crown Lands Commissioners who were appointed from 1842 onwards to each of the new pastoral districts that were created as the settlement spread. The machinery of government was gradually developed: the office of the Chief Commissioner of Crown Lands was established in 1849 to handle the considerable work-load associated with the alienation of Crown land. This Office was finally abolished in 1875, but the local Commissioners for Crown Lands in the Unsettled Districts continued to exist for many years under the direction of the Under Secretary for Lands.

During the 1860s and 1870s the public officials concerned with the administration of land, in Queensland as in New South Wales, involved themselves with the huge task of surveying new land, arranging for the sale of Crown lands, the administration of pastoral leases, and all the detailed business associated with these activities.

After dealing briefly but adequately with these developments, the

Introduction to the *Guide* goes on to explain the administrative procedures in the Office of the Chief Commissioner of Crown Lands and the record keeping system in the two main areas of correspondence and the registration of pastoral leases of Crown land. In passing, one can note with regret the loss of some of the correspondence registers and correspondence relating to this vital settlement period.

The section describing the records is divided into I Correspondence; II Registers of Pastoral Leases; III Miscellaneous items; and IV-X Records of the Commissioners for Crown Lands for the various Districts — Burke, Darling Downs, Gregory South, Leichhardt, Moreton, Warrego, Wide Bay and Burnett. Each series is clearly described and the level of indexing noted.

As mentioned previously, much correspondence has not survived but there is fair coverage of the 1860s, the earliest Register commencing in July 1855. The Registers of Pastoral Leases commence in 1848 and would seem to be far more complete. The series are grouped under the legislation by which the leases were issued. The quantity of material surviving varies greatly between the various Commissioners. The records from the Burke, Wide Bay and Burnett Districts are fairly voluminous; while the other Districts are represented by only one or two items. However these are often very interesting Letterbooks, or in the case of Darling Downs an early Diary, 1845-52.

The Appendices provide detailed lists of the contents of the individual items in the major series of Registers of Pastoral Leases; an explanation of the symbols used in the Registers; a list of references in the New South Wales (to 1859) and Queensland (from 1859) *Government Gazettes* relating to Pastoral District Boundaries; and a list of the Chief Commissioners of Crown Lands, 1860-75. This information will be of considerable value to researchers using the *Guide* to access these records.

Like most Australian archival finding aids, the format of the *Guide* is utilitarian — it will not grace many coffee tables. However researchers and archivists will treasure it and experience no difficulty in using it to facilitate their access to the records. The straightforward, factual style allows for rapid perusal and a ready understanding of the text.

The *Guide* will be of particular value to researchers and archivists in the eastern States which have a common administrative origin and for this reason have a continuing interest in records held in other State archives. New South Wales and Queensland share records of the pre-1859 period and researchers naturally benefit from the publication of guides to the various sources.

The appearance of this new guide will be noted with pleasure by archivists. The coming Bicentenary with its strong emphasis on local history and community involvement, coupled with the huge and still growing upsurge of interest in genealogy, will place increasing pressure on archival institutions. They are unlikely to receive much in the way of additional staff and resources. Guides such as this ease the work of researchers and archivists and can do much to relieve the pressures.

The Queensland State Archives is to be commended on its publication. I look forward to seeing others of a comparable standard.