

The Northern Territory Archives Service

Don Brech

Following self-government in 1978, archives and records storage facilities were provided to Northern Territory Government agencies by the Northern Territory Branch of Australian Archives. In 1981 the Northern Territory Government undertook to accept responsibility for the provision of archives services. The function was placed within the Northern Territory Department of Community Development.

In January 1983, a Principal Archivist was appointed to be responsible for 'the establishment, development and operation of the Northern Territory Government Archives'. In July 1983 the Northern Territory Archives Service was created as the archival authority of the Northern Territory Government. Initially regarded as part of the administrative structure of the Northern Territory Library Service, it was effectively separated from library services following a review of the organisation of the Department of Community Development in July 1984.



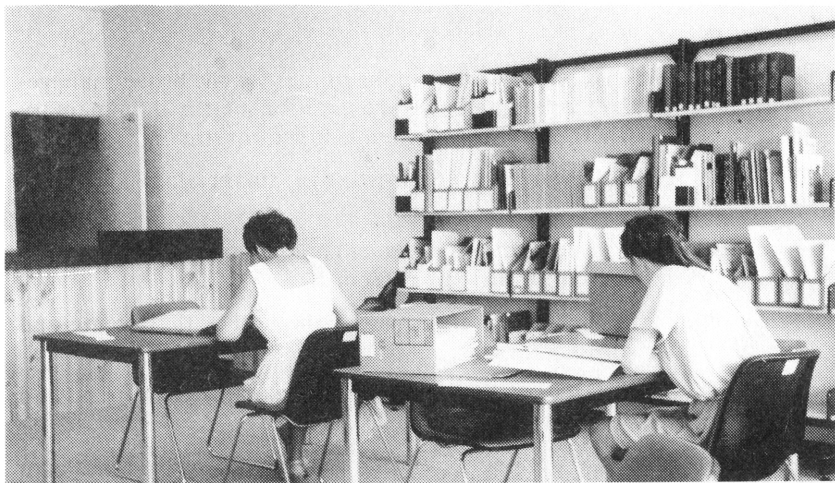
Privileged access at the official opening of the McMinn Street repository. L to R: Director, Community Services, Mr Cec Suthern; Principal Archivist, Mr Don Brech; Minister for Community Development, The Hon Darryl Manzie MLA.



Foyer and exhibition area. The main entrance is off-camera to the left. Centrally located, this gives access to the Lending Service counter, Search Room and general offices.



The interim Archives building at McMinn Street has off-street parking and loading bay facilities at the front and rear.



The Search Room can accommodate up to six researchers and contains the Reference Library.

Records are stored in standard size boxes where practicable. Adjustable shelving in compact units ensures maximum use of the repository's storage capacity.



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The Archives has Territory-wide responsibilities for the broad management of government records and the preservation of the documentary heritage of the Northern Territory. Its main functions are:

- to identify records needed for administrative, financial, legal and research purposes
- to house and protect records of permanent and temporary value and to control the destruction of unwanted records
- to record information about records and the bodies that create and control them
- to control access to records and make them available for official and public use
- to preserve records of permanent value from private sources relating to the Northern Territory.

Five additional staff were appointed in 1984, including two archivists. The staff has recently been increased to nine following the transfer of the oral history program and its executive officer from the former Northern Territory University Planning Authority and the creation of two positions under the Community Employment Program.

The Northern Territory Archives Service was temporarily located in the State Reference Library building in Cavanagh Street until August 1984 when it occupied its own building at the corner of Carey and McMinn Streets, Darwin in the city centre.

While not 'purpose designed', the original partially finished structure was completed to meet the requirements of an archives repository and leased by the Government. The building was officially opened by the then Minister for Community Development, The Hon Darryl Manzie MLA.

The building is air conditioned with separate systems for the repository (18°C ±2° and 50% RH ±5%) and offices. The total area is 921m² and is protected by sprinklers and smoke detectors and a security alarm system. The shelving is Brownbuilt mechanically operated compactus with a storage capacity of 4800 linear metres of standard boxed records. Over 3000 linear metres is now occupied, mainly by secondary records, following the transfer of Northern Territory Government records from the custody of the Australian Archives.

A second interim repository is being planned for occupation in mid-1985. Both buildings will be vacated when the permanent, purpose designed Archives building is constructed. This is planned for completion by 1988 to coincide with the Australian Bicentenary and the 10th anniversary of self-government in the Northern Territory.