

NSW Action Committee on local govt record

THE RECORDS produced by local government bodies, shires, municipalities and cities contain information vital not only to the administration which created them, but also to historians, archaeologists and architects.

However the legislation governing the retention of such records provides that only a few classes must not be destroyed: minute-books, registers of legal documents, registers of correspondence, legal documents, registers of returning officers' declarations of elections and of polls and the returning officers' declarations themselves. All other records may be discarded after six years, subject, in the case of accounting documents, to the auditor's report.

Over the past five years the NSW Branch of the LAA has been increasingly concerned with local history collections and has organised successful seminars and workshops on the relationship between librarians and local historians. The Sydney Branch of the Australian Society of Archivists has also been conducting a survey of the attitudes of local government bodies towards record-keeping.

In October 1981, the two bodies jointly organised a workshop and seminar to examine some major issues in the control, management, preservation and use of local records.

Attended by senior members of the Archives Authority of NSW, the Mitchell Library, local government bodies and the universities, it concluded with a symposium summing up the day's discussion, and also proposing future action. (The proceedings have been published and are available through the LAA.)

As a result, the Action Committee on Local Government Records was established under the chairmanship of Associate Professor Ian Jack of the University of Sydney. The Committee's suggestions on extending and clarifying the range of documents which should not be destroyed have led to significant additions to the list of records so classified.

The reduction of local government archives to microform is a superficially attractive way of reducing storage problems but there are problems of policy, control and quality. The Action Committee, in association with the Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW, has therefore instigated a one-day seminar at the State Archives Building in the Rocks on 29 April 1983 to examine the issues involved.

For further information contact Patricia Ward, 4 Lyons Street, Dover Heights 201 2030 (02) 371 7394.

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