



Australian
Historical
Association

2 March 2016

The Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP, Prime Minister of Australia
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Mr Turnbull

As the peak body representing historians in Australia, the Australian Historical Association is extremely concerned about further cuts to the budgets of our national collecting institutions. Our national institutions, including the National Library, the National Archives, the National Museum, the Museum of Australian Democracy and the National Film and Sound Archive are the most prominent storehouses of our collective identity and culture. When they cannot fulfil their missions to collect, preserve, interpret and enable research access, we are all diminished.

Historians in Australia tell our rich national story. We constantly discover new aspects to Australia's past that make sense of our present and open up possibilities for the future. To do so we rely on access to the private and public records, publications and artefacts that are the remains of that past. If our collecting institutions are forced to reduce staff and services even further than they have, the work of historians, researchers, teachers, genealogists and students at all levels will be seriously impeded.

Indicative of the gravity of this new round of 'efficiency dividends' is that the National Library's Trove platform may cease aggregating content from museums and universities. Trove is the central digital repository of Australia's past, a crucial tool for historians, and beloved by the 70,000 people who use it every day. It is an exemplary product of efficiency and innovation, admired around the world. To curtail Trove is to constrain understanding of our past.

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These are **national** institutions, not Canberra institutions, and all Australians are affected when they are insufficiently resourced to fulfil their missions of developing, maintaining, and making accessible nationally significant collections.

The AHA asks that our national collecting institutions be fully funded in the May budget, not further cut back.

Australia's understanding of its past is a lot to lose.

Yours sincerely

Professor Angela Woollacott
AHA President

cc The Hon Bill Shorten MP, Leader of the Opposition
Senator the Hon Mitch Fifield, Minister for the Arts
Hon Mark Dreyfus QC, MP, Shadow Minister for the Arts

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