

8 Access policy (January 2017)

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 Policy Statement

This policy is to clarify conditions of access to the Archives. It has been ratified by the Benedictine Community in consultation with its Archives, Research and Publications Committee.

The Benedictine Community of New Norcia Archives is a private archives; access to its records, therefore, is restricted and is always at the discretion of the Superior of the Community.

8.2 Purpose and nature

8.2.1 The Benedictine Community was founded at New Norcia on the 1st March 1846 as a monastery, undertaking a mission to the Aboriginal people of the area. In 1867 the monastery was made an Abbey Nullius and remained so until 1982. In the early 1900s schools for European/Australian children were opened. The monks lived their monastic life while managing a farm and the mission, and doing pastoral work in the parishes of the Abbey Nullius and in the schools.

8.2.2 Records from these activities, along with histories written by monks and others, photographs, slides, films and videos, maps and plans form the bulk of the archival records. Some of the records are in their original format whilst some of the records have been digitised. The above are available at New Norcia only.

8.2.3 Some of the records have been microfilmed. These microfilms are available at New Norcia and copies are administered through the J S Battye Library, Alexander Library Building, Perth. The microfilms are available to researchers with permission from the Benedictine Community as detailed above.

8.2.4 The Archives retains records from the ongoing life of the Benedictine Community, the monks' personal records, farm and business records and materials donated by past members and students.

8.2.5 The collection is retained and preserved for:

- the use of the Benedictine Community of New Norcia in its day to day running of the town and farm of New Norcia.
- use in providing materials for educational purposes by schools and universities, and for public education in Australia.
- genealogical research for Aboriginal people, former students, workers, monks, local farmers etc.

8.2.6 Researchers may come to the Archives in New Norcia or alternatively go to the J S Battye Library of Western Australian History, 3rd Floor, Alexander Library Building, Francis Street, Perth to do their research.

8.3 Access to research material

8.3.1 Under no circumstances will records which are deemed to be confidential or sensitive or which might in any way cause embarrassment to the Community or to an individual, be made available for research.

8.3.2 Permission to access the records must be applied for by a 'Permission to Access Form' (See Form 9.5.1 in Appendix C).

- This form is available on the web site www.newnorcia.wa.edu.au by following the Monastery and Archives links, or from the J S Battye Library of Western Australian History, 3rd Floor, Alexander Library Building, Francis Street, Perth.
- When completed, the Permission to Access form should be forwarded to the Archivist who will check it and forward it to the Abbot for his permission and signature.
- The Abbot will assign a date for termination of the permission. An application can be made for an extension if necessary.

8.3.3 All enquiries for individuals' records require the completion of Form 9.5.2 (See Appendix C) and for genealogical research post 1900, photo identification will be required. Aboriginal genealogical research also requires the completion of Part 3 of Form 9.5.1.

8.3.4 In addition to the Permission to Access forms, a Research Request form, Form 9.5.3 (See Appendix C) must be completed and submitted to the Archivist. This is also available on the website.

8.3.5 Persons seeking records (see definition above) other than their own:
Where the applicant is seeking records of people who are still alive, permission must be sought from the living record owner in order to release their records.

Where the applicant is seeking records of deceased people, only the records of immediate family members may be released; otherwise for extended family members (e.g. uncles and aunts, in-laws, cousins etc) permission must be sought from the direct family members of those people; or if there are none still living, then application must be made to the Abbot. Records of people who are not related to the applicant will not be provided except as required by law.

8.3.6 Photographs. Upon application via the Permission to Access form, photographs may be made available either from the New Norcia Archives or from the Battye Library. Where photographs of Aboriginal persons are concerned, these will only be made available to direct relatives (antecedent or descendant) where that relative is no longer alive. Following recent advice from the Manager of Storylines (Indigenous Collections) at the WA State Library, group photographs may be released but with the advice that the release of the photograph is for personal use only and that permission for onward publication will need to be gained from the Abbot.

8.3.7 Only the Archivist, the Abbot, the Prior or other persons approved by the Archivist, may enter the Archives storage area and open or remove boxes or other items from the shelves. The Archivist is responsible for handing out material to *bona fide* researchers and for returning them to their storage locations.

- 8.3.8 Only the Archivist, the Abbot, the Prior or other persons approved by the Archivist may consult the databases.
- 8.3.9 A fee may be charged for research carried out by the Archivist according to the relevant statements below.

8.4 Charges relating to the access of records

8.4.1 Copying

Limited copying of these records may be permitted. Copying charges will be set by the Archives at the Monastery of the Benedictine Community at New Norcia or by the State Archives of Western Australia or the J S Battye Library of Western Australian History in accordance with their current rate.

8.4.2 Charges may be levied at the discretion of the Archivist.

Where charges are levied by the Archivist, costs will be determined by;

- The time taken to discover and clear the records requested,
- The number of photocopies made,
- Materials used in meeting the researcher's needs , e.g. CDs, paper etc.

8.4.2.1 Charges relating to the translation of records will be set by the translator.

8.4.2.2 All the above charges are to be paid by the person using the archival records held by the Benedictine Community of New Norcia at the discretion of the Archivist.

8.4.2.3 In practice, a donation to the Community is preferred over imposing charges.

8.5 Rules and Conditions to be observed whilst in the Archives

8.5.1 All bags, cases and other similar containers are prohibited from the search room.

8.5.2 Pencils only may be used to take notes from the records and photography is not permitted.

8.5.3 Eating, drinking and smoking are prohibited.

8.5.4 Searchers may use no more than one file at a time.

8.5.5 Care must be taken to ensure that the order of papers, cards etc which are loose in folders, bundles or boxes, is maintained at all times. Where papers are fastened together in any way, the fastening must not be interfered with.

8.5.6 Original documents must always be handled with the greatest care and respect. Readers must avoid placing their hands, arms and writing materials on the documents. Latex gloves are available from the Archivist for handling documents.

8.5.7 Full reference details of records accessed should be kept by the researcher; New Norcia Archives [NNA] accession number, title of the record, date, page, paragraph, author and addressee.

8.5.8 No marks of any kind may be made on the documents.

8.5.9 Upon request the Archivist may copy documents for a researcher. However, it should be noted that this request may be refused at the discretion of the Archivist and that the researcher must abide by the Archivist's decision.

8.6 Confidentiality

The records in the Archives include material of a confidential nature whilst other material is restricted because of the sensitivity of the data contained in it and for other reasons, for example respect for the cultural sensitivities of the Indigenous population and for individuals' rights not to have their details made public. The Archives is a private archives and is not bound by freedom of information requirements or legislation; the release of information from the Archives, therefore, is entirely at the discretion of the Superior of the Benedictine Community. Consequently all staff, including volunteers, will undertake not to disclose any information that may be learned whilst working or volunteering in the Archives. This undertaking is formalised by signing the Declaration relating to the Confidentiality of Public Records and Private Archives (See Appendix C, Form 9.7)

8.7 Borrowing

Limited borrowing from the Archives is permitted, in which case an entry must be made in the *Borrower's Register*. All staff and members of the Community may borrow any reference work (mainly monographs) from the Archivist's Office. Only members of the Community may borrow actual archival records.