Our PARBICA conference theme this year talks about various different opportunities for engagement: public engagement, engagement with professional stakeholders, and strategic engagement.

Why do organisations want to engage with a community? What drives the need to ‘engage’? And what does engagement look like?

We know that engagement is vital if an organisation wants to continue to be relevant to its audience.

But how do you measure success when it comes to engagement? And how do you know when you have reached the finish line, and ‘engaged’ successfully?

Many of the projects which we do in our archives and government institutions are hard to quantify in terms of results. We can measure how many visits to a webpage, or page downloads, or the numbers of items digitised. These are all tangible things that we can count. But how do we measure the intangible benefits of a project – things like increased community awareness of a new archive collection or a new exhibit, or improving a relationship with another organisation? These things are a little harder to measure.

Today I would like to share with you a stakeholder engagement project which I am working on as part of a small team at my workplace, the Department of Health and Human Services, Victoria, based in Melbourne. In my presentation I’ll highlight some of the challenges which we have needed to address in working to make the department’s records accessible to a key group stakeholders and members of the public.
Engagement with professional stakeholders and strategic stakeholders can bring its own set of challenges. The records held in the department’s collection are of special interest to a particular group of people in the community, who hold strong views about access and ownership. Liaising with these individuals and organisations has required a strategic and sometimes political approach for our project.
Firstly, some background to the Archive collection itself. The Department of Health and Human Services, Victoria, (or DHHS) has provided services and support to the community of the State of Victoria for over 150 years. Over this time, the Department and its previous agencies have created a large number of administrative and client records, which document the functions which have been carried out by the department over the years – social services, child protection, adoption services, disability services, public housing, and public health.

This huge collection of items includes records for tens of thousands of children who were under the official care of the department or received a service from the department at some time in their life. There have been many thousands of children, including Wards of State and other children who, for a variety of reason or family circumstances, were not able to live with their families for a period of time during their childhood. The department ran residential homes for many of these children, and it also provided funding for other organisations which provided care services for children. The department archives holds administration and client records from some of these organisations, and also holds records relating to child migrants and aboriginal children who were removed from the care of their families.

A note on the term ‘care leaver’ – from the title of my presentation – this term has become known in Australia to refer to an adult who was under the care or protection of the Government as a child, often in an institution such as a children's home or orphanage, or who received a support service from the Government. Indigenous children who were
removed from their families are known as the “Stolen Generation”, and the term ‘Ward of State’ describes a child who was placed in the care of the State Government through an official court order.

Children who were placed in State care often did not experience any family life with parents and siblings, and many were also disconnected from their extended family network. Many of these children were victims of physical or sexual abuse, and psychological abuse while living in government and institutional care homes. These painful childhood experiences have often created a sense of distrust or anger towards Government offices, including DHHS. The main advocacy groups for the care leaver community have differing views about who should be allowed to access their personal records and what should happen to the records. The groups also disagree about the idea of being called a ‘care leaver’, as many of the children now adults don’t consider that they lived in a caring environment as children.

The opposing views held by the key stakeholder groups is just one of the levels of complexity in the engagement process for this project.
The DHHS Ward Records Plan was established to improve recordkeeping practices and improve public access to department records, especially those records relating to former wards of State. From 2013-2016, as part of the Ward Records Plan, the DHHS Records Management Unit processed more than 1,000,000 records, improving record descriptions in the controlling database, and making records more identifiable and accessible to individuals who request copies of their case files.

A department website, Finding Records, was launched in December 2016, and this is the public face of the Ward Records Plan. The website contains over 300 guides which give detailed descriptions of the different record collections in the archive which relate to wards of state and children in care.

While working on this project, the department identified thousands of archival items other than files, which have connection with former wards and care leavers. These include photographs, magnetic tapes (audio and video cassette tapes), architectural building plans, and other artefacts and memorabilia. These types of items can all build a picture of childhood experiences, and can add details to a story which is often more personal than the life story documented in official records.

The importance of photographs and other artefacts, and the need to improve access to these items was especially mentioned in submissions made to an official government enquiry. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses into Child Sexual Abuse in Australia was established in January 2013 to investigate how institutions such as schools, churches, sports clubs, and government organisations like DHHS, have responded to allegations and instances of child sexual abuse which have taken place within institutions.
which have provided care for children. Similar commissions of inquiry have also been held in other countries around the world, including the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Canada. Individuals and organisations making submissions to the inquiry especially mentioned the importance of improving access to photographs, files and artefacts.

The response of DHHS to the Royal Commission has resulted in **Phase 2 of the Storage Strategy**, as you can see. This second phase of the project focuses on making records accessible, and on actively engaging with care leavers and other community groups to make these records and other items available to local groups and individuals who have a personal interest in the stories connected to the items.
Think about the memories that you have of your childhood. Maybe your mother could tell you how old you were when you first started to talk, or what was your favourite food when you were a child. Maybe your sister or brother could talk with you about the house you lived in when you were 8 years old.

As you know, in many Pacific communities there is a strong tradition of oral history and story–telling as a way of passing knowledge to other family members. People who lived in government care from a young age might not have any connection or knowledge of their own family. They might not have any stories of childhood experiences, no stories passed on by family members – their siblings, aunties and uncles, their wantoks. These individuals may not know anyone who knew them when they were a child. Because of this lack of oral history or shared memories, these individuals rely more keenly on any documents or items they can discover which will help to build a picture of their childhood.

The department is committed to trying to improve this situation for care leavers by making personal and institutional records more accessible to individuals who have received services provided by the department.

The first stages of this project started in early 2017, focussing on the digitisation of photographs in the department’s archive collection to preserve the items and improve accessibility. This has now evolved into a much wider strategy for engaging with professional and strategic stakeholders, and building relationships with advocacy groups who represent past clients of the department.
The initial project has grown into a multifaceted outreach and engagement program, with streams of work across a broad range of areas, including outreach, building partnerships, digitising the collection, obtaining technical advice, and managing the collection items themselves.
The Program Logic Model you can see here is a tool for managing tasks within a project management environment. This model provides a snapshot of the streams of work identified for the DHHS Archives Accessibility project:

**Outreach**

**Partnerships**

**Processing**

**Project Management**

The model illustrates elements such as:
- the stakeholders identified for the project, including target groups of key stakeholders and care leaver advocacy groups
- the department’s relationship with the stakeholder – internal and external organisations – eg: Legal Services unit
- what work is involved – what activities have been identified to be worked on
- timeframes for the activities to be completed – short, medium and long term outcomes
- what results do we want to achieve from the activities – outputs – transparency with stakeholders, care leavers involved, improved compliance with legislative requirements, preservation of vital records

Inputs
Activities
Outputs
Short term outcomes
Medium Term outcomes
Ultimate outcomes

Using a tool like this to map out different streams of work within a project can make it easier to see where stakeholder engagement fits within the project tasks and its direct relationship to and effect on the various project activities.
The work streams or areas of activity that we identified in the engagement framework map of the previous slide, are now translated into project tasks.

Some examples of the tasks in the Program Logic Model, with a corresponding activity:

- **Outreach** – identify opportunities for care leavers to access records and contribute knowledge and stories – enhance the description of items, contribute contextual knowledge, and build trust with stakeholder groups

- **Partnerships** – internal and external. Liaise with local community groups to develop exhibitions of historical material and memorabilia in locally based displays

- **Processing** – digitisation of collection items for preservation and for reference use or sharing with others - photographs, magnetic tapes, building plans

- **Program Management** – liaise with Legal Services to establish formal endorsed processes relating to copyright and access to records
Project Activities

• Digitise collection items
• Publish digitised items in public forums
• Improve record descriptions in the TRIM database - determine protocols for metadata and description
• Consult with stakeholders to add descriptions to collection items
• Develop public exhibitions of archival material

Highlighting just a couple of the activities:

Some of the streams of work involved in the engagement project:
• **Publish digitised items** in public forums using the Collections Victoria database – managed through the State Library of Victoria – a photograph sharing database used by many community organisations to make images available for public view
• **Improve record descriptions** in the TRIM database – **determine protocols** for metadata and description
• Consult with stakeholders to add descriptions to collection items - **identify people, places and events depicted in photographs**
• Develop public exhibitions of archival material – **internal and external** exhibitions – exhibitions relating to business areas within the Department and targeted exhibitions to small stakeholder groups
Collaboration with stakeholders is a key part of any engagement project. This project has provided many opportunities for collaboration with internal and external stakeholders to the project.

Most visible is the collaboration with advocacy groups and with organisations who have or continue to provide support services to children.

**Example** – this example is from a visit which I and my colleague made only a couple of weeks ago – a religious order the Daughters of Divine Zeal in Melbourne ran an orphanage called the Antonion Children’s Home during the 1950s through to the 1970s – we had an opportunity to spend time with one of the Sisters to look through a photograph album and identify children in the photographs – we can now link the information about the photographs with any other information or files recorded in the TRIM database for each individual child. Previously the Department might not have held any information on a child other than the official department file.

**Share knowledge – legal opinion and protocols developed for access to images and privacy concerns**

**Example** – Many private and religious based organisations have faced similar challenges when trying to assist former residents by providing access to client records and personal information. Questions of questions of access, privacy and the wish to provide any and all information which might help a care leaver to build the story of their childhood.
Share results with other organisations – other organisations working on similar projects can benefit from work done on obtaining legal advice and establishing protocols regarding access and privacy concerns. Ensures a consistent approach.

Consultation with the department’s Legal Unit to obtain information regarding copyright law, privacy legislation, health records legislation – all of these factors have an influence on what information and images can be published in a public forum. We are currently developing an Access Policy for the project, and also a policy on options for removing published content if we receive complaints or concerns about breaching privacy of individuals – establishment of Take Down Protocols.

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Awareness raising activities –
Example – work with other business areas within the department, or other archival institutions, to raise awareness and promote archives and history of the organisation. Internal DHHS stakeholder engagement awareness raising:
Develop an exhibition to celebrate a key date of significance to other business areas, eg: World Vaccination Day, Mental Health Awareness Week

Look for opportunities to engage with your stakeholders and work collaboratively.
Challenges and Opportunities

- Story telling
- Digitisation
- Competing interests and expectations of advocacy groups
- Ownership of original records
- Legal requirements
- Privacy versus Access

Some of the challenges and opportunities created during this project:

**Some opportunities:**

**Story telling** – Improved descriptions and awareness of collection items provides opportunities to create links between separate collection items in different formats to create stories which will connect with members of the public or with targeted stakeholder groups.

**EG:** Link a floor plan for a building, with a plaque from the building, and a photograph of a group of people standing outside the same building

**Digitisation** – preservation of fragile items – making items accessible

Digitisation can also **create challenges:** Which items to prioritise? – those which can be made publically available, or those which are fragile and in danger of being lost?

**Other challenges:**

I briefly made mention earlier of the **Competing or conflicting interests and expectations held by advocacy groups**

**Ownership of original records** –

Who holds the original and who holds the copies?

- When is it appropriate to place original items in community based organisations or in community groups where the items are most relevant or have the greatest connection? Eg: placing items in a known organisation which is trusted by the care leaver. This could create a ‘safe’ space for those traumatised by their childhood experiences in State care, who may still hold a mistrust of government or are not willing to interact with official government
processes
- Provision to care leavers of original records held on an official department client file (eg: photographs) or copies – conflict between maintaining the integrity of the original collection of records, and providing access to an item that could help an individual to build a picture of their children. An original photograph held in your collection might be the only picture that an adult may have seen of themselves as a baby

We need to find a balance between collecting what is required to meet legislatory requirements, and making items more accessible to interested stakeholders and the wider community

Legal requirements – copyright and privacy:
Consultation with advocacy groups to determine appropriate access and audience – eg: Demonstration of Victorian Collections website with advocacy groups CLAN and Open Place – demonstrate examples of the types of photographs we are planning to publish
Option for providing access to photographs and artefacts to a limited audience in a controlled situation, eg: liaison with a care leaver advocacy group to provide a display of photographs at a reunion event for a children’s home
**Mind Map** – illustrates the complexities of providing access to material in accordance with authorised legal, copyright and moral standards.

Access to archival content – the level of access and the copyright permissions varies depending on factors such as the type and age of the material, the type of client depicted in the material, whether or not the client is of an indigenous background, whether or not any individuals in the information are identifiable.

Some considerations:
Do you provide access to everything? What about group photographs?
Should you get the permission of the person in the photo before you publish it online?
What about if you don’t know who the person is, or if one person in the group agrees to publication but others don’t agree?
What about the privacy of other people in a group photograph?

Moral rights of former clients that their image not be published without their permission
Moral responsibilities of DHHS to protect personal privacy of individuals

Find a balance between protection of personal privacy and providing access where possible, within legal guidelines.
Sharing the News – otherwise known as Project Reporting

Reporting is an extension of, or another level of engagement:
- Provides evidence of the activities of the project
- Reporting to stakeholders maintains a profile for your organisation and continues to raise awareness about your project and hold the interest of your audience

**Formal project reports** to DHHS management team – linked to funding and organisational reporting requirements, reporting as part of the wider Storage Strategy 5 year plan
- Reporting on budget spending
- Periodical reporting

**Online presence:**
- Collections Victoria website, twitter, weekly department staff newsletter
- Make a collection of records available and update the collection regularly, eg monthly, or in response to a special event or anniversary
- Updating the content regularly demonstrates to your stakeholders your continued interest in their concerns or purpose

**Liaison with advocacy groups** on key activities or sub-projects
- Written reports
- Attending meetings of stakeholder interest groups – ensures that the community is aware of your presence and activity in that area of interest
- Provide a presence, eg: a photograph display at key events or anniversaries / occasions for the advocacy group

Other archives and collection management organisations:
- Attending networking events as part of relationship building
- Sharing knowledge and experiences regarding technology solutions, metadata descriptions

Reporting to archival and community forums:
- report on project activities and outcomes – eg PARBICA, ANZSHM (ANZ Society for the History of Medicine), Australian Society of Archivists Conference 2018, social history conferences, conferences re care leaver experiences
- Sharing experiences and exchanging ideas regarding approaches to project issues
- Publicity – Spreading the word about DHHS project and outreach activities, within the wider community
[This photo demonstrates that these clients are the Aradale Training Centre in the 1960s were very effective at creating woven baskets which were made available for sale!]

To refer back to the Program Logic Model, the outputs of your project will be a mixture of tangible and intangible outcomes. Some of the benefits for the DHHS project which we are working towards and hope to achieve include:

- **Positive public profile** of DHHS & Records Management Unit– promote activities to internal business units within the department, and externally outside the department - participation in conferences, working groups, regular meetings with key groups – identify appropriate fora, community groups receiving placement of records and artefacts of local interest

- **Established and or improved relationships** with key user groups and community organisations:
  - advocacy groups and organisations previously antagonistic towards the department are willing to work with the department and contribute ideas and information to project activities
  - organisations not previously interacting with department see DHHS as a first point of contact for key issues
  - community organisations & local history groups not previously associated with the department – holding DHHS records of local interest after close liaison with DHHS
  - care leavers and advocacy groups feel acknowledged and included in the process of making more records and items accessible from the department’s
- **Digitisation** completed for a significant number of photographs, magnetic tapes, building plans: preservation of significant or fragile collection items

- **Records are more accessible** to care leavers and the general public, within a framework of legal, copyright, privacy and access considerations:
  - Increased ability to identify and locate items by improving record descriptions in the controlling database – metadata descriptions
  - Digitised items published online on a regular basis

- An **approved policy and procedures framework is established** and available for future use when required
Success Stories

Improved relationships with community groups and advocacy groups
- Ongoing networking and collaboration with a key stakeholder group of care leaver advocacy and provider organisations (Record Holders Group) regarding processes for managing photographs

Advocacy groups see DHHS as a trusted organisation:
- An organisation with a long history of a difficult relationship with DHHS looks to DHHS for advice regarding access to a collection of historical photographs of wards of state and children in care, held in a private organisation
- Stakeholder groups have confidence in and trust that the department has a better understanding of their childhood experiences, and know that the department is ready and willing to work with the groups to improve access and understanding of care leaver experiences

Online presence -
Post of first photograph to Collections Victoria website, and first posting to Twitter – received two ‘likes’ within the first minute of posting!

https://victoriancollections.net.au/items/59a8f21921ea751fa8bc1531

Department records held in other organisations returned to DHHS:
- Negotiations are currently taking place with an archive organisation regarding return of a collection of records produced by DHHS staff to the department archive
- Referral to DHHS by the State Archives Office – DHHS is made aware of collections of original department records held by private organisations
The DHHS accessibility project is a long term project. Where is our project finish line? In a practical sense, project resources and funding are finite.

So much of the department’s work is governed by regulations and legal obligations, eg official reporting requirements, funding and budget restrictions, Freedom of Information legislation, copyright and privacy legislation, etc.

The department needs to continually to question our practices and examine how we can work within this environment to serve the community in a better way.

Ideally we will continue to carry out activities commenced or expanded on during the project:
- **Authorised protocols / procedures** become a part of daily practice — utilising standard metadata descriptions, creating a regular schedule of work re digitisation, awareness of DHHS Records Management presence and role in managing archival collections
- **Online content** continually added to and updated, commented on and shared by the public
- **Key records digitised** — vital records preserved and project scope completed
- **Collaborative projects** continue with advocacy groups and other community groups
- Continued **positive relationships** with care leaver advocacy groups — DHHS is seen as a trusted partner

The department is examining how it interacts with the public, moving from a role of
gatekeeper of the official archive collection to the means by which information is preserved, accessed and shared by its community.

This project is a re-forging of links with existing stakeholder groups, and creating a new attitude of inclusiveness, and acknowledgement of the role that individuals play in the creation of records.

We are re-thinking how the archive collection can be preserved, utilised and shared in the future, and allow opportunities for the opinions and needs of the public and key stakeholder groups to influence a program of work when appropriate.

The conversation and engagement will continue into the future.