

EVIDENCE-BASED GOVERNANCE IN THE ELECTRONIC AGE: THE IMPORTANCE OF RECORD KEEPING FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

**SUMMARY SESSION 8, WEDNESDAY 2 APRIL 2003
1700 TO 1900 EDT**

Sites

- Washington
- Cook Islands (via audio)
- Fiji
- Papua New Guinea (via audio)
- Samoa (via audio)
- Vanuatu (via audio)
- New Zealand

The Current Situation and Present Needs

In the discussion of the current situation, participating countries began by outlining the current state of their records and access legislation and discussing the role of records in their societies. They then proceeded to discuss the following key issues:

- the fact that in the Pacific island states, records are largely paper based and space is a real problem
- the fact that in many Pacific countries, a public records act usually accounts for semi-current and non-current records but not for current records; guidelines may exist but there is no formal enforcement or monitoring to ensure standards are met and not enough is being done to protect the public record
- the fact that often there is a lack of awareness in government of records legislation, which means it is part of the archives' job to bring this issue to the public's awareness
- the need for training, resources, storage and financial support for all aspects of record keeping throughout government
- the fact that in some countries records management is not nationally regulated and there may not be access legislation; records retention schedules may be in place but they may not include all records

- the reality that countries in the region experience hot, humid climates and cyclones, which means that ensuring proper environmental conditions is difficult
- the fact that archival involvement in current records management is a new concept in many countries; archivists have had to persuade government and other agencies that they have to be involved if there are to be good quality records, but they have not always been successful in gaining acceptance
- the reality that many land records are over 100 years old and are being called upon daily, weekly and monthly; their care is not satisfactory, their physical condition is deteriorating and, given their tremendous importance, their care ought to be of the highest priority for government
- the fact that access legislation leads to complications in relation to records management; it is important to coordinate legislation, education, awareness and information systems, especially with regard to electronically generated records, so that records are well managed
- the reality that countries in the Pacific are competing in the global market place with countries that have different legislative statues, which raises a range of record keeping concerns that small Pacific countries have to consider
- the fact that Pacific island archivists need to be able to position themselves collectively so that they can manage the demands of electronic governance and develop effective record keeping systems
- the fact that donor aid is critical in the Pacific; further education and training need to be supported because a whole range of new skills is required for managing electronic records.

The Way Forward

Participants then considered actions that could be taken to improve the record keeping environment in their countries and around the world. They identified the following central issues:

- the need to use technology to streamline government operations, yet at the same time to get paper records under control and manage electronic records, which are starting to be produced rapidly
- the need for changes in records and access legislation to address record keeping issues more effectively
- the value of support from organisations such as the World Bank and Commonwealth Secretariat, who are taking such a strong interest in records management; it will help a great deal if international institutions can help to create awareness among policy makers of the need so strengthen records management; without this awareness by policy makers, countries in the region will continue to be affected by inadequate policies, training and resources

- the importance of raising the profile of archives, working closely with donors and partners to emphasise the importance of records and to seek new ways to support accountability through quality record keeping.