



Oral History Australia

Guidelines of Ethical Practice 2007

Preamble

The Oral History Association of Australia was formed in 1978 to promote the practice of oral history in Australia; this national body is now known as Oral History Australia. There are independently incorporated Oral History Associations in each State affiliated through their membership of Oral History Australia and committed to providing information and forums for discussion about oral history.

Oral History Australia is concerned that due regard is given to ethical practices and strongly advises that the following guidelines be followed by anyone involved in oral history.

Oral history involves recording, preserving and making available candid information that may be sensitive or confidential. All interviewers are asked to act to preserve the rights and responsibilities of the different parties involved and to refuse to work in any other way.

These guidelines describe ethical practice only. Information about method is available elsewhere and it is hoped that no-one undertakes oral history without being competent in interview technique.

Questions regarding any issue arising from these guidelines may be directed to the Oral History Australia (www.oralhistoryaustralia.org.au) or your State Oral History Association.

The interviewer's responsibilities are to protect the rights of interviewees by:

Explaining: -

1. the purpose of each interview, how it will be organised and recorded, whether it will be placed in a repository, and what interviewees will receive after the interview, such as a copy of the tape, transcript or planned publication;
2. oral history copyright, the implications of assigning copyright to another party, and the rights of interviewees to have a say in the use of their material by asking for anonymity and/or placing restrictions on use of the interview during their lifetime possible future use of interviews by all parties involved such as the interviewer, interviewee, and a repository.

Giving:-

1. each interviewee an agreement to sign which clearly states whether the interviewee will retain copyright or assign it to another party and under what conditions assignment of copyright is granted; any change in use not covered in the original agreement would need to be renegotiated.
2. Conducting interviews with objectivity, honesty and integrity.
3. Being aware of defamation laws and the implications, for all parties concerned, of recording potentially defamatory material.
4. Treating every interview as a confidential conversation until an interviewee gives the right to share information through an agreement.
5. Ensuring that interviewees are given the opportunity to review, correct and/or withdraw material.
6. Ensuring that interviews are preserved for future researchers by, if possible, placing them in a repository under conditions agreeable to the interviewee.

The interviewer should ask that funding bodies or employers

1. Provide a written contract or agree to a written proposal that clearly states the purpose and intended use of interviews and what copyright provisions apply.
2. Accept the confidential status of interviews until the completion of a signed agreement allows otherwise.
3. Allow the interviewer to act professionally and to abide by the guidelines of ethical practice of Oral History Australia.
4. Place interviews in a repository where they will be available for research, subject to any conditions placed by the parties involved.