

obstacle to effective retrieval of information from a full text system.

2.2 We chose to adopt the summary system which involved recording summaries of the transcript using consistent language and format. Therefore, no unedited information entered the database.

2.3 Incidentally, we also opted for a single user system as we did not foresee that more than one person would need to access the computer at the same time. As we were entering summaries only, we decided that a personal computer would suffice with a duplicate sister system in Darwin. The equipment was ordered on our behalf in Darwin and, when it arrived, it diverged from the specifications in several respects. It would have been preferable to order and purchase our own equipment, thereby ensuring direct recourse against the supplier.

3. THE DATABASE

3.1 Structure

We built a database of four chapters, each chapter representing a different proceeding (Chapter 1 – First Inquest, Chapter 2 – Second Inquest, Chapter 3 – Trial, Chapter 4 – Inquiry). This division made it possible to search for references in one proceeding only, or any combination of proceedings.

In retrieval systems of this kind, chapters are further divided into articles. The article is the predetermined unit of information that is retrieved in response to any search request. In this instance we chose to have each article correspond to a page of transcript. Each article contained such

information as the name of the proceeding, the volume and page reference, the name of the witness and a summary of the evidence on that page.

3.2 Form of summaries.

The transcript was processed by summarising it in two ways:

- (1) Encoding the contents of each page using predetermined "categories" (see 4.1.1 below)
- (2) Abridging the evidence to a short continuous narrative.

3.2.1 Categories

In consultation with Counsel assisting the Commission, we attempted to list all substantial issues raised in both the lay and scientific evidence of previous proceedings. Each issue was then assigned a category number. Every page of the transcript of each proceeding was read and summarised by reference to these predetermined numbered categories.

The category numbers were keyed into the system, translated into full category names (by use of a computer program we developed called SPP) and then added to the database.

Consequently, in the retrieved article, the full category names would appear in a consistent and obviously more legible form.

3.2.2 Narratives

In addition to category numbers, short narrative summaries were prepared for each page of Trial and Inquiry transcript.

The narrative summaries, as well as recording the main points of oral evidence, noted the tender of exhibits, the production of documents under summons and questions asked

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The coming meetings are listed on the back page.

Contact has been made with the interstate societies and we hope to bring you interstate news and contributions in our next edition.

NEWSLETTER

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