

Public Service Medal (PSM)

Victoria

Ms Michaela Joy Hart, VIC

For outstanding public service to archival practice and access to records.

Ms Michaela Hart has delivered exceptional public service through her leadership in archival services and records accessibility, with particular focus on care leavers and vulnerable Victorians. Over her distinguished career, Ms Hart has championed public access to historical records, enabling individuals who experienced state care to reclaim their stories and identities.

Her work has transformed how sensitive records are managed and accessed, ensuring individuals seeking information are met with dignity, compassion and care. Ms Hart has held key roles across the Department of Health and the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, where she oversaw the preservation and accessibility of more than one million paper-based records, some dating back over 150 years. She has demonstrated leadership and service excellence by embedding client-centred records management practices.

Ms Hart played a pivotal role in the department's operational response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, contributing her expertise to ensure sensitive and trauma-informed record keeping during a critical period. Recognised globally, Ms Hart has set new benchmarks in trauma-informed archival practice. She has been instrumental in recognising and addressing the impact of vicarious trauma on archivists.

Through the development and delivery of a comprehensive training program, she has promoted mental health awareness and self-care across multiple government departments, fostering a culture of wellbeing and resilience. Ms Hart's work, grounded in trauma-informed principles and a person-centred ethos, has improved productivity, strengthened public trust, and ensured the ethical stewardship of public records.

A tireless advocate for individual rights, Ms Hart champions those represented in records, those seeking access to them, and those entrusted with managing them. Her leadership has reshaped archival practice across government and driven lasting cultural change. Her legacy lives on in the systems she has improved, the staff she has empowered, and the people she has helped reconnect with their histories, making her work a cornerstone of compassionate and forward-thinking public service.