

**Records Management Standard
Records Disposal**

October 2003

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This Standard is issued in pursuance of
Section 137 of the *Information Act*.

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ABOUT THIS STANDARD

Purpose

The purpose of this Standard, established in pursuance of the *Information Act*, is to define policies and compliance requirements for the retention and disposal of records held in NT Government public sector organisations.

In pursuance of the *Information Act*, the NT Archives Service regulates the disposal of NT Government records. Authorised records disposal schedules enable accountable appraisal and disposal of NT Government records to meet business needs and community expectations.

Scope

Application of this Standard is mandatory for all NT Government public sector organisations, including NT Government Departments or Agencies, NT Government Statutory Bodies, NT Government Business Divisions and NT Government Owned Corporations.

This Standard applies to all NT Government records in all formats, including electronic records and records in business systems, copies of records and parts of records.

Regulatory Framework

The regulatory basis for this Standard is defined in the *Information Act*

The NT Archives Service endorses the Australian Standard *AS ISO 15489: 2002—Records Management*.

Related Documents

This Standard is to be read in conjunction with:

- ▶ the complete set of NT Government Records Management Standards
- ▶ authorised schedules for the disposal of NT Government records
- ▶ the NT Government approved thesauruses for the classification and titling of records
- ▶ policies and procedures of individual NT Government public sector organisations.

Responsibility

The NT Archives Service is responsible for establishing this Standard including the provision of advice and training, and for monitoring NT public sector organisation compliance.

Implementation of this Standard is the responsibility of the Chief Executive Officer in each NT Government public sector organisation.

Authority

This Standard was approved by the Minister for Corporate and Information Services on the 8th October 2003 and is effective immediately.

This Standard has been endorsed by the NT Information Commissioner.

POLICY

Policy Statement

NT Government public sector organisations use authorised records disposal schedules for the disposal of all records, and:

- ▶ all records disposal schedules are authorised by the NT Archives Service and by the Chief Executive Officer of the organisation responsible for the functions described in the schedule
- ▶ all records disposal schedules relate to classifications described by approved functional terms managed by the NT Archives Service
- ▶ all NT Government public sector organisations apply general records disposal schedules issued by the NT Archives Service
- ▶ all NT Government public sector organisations develop and apply authorised records disposal schedules to suit the business records of the unique functions of each organisation, and with due consideration of privacy principles
- ▶ an annual list of current, draft and proposed disposal schedules relevant to the business records of the unique functions of each NT Government public sector organisation is submitted to the NT Archives Service
- ▶ authorised records disposal schedules are recorded in records management systems and applied to records at the time of capture into the records management system
- ▶ authorised records disposal schedules are applied to records that are held solely in electronic format as soon as possible after creation or receipt, to ensure that the management of those records is planned and technical implications are addressed
- ▶ where a function is transferred from one NT Government public sector organisation to another, all records relating to that function, including records relating to the control of those records, are transferred with the function
- ▶ archives (records of permanent value) are transferred to the NT Archives Service not later than 30 years after creation, unless special arrangements are agreed for particular records to be retained by the organisation for a further period
- ▶ authorised records disposal action is planned and carried out regularly
- ▶ appraisal and sentencing of records is reviewed prior to authorised disposal action (particularly destruction) to ensure the disposal class description and sentence assigned at the time of capture is still applicable, and privacy requirements such as de-identification are addressed

- ▶ no records are destroyed without an authorised records disposal schedule
- ▶ all records disposal actions are formally documented and recorded in records management systems
- ▶ formal notification of authorised destruction of records is provided to the NT Archives Service
- ▶ authorised general disposal schedules for functions common to all NT Government public sector organisations are reviewed at least every three years by the NT Archives Service in consultation with all NT Government public sector organisations
- ▶ NT Government public sector organisations monitor changes to the legislation or operational environment relevant to the unique business functions of the organisation that may impact on authorised disposal schedules and may therefore necessitate a review
- ▶ authorised disposal schedules for unique functions of NT Government public sector organisations are reviewed at least every three years in consultation with the NT Archives Service
- ▶ retention of ephemeral information is kept to a practical minimum and is regularly destroyed under Normal Administrative Practice guidelines.

Explanation

In the paper world, the need for disposal is clear, since keeping unnecessary papers can lead to an unmanageable accumulation of files, costing an organisation for storage and retrieval every year. This is less apparent in the electronic world, where electronic storage is relatively inexpensive and widely available, creating a case for keeping everything on hand.

However, even in the electronic world, there are a number of issues that may motivate an organisation to undertake regular disposal action:

- ▶ privacy responsibilities: some records need to be destroyed in order to preserve the privacy of information about individuals, as required by the *Information Act*
- ▶ burden of management: managing vast quantities of time-expired electronic records imposes a storage burden on records management systems, including issues involved in migrating records or managing records in outdated or legacy systems, and may impede effective retrieval of records.

The term records disposal means:

- ▶ Transfer of the custody of records, including movement to secondary storage or to the NT Archives Service

- ▶ Transfer of ownership of records
- ▶ Rearrangement
- ▶ Alterations to the context or format of records, for example the migration of electronic records to different systems where there may be a risk of data degradation or loss
- ▶ Destruction of records.

Any of these actions may affect the effective operation and accountability of an organisation. It is important that appraisal and sentencing of records is reviewed prior to authorised disposal action (particularly destruction) to ensure the disposal class description and sentence assigned at the time of capture is still applicable, and privacy requirements such as de-identification are addressed. Review of appraisal and sentencing is particularly important for electronic records, including those in business systems, where actions such as software upgrades or system backups may add complexity to disposal action.

Under the *Information Act*, the NT Archives Service is responsible for establishing standards and monitoring disposal of NT Government records, and there are penalties for unauthorised disposal.

Authorised disposal of records is achieved by the application of records disposal schedules. Records disposal schedules are policy documents that describe each class of records held, using thesaurus classifications based on business analysis. The schedules set out

minimum requirements for the creation, maintenance, retention or destruction actions to be taken in relation to existing or future records.

NT Government Disposal Schedules

There are two types of records disposal schedules:

- ▶ “general” records disposal schedules that apply to records common to most or all NT Government public sector organisations, and
- ▶ records disposal schedules specific to an NT Government public sector organisation or function.

General Disposal Schedules are issued by the NT Archives Service and are NT Government policy documents.

Records disposal schedules specific to an NT Government public sector organisation or to unique functions are policy documents for the organisation, and are established through consultation between the NT Archives Service and the organisation controlling the records.

A Register of Current and Draft Disposal Schedules for individual NT Government public sector organisations or functions is held by the NT Archives Service.

Acknowledgment

The NT Archives Service acknowledges that the work of the following organisations has been a significant influence on the establishment of this Standard, and associated records disposal schedules:

- ▶ National Archives of Australia
- ▶ Public Record Office of Victoria
- ▶ State Records Authority of New South Wales.

COMPLIANCE

Compliance Checklist

NT Government public sector organisations need to progressively satisfy the following requirements.

- The organisation assigns responsibility for the management and application of regular records disposal action using authorised records disposal schedules, to an appropriately skilled records manager who consults with the NT Archives Service
- The organisation applies NT Government general disposal schedules issued by the NT Archives Service
- The organisation's business managers, in cooperation with an appropriately skilled records manager, are assigned responsibility for the development, maintenance, review and application of authorised records disposal schedules to suit the unique business of the organisation
- Records of all of the functions and activities of the organisation are described accurately and disposal action is defined in an authorised records disposal schedule
- All employees of the organisation are familiar with the authorised records disposal schedules relevant to the organisation's records
- An annual list of current, draft and proposed disposal schedules relevant to the organisation's unique records is submitted to the NT Archives Service
- Authorised records disposal schedules are applied to records in the organisation's records management systems, including systems for the management of paper records, electronic records, or records in any other format
- Authorised records disposal schedules are applied to records in the organisation's business systems, either directly or by linking the business system to a records management system
- The organisation's records manager plans and conducts a regular program of authorised records disposal, including a review of appraisal and sentencing prior to any disposal action in consultation with the relevant operational business managers and with due consideration of privacy principles
- Notification of disposal forms are completed for all authorised records disposals and are submitted to the NT Archives Service
- Archives (records of permanent value) are identified and managed with due regard to long term preservation

- An annual search is conducted to discover archives (records of permanent value) that are no longer required for operational use or reference, and those records are transferred to the NT Archives Service

- The organisation has a policy of regular destruction of ephemeral information, using Normal Administrative Practice Guidelines, so that unimportant information does not impede the effective storage and retrieval of records.

- All authorised disposal schedules are reviewed at least every three years, in consultation with the NT Archives Service.

