

# RECORDS AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SCHEDULE OF DEFINITIONS

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## 1 PURPOSE

To provide ready access to definitions of terms used in records management and to supplement those terms provided in the Records Management Policy.

## 2 SCHEDULE

### Access Direction

State records are open to public access after 20 years unless the record is subject to an early access authorisation or a closed to public access direction.

**Early access authorisation:** Public offices can make access directions to open some records before they are 20 years of age.

**Closed to public access direction (CPA):** Public offices can also make access directions to close some records to public access for longer than 20 years to protect sensitive information. A CPA direction remains in force for 5 years - at which time it can be renewed or revoked by the agency.

Records available as open access information or proactively released under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* should also be authorised for early access under the *State Records Act 1998*.

**Accountability:** the principle that individuals, organisations, and the community are responsible for their actions and may be required to explain them to others.

**Active Records:** those records required for the day-to-day functioning of an agency or person. Also referred to as current records. Ellis (ed), *Keeping Archives*, p. 461.

Records in frequent use, regardless of their date of creation, required for current business relating to the administration or function of the organisation. Such records are usually maintained in office space and equipment close to hand.

**Appraisal:** the process of evaluating business activities to determine which records need to be captured and how long the records need to be kept, to meet business needs, the requirements of organisational accountability and community expectations. AS 4390 Part 1 Clause 4.3

**Archive:** Archive means a record that has continuing value but is no longer required for current use. This includes permanent university and state archives.

**Arrangement:** the intellectual and physical process of putting archives and records into order in accordance with accepted archival principles, particularly those of provenance and original order. If, after detailed examination, the original order is identified as a totally haphazard accumulation making the records irretrievable (but not an odd, unordered or difficult arrangement), the archivist may (after documenting the original order) impose an

arrangement that presents the records objectively and facilitates their use. Ellis (ed), *Keeping Archives*, p. 464. See '**Description**'.

### **Authoritative Records and Information**

To be considered authoritative, records and information must include specific metadata (data about the data) that describes:

- Content: What the records contain.
- Structure: The format and layout of the records.
- Business Context: The circumstances under which the records were created, received, and used.
- Relationships: How the records relate to other records and information.
- Actions and events: The business activities connected to the records.
- Retrieval information: Data needed to find and present the records.

This metadata needs to be stored in systems and updated whenever changes occur to keep the records accurate over time.

**Consignment:** a group of records that belong to the same series, need to be kept for the same length of time, have the same storage requirements and are transferred at the same time.

**Control:** Control systems and processes associated with records management include:

- registration - which provides evidence of the existence of records in a recordkeeping system;
  - classification - which allows for appropriate grouping, naming, security protection, user permissions and retrieval;
  - indexing - which allocates attributes or codes to particular records to assist in their retrieval; and
  - tracking - which provides evidence of where a record is located, what action is outstanding on a record, who has seen a record, when such access took place and the recordkeeping transactions that have been undertaken on the record.
- AS 4390 Part 4 Clause 1

**Corporate Governance:** the processes by which organisations are directed, controlled and held to account. It encompasses authority, accountability, stewardship, leadership, direction and control exercised in the organisation. AS 8000 Clause 1.5.1.

**Counter Disaster Plan:** a plan for measures to be taken for disaster prevention, disaster response and recovery and vital records protection.

**Custody:** the physical location of the records or archives. Custody does not always include legal ownership, or the right to control access to records. Ellis (ed), *Keeping Archives*, p. 466.

**Data:** Set of characters or symbols to which meaning is or could be assigned (AS/NZS ISO 30300: 2020 – section 3.2.4). Note: Data is the digital representation of information. It is considered to be the result of how information has been recorded and consists of bits, bytes, characters and pixels” (ISO/TR 8344: 2024 – section 3.2).

**Data Management:** Activities involved with managing data across the full lifecycle so that it is protected from unauthorised use and inappropriate deletion. Data needs to be appropriately managed from procurement or service design through to creation and final disposal. This includes protection of personal, health and sensitive information, and the prevention of deletion until enabled by legal authorisation (see [NSW Government Data Glossary](#)).

**Deaccessioning:** the process of removing material from the care and custody of an archives, either because the material has been reappraised and found to be unsuitable for the archives' holdings, or because the legal owner has requested its return, or because it has been agreed to transfer it to another archives. Deaccessioning is a serious matter which requires careful consideration and documentation. Ellis (ed), *Keeping Archives*, p. 466.

**Description:** the process of recording information about the nature and content of records in archival custody. The description identifies such features as provenance, arrangement, format and contents, and presents them in standardised form. Ellis (ed), *Keeping Archives*, p. 467. See '**Arrangement**'.

**Digital Records:** records communicated and maintained by means of electronic equipment. (AS 4390 Part1 Clause 4.13):  
Records capable of being processed in a computer system and/or stored at any instant in a medium which requires electronic or computer equipment to retrieve them. Ellis (ed), *Keeping Archives*, p. 469

**Disposal:** a range of processes associated with implementing appraisal decisions. These include the retention, deletion or destruction of records in or from recordkeeping systems. They may also include the migration or transmission of records between recordkeeping systems, and the transfer of custody or ownership of records. AS 4390 Part1 Clause 4.9.

**Disposal Authority:** see '**Retention and Disposal Authority**'.

**Disposal Classes:** classes of records performing or recording similar activities and therefore having the same retention period and disposal action. AS 4390 Part 1 Clause 4.11.

**Disposal Trigger:** the event from which the disposal date is calculated, for example 'last action' or 'expiry of contract'.

**Document:** recorded information or object which can be treated as a unit. AS ISO 15489 Part 1 Clause 3.10.

Document means any record of information, and includes:

- anything on which there is writing, or
  - anything on which there are marks, figures, symbols or perforations having a meaning for the person qualified to interpret them, or
  - anything from which sounds, images or writings can be reproduced with or without the aid of anything else, or
  - a map, plan, drawing or photograph.
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- Evidence Act 1995 (NSW)  
Some documents are records because they have participated in a business transaction, or were created to document such a transaction. Conversely, some documents are not records because they do not function as evidence of a business transaction.



**Electronic Document:** a collection of electronic data which may be produced by the creation of original data (typically a text document, small database, spreadsheet, graphic created within the office environment) or by the combination of existing data (which may include data extracted from data files and databases). It should be managed as a unique entity by means of a standard set of descriptors.

Information Exchange Steering Committee, *Management of Electronic Documents in the Australian Public Sector*, p. 12.

**Evidence:** information that tends to prove a fact. Not limited to the legal sense of the term. Australian Standard AS 4390-1996, Part1. Clause 4.14

**Information:** Data in context with a particular meaning (AS/NZS ISO 30300: 2020 – section 3.4.7).

**Information Asset:** a body of information, defined and managed as a single unit so it can be understood, shared, protected and exploited effectively. Information assets have recognisable and manageable value, risk, content and lifecycles. (National Archives UK [Factsheet](#) Information Asset).

**Information Management:** Planning, collection, control, distribution and exploitation of information resources within an organisation, including systems development, and disposal or long term preservation (AS ISO 5127: 2017 – clause 3.2.1.23).

**Information Systems:** organised collections of hardware, software, supplies, policies, procedures and people, which store, process and provide access to information. AS 4390 Part 1 Clause 4.17.

**Intellectual Control:** the control established over the informational content of records and archives resulting from ascertaining and documenting their provenance, and from the processes of arrangement and description. Ellis (ed), *Keeping Archives*, p. 472.

**Litigation Hold:** Under the *State Records Act 1998* (NSW), a litigation hold (or legal hold) is a mandatory instruction to suspend the destruction of records when a public office is aware of possible legal action, such as lawsuits, investigations, or Freedom of Information (GIPA) requests. This ensures evidence is protected from loss or destruction.

**Metadata:** see Recordkeeping Metadata

## Migration

Line of business systems may have a shorter life than the records they contain. Technology changes rapidly and systems regularly improve and are updated. When systems are superseded but the record is still required for business or operational purposes, the records must be transferred to the new system in a process called migration.

Migration processes create a new version of a record, while the old version (source record) of the record is kept for the purposes of quality assurance. After the migration process is completed, source records can often be disposed of. [The General authority for source records that have been migrated \(GA48\)](#) provides the permission for the disposal of source records. The GA48 also includes a number of requirements that must be met in order to destroy source records and keep the migration process safe and reliable.

**Normal Administrative Practice:** A normal administrative practice (NAP) is a process that allows agencies to destroy certain types of low-value and short-term information in the normal course of business. Business information that is not needed to document the

University's can be destroyed in accordance with a NAP without formal permission from State Records NSW. NAP is based on The [State Records Regulation 2024](#).

### **Open Access Period**

Records that are **less than 20 years old** are closed to the public unless an 'early access' direction has been made.

Records that are **more than 20 years old** are considered to be in the 'open access period.' These records are deemed to be subject to an 'open to public access' (OPA) direction unless a 'closed to public access' (CPA) direction has been made.

The University may also apply a 'closed to public access' (CPA) direction to close the records for longer than 20 years.

**Protection:** the processes and operations involved in ensuring the technical and intellectual survival of authentic records through time.

### **Record**

Record means any document or other source of information compiled, recorded or stored in written form or on film, or by electronic process, or in any other manner or by any other means (State Records Act, s.3(1) Definitions).

Information created or received and maintained as evidence and as an asset by an organisation, in pursuit of legal obligations or in the course of conducting business. (AS/NZS ISO 30300: 2020 – section 3.2.10)

**Records Management:** Field of management responsible for the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use and disposition [disposal] of records, including processes for capturing and maintaining evidence of and information about business activities and transactions in the form of records (AS ISO 15489.1: 2017 – clause 3.15).

### **Recordkeeping**

The making and maintaining complete, accurate and reliable evidence of business transactions in the form of recorded information. AS 4390 Part 1 Clause 4.19. The process of making accurate and reliable records and capturing them into the official recordkeeping systems of the organisation.

Recordkeeping includes the following:

- a. the creation of records in the course of business activity and the means to ensure the creation of adequate records;
- b. the design, establishment and operation of recordkeeping systems; and
- c. the management of records used in business (traditionally regarded as the domain of records management) and as archives (traditionally regarded as the domain of archives administration).

AS 4390 Part 3 Foreword

**Recordkeeping Metadata:** metadata (data elements captured or used to describe information, such as date created, author and title) required for the appropriate management of records.

**Recordkeeping Requirements:** requirements arising from regulatory sources, business needs and community expectations that identify the types of records that should be created

and the management framework needed in order to have, and accountably manage, all the business information that is necessary for an organisation.

**Records Continuum:** The whole extent of a record's existence. Refers to a consistent and coherent regime of management processes from the time of the creation of records (and before creation, in the design of recordkeeping systems), through to the preservation and use of records as archives.

AS 4390 Part 1 Clause 4.22

**Retention and Disposal Authority:** documents authorised by State Records NSW that set out appropriate retention periods for classes of records. There are two main types:

- *Functional* retention and disposal authorities authorise the retention and disposal of records unique to a specific organisation.
- *General* retention and disposal authorities authorise the retention and disposal of records common to more than one organisation.

Such records may include:

- general administrative records
- common records that relate to unique functions, and
- records relating to the unique functions of like organisations such as local councils, universities, and public health services.

**Retention Period:** The period of time, usually based on an estimate of the frequency of current and future use, and taking into account statutory and regulatory provisions, that records need to be retained before their final disposal. Sometimes also used to indicate the length of time records are to be retained in offices before being transferred to secondary storage.

Ellis (ed), *Keeping Archives*, p. 479

**Sentencing:** the process of identifying and classifying records according to a defined Retention and Disposal Authority and applying the disposal action specified in it.

**State Archive:** a state record that falls under the control of Museums of History NSW. A record may be designated as a state archive based on retention and disposal authorities issued under the State Records Act. State archive can also mean a State record that Museums of History NSW has control of under this Act (State Records Act, s.3(1) Definitions).

**State Record:** a record made or received by a person, whether before or after the commencement of this section:

- a. in the course of exercising official functions in a public office; or
- b. for a purpose of a public office; or
- c. for the use of a public office (State Records Act 1998, s.3(1) Definitions).

## State Records Act

Key records management provisions of the Act require public offices to:

- make and keep records that fully and accurately document their business activities
- establish and maintain a records management program in conformity with standards and codes of best practice approved by State Records NSW
- ensure that records, information and data are stored in conditions appropriate to their

format and preservation requirements

- ensure that equipment- and technology-dependent records are accessible for as long as they required.

Other key parts of the Act include provisions governing the disposal of records, a statutory basis for a right of public access to records more than 20 years old, and the transfer of records required as State archives to the custody and control of Museums of History NSW.

### **Administration of the State Records Act**

The State Records Act 1998 is administered by State Records NSW and Museums of History NSW.

State Records NSW is the NSW Government's records management authority.

State Records NSW's responsibilities and functions are established by the [State Records Act 1998](#). They include:

- overseeing recordkeeping by public offices of NSW (this includes Universities)
- determining standards and providing advice
- identifying State records that have enduring value and are required to be retained as State archives.

Museums of History NSW (MHNSW) is a state cultural institution, established under the [Museums of History NSW Act 2022](#). Through the State Archives Collection, MHNSW manages NSW's official documentary heritage, supporting government transparency and the public's right to access information.