




GRPP.02.01.11 RECORDS MANAGEMENT POLICY

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Council Policy

Records Management Policy

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1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

- To ensure the management of Council's information resources and Records Management System, to provide timely and comprehensive information to meet operational business needs, accountability requirements and community expectations.
- To ensure the preservation of Council's corporate records through sound recordkeeping practices and the accurate capture of information to meet legal, evidential and accountability requirements.

1.0 Applies to.

This policy applies to all Council officials and relates to both physical and electronic records. This policy applies to all aspects of organisational business, all records created during business transactions and all business applications used to create records including email, databases and websites.

2. REFERENCE

Legislation / Recognized Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• State Records Act 1998• Australian Standard AS/ISO 15489 – Records Management• Local Government Act 1993• Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009• Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998• Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002• Evidence Act 1995• State Records General Retention and Disposal Authority: Local Government Records GA39
Risk Assessment	

2.0 Record Management

2.1 Records Management Program

In accordance with s 12(2) of the *State Records Act*, Council will establish and maintain a records management program for the organisation. This is an identifiable organisational program directed towards achieving relevant corporate objectives.

These objectives are:

- Council maintains records to support its ongoing business activity and customer services, meeting accountability requirements and community expectations
- Records are managed as efficiently and effectively as possible
- Records are stored and able to be retrieved and used in a way which meets Council's needs
- Council complies with all external requirements concerning its records and



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records management practices including legal obligations under the *State Records Act*, the *Local Government Act 1993* and other relevant legislation.

2.1 Creation and control

Records must be created in all instances where there is a need for Council or an individual to be accountable for, and/or provide evidence of decisions made or actions taken.

Records should be uniquely identified, classified and registered into the corporate records management system as soon as they are received or created.

The location of physical records should be kept up to date at all times to ensure that physical items can be located as required.

The records management system should be monitored regularly to ensure that the identification and retrieval of information meets the needs of the organisation.

Mail handling procedures should ensure that mail is dealt with in a timely manner and that the flow of correspondence throughout the organisation is as efficient as possible.

2.2 Storage and retrieval

Records must be stored in conditions which ensure that they are accessible and readily retrievable for the length of time that they are required.

Records which are no longer required for day-to-day access and which have been identified as having a specified temporary retention period (via the general disposal authorities) should be removed from the working office area.

To ensure their longevity, records which have been identified as having permanent or continuing value should be stored in conditions which satisfy minimum standards for permanent records.

Records should be stored in conditions which take into account their physical characteristics, sensitivity, retention period and expected access rate..

2.3 Retention and disposal

Council will take all reasonable steps to reduce the cost of storing records through the implementation of an appropriate disposal program. The program will include sentencing and the regular culling, transfer to archives and physical destruction of appropriate records in accordance with approved disposal schedules.

Disposal of official public records is governed by the *State Records Act 1998* and must only be carried out in accordance with the appropriate General Retention and Disposal Authority (GA39) by authorised officers.

Council records are State Records and may only be disposed with written authority of the General Manager.

Disposal must be documented in such a way to explain the rationale for the decision as well as provide evidence of their ultimate destruction.

Regardless of any legislative authority to dispose of a record, Council will not destroy records relating to a matter where it has been notified of impending litigation, application under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act* or other reason for legal discovery proceedings.

In regard to electronic records, Council's official record is regarded as the electronic



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image stored within the records system and not the 'paper' original.

2.4 Electronic record keeping

The business processes and systems of Council must operate to capture records which provide evidence of all business transactions conducted electronically and to ensure that those records are retained.

Consideration of the maintenance and disposal of official electronic records will be incorporated into the planning for Council's Information Technology systems.

Council officials are required to adhere to adopted procedures and ensure that electronic mail messages are managed in the same way as other mail.

2.5 Disaster recovery/business continuity

All reasonable steps are to be taken to ensure that Council's records are at minimal risk of damage or loss due to accident or disaster.

Council will develop and maintain a disaster recovery plan or business continuity plan which details all procedures to be followed in the event of a disaster. The plan will include all information necessary to implement the procedures.

In the event of an accident or disaster Council will take all reasonable steps to ensure records are conserved according to current best practice.

2.6 Ownership

All records which are made or received by Council, or Council Officials, during the conduct of Council's business are corporately owned by Council and, consequently, are subject to the recordkeeping practices and procedures of Council.

Any contractual agreement for any operation or service contracted out by Council must include a consideration of recordkeeping issues.

3. DEFINITIONS

Accountability	The principle that individuals, organisations and the community are required to account to others for their actions. Organisations and their employees must be able to account to appropriate regulatory authorities, to shareholders and members, and to the public to meet statutory obligations, audit requirements, relevant standards and codes of practice,
Active Records	Records in frequent use required for current business. These records are usually stored in office space and equipment close to hand.
Administrative Records	These records include all aspects of the organisation's internal administration, including budget and finance matters, general correspondence, staff matters, Ministerial and Parliamentary papers, accommodation and management information systems, and the organisation's own agendas, minutes and business papers.
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 the business needs, the requirements of organisational accountability and community expectations.



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Archives	The whole body of records of continuing value of an organisation or individual. Sometimes referred to as 'corporate memory'.
Business Activity	<p>An umbrella term covering all the functions, processes, activities and transactions of an organisation and its employees.</p> <p>To support the continuing conduct of business, comply with the regulatory environment and provide necessary accountability, organisations should create and maintain authentic, reliable and useable records and protect the integrity of those records for as long as required. (AS ISO 15489 def 7.1)</p> <p>Records that document business activity are vital for supporting informed decision making, corporate memory and ensuring accountability.</p> <p>Records, including email, containing evidence of business transactions must be captured into EASE such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A directive or approval for a particular course of action • Formal communications between internal officers or external agencies • Final versions of reports • Policy documents and statements • Formal minutes of Council and Committees <p>This material is distinct from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information only messages • Duplicates or working copies • Private messages or personal comments between officers
Classification	The process of devising and applying schemes based on the business activities which generate records, whereby they are categorised in a systematic and consistent ways to facilitate the capture, retrieval, maintenance and disposal. Classifications includes determining document or file naming conventions, user permission and security restrictions on records.
Council Official	Includes Councillors, member of staff of Council and delegates of Council.
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.
Documents	Structured units of recorded information, published or unpublished, in hard copy or electronic form, and managed as discrete units in information
Electronic Mail-Email	Email is a computer based message sent over a communications network to one or more recipients. It may be transmitted with attachments such as electronic files containing text, graphics, images, digitised voice and video or computer programs.



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Electronic messaging	Electronic messaging is a generic term encompassing all forms of electronically generated communication. This includes electronic mail for text messages, voice mail, electronic document exchange (Faxes), electronic data interchange (EDI), and multi-media communications such as tele/video conferencing and video text. It involves the electronic transmission of information as discrete electronic messages over computer-based data communication network or voice messages over a telephone network.
Evidence	Information that tends to prove a fact. Not limited to the legal sense of the term.
File	A file is a collection of documents, which show organisational activities through an identifiable sequence of transactions. Individual documents on the file have relationships with each other, for example a letter and a reply, and a reply to that etc., which are preserved by being kept on file in the right order and are part of the evidence in the records. A file can be physical or
File Desktop Audit	A process conducted by Records staff on a weekly basis using a hand held device to detail the current location of files.
Functional Records	Records relating to the functional activities of the Organisation.
Inactive Records	Those records no longer required for the conduct of business and which may therefore be transferred to intermediate storage, archival custody or destroyed.
Recordkeeping	Making and maintaining complete, accurate and reliable evidence of business transactions in the form of recorded information.
Recordkeeping System	Recordkeeping systems are business information systems capable of capturing, maintaining and providing access to records over time.
Record	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.
Records	Recorded information, in any form, including data in computer systems, created or received and maintained by an organisation or person in the transaction of business or the conduct of affairs and kept as evidence of such activity.
Records Disposal Authority	A systematic functional listing of records created by State Records which plans the life of those records from their creation to their disposal.
Records Management	The discipline and organisational function of managing records to meet operational business needs, accountability requirements and community expectation.
Registration	The act of giving a record a unique identity in a recordkeeping system.



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Semi-active Records	Records that are no longer frequently used by the organisation in the conduct of its activities and functions (ie once or twice a year).
State Archive	Records that are appraised as having continuing value and have been selected for permanent preservation. When they are no longer required for use by an organisation, custody of the record is transferred to the State Records Authority.
State Record	Any record made and kept, or received and kept, by any person in the course of the exercise of official functions in a public office, or for any purpose of a public office, or for the use of a public office, whether before or after the commencement of the State Records Act.
Storage	The function of storing records for future retrieval and use.
Tracking	Capturing and maintaining information about the movement and uses of records.
Transaction	The smallest unit of business activity; uses of records are themselves transactions.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

4.0 Policy relevance

Council has defined formal recordkeeping responsibilities in accordance with the State Records Act 1998 (NSW), which requires public officers to 'make and keep full and accurate records of their activities and to establish and maintain a records management program in conformity with standards and best practice'. Council recognises its regulatory requirements as a NSW Local Government Authority, and is committed to the principles and practices set out in the Australian Standard for Records Management (AS ISO 15489).

The policy aims to:

- promote an integrated framework for dealing with Records Management;
- ensure consistency and fairness in the manner in which the council deals with Records Management;
- ensure compliance with legislative requirements under the Local Government Act 1993 and the State Records Act 1988;
- promote awareness of the requirements of the relevant Acts with respect to Records Management;
- make council's policies and requirements for Records Management readily accessible and understandable to the public.

The management of records is an essential part of any organisation and by implementing best recordkeeping practice, Council can ensure the creation, maintenance, protection, identification and retrieval of accurate and reliable records. Good record management practices are vital for ongoing day to day Council business activities and for internal and public accountability.

Council's records are both electronic and paper and they need to fully support Council's



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business activities, accountability and cultural and historical heritage. Council currently uses the Synergysoft document management system for the storage of electronic records. Synergysoft is used to manage the registration, tracking, retrieval, security, storage and archiving of Council's files and documents.

Council is concerned with:

- managing records from the time they are created, for as long as they are required
- designing and managing systems to ensure that records are authentic and reliable
- providing a service to meet the needs and protects the interest of the organisation, its employees and ratepayers/clients
- capturing complete, accurate, reliable and useable documentation
- managing records as an asset and information resource.

5. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Staff members are to follow Standard Practice Notes and procedures in carrying out Records Management functions and use of records. In particular:

- Staff shall not alienate, relinquish control over, or destroy Records of the Organisation without authorisation to do so.
- Staff should ensure that Records in any format, including electronic documents and electronic messages, are captured into the organisation's Recordkeeping Systems.
- Staff are to handle Records sensibly and with care and respect in order to avoid damage to the Records and prolong their existence. Smoking, eating and drinking should not occur near Records or in Records storage areas.

Elected members, too, must display sound recordkeeping practices. In the "good Conduct and Administrative Practice" document prepared by the NSW Ombudsman, the following is recommended:

Agencies are obliged to make and keep full and accurate records of their activities. Public officials should help their agency meet this obligation by creating and maintaining full and accurate records of the work in which they are involved and of the decisions they make, including the reasons for those decisions. They should ensure the routine capture of these records into recordkeeping systems (Synergysoft), in the course of their duties. They should comply with requirements to keep and manage records which appear in relevant legislations, formal directives and guidelines.

Public officials should also be aware of the legal and administrative requirements which apply for the retention of public records. In this regard 'state records' include all documents of any kind made or received in the course of official duties by any person employed in a public office.



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Public officials responsible for or in possession of public records must ensure that they are kept secure against unauthorised access, alteration, loss or destruction.

Further State Records makes the following recommendations:

Meetings

Make sure that someone has been delegated to make a record of the meeting, whether minutes or a simple summary of decisions. Ensure that decisions are clearly recorded. Record any dissent by participants.

Circulate the minutes or record of the meeting to other participants and sign or otherwise confirm the accuracy of the records.

Conversations

Make a record of significant business you conduct via the telephone or face to face.

Significant business can include:

- *Providing advice, instructions or recommendations;*
- *Giving permissions and consent; and*
- *Making decisions, commitments or agreements.*

Transcribe voicemail messages, or capture the message directly into your organisation's official records system.

Decisions and recommendations

Document the reasons for decisions or recommendations that you make.

Correspondence

File or attach email, letters, faxes and internal memos (sent or received) that relate to the work you do onto official files within your organisation's paper or electronic records system.

Drafting documents

File copies of drafts submitted for comment or approval by others, and drafts containing significant annotations, into your organisation's official records system.

Elected Members are to keep thorough notes of meeting with the public as well as any meeting with developers or potential developers.



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6. POLICY REVIEW

The policy will be automatically revoked at the expiration of twelve months after the declaration of the poll for the next general NSW local government election, unless council revokes it sooner. **Note:** *Automatic revocation of the policy is provided for by section 165(4) of the Local Government Act 1993. The next general local government election is expected to be held in September 2016.*

This policy may also be reviewed and updated as necessary when legislation requires it; or council's functions, structure or activities change; or when technological advances or new systems change the way that council manages Records.