





Murrumbidgee
COUNCIL

Records Management Policy

(Revision 1)

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1. Policy Scope

This policy applies to all Councillors and employees of Murrumbidgee Council, and contractors and external consultants carrying out work on behalf of Murrumbidgee Council.

This policy applies to all records, both physical and digital, created or received, in the conduct of the official business of Murrumbidgee Council. This includes all aspects of all records created during business transactions and all business applications used to create records, including email, databases and websites.

Emails, which are relevant to the information gathering, policy formation or decision-making processes of Council, are part of the scope of this policy.

All records management procedures and systems are to be in accordance with this policy.

2. Policy Objective

Murrumbidgee Council is committed to meeting its responsibilities under the State Records Act 1998, and to implementing best practice for its information management practices and procedures. The purpose of this policy is to:

- Establish a framework for the implementation of a records management program to ensure Murrumbidgee Council's records meet operational business needs, accountability requirements and community expectations;
- Ensure the preservation of Council's corporate memory through appropriate record keeping practices;
- Drive efficiencies through implementing best practice.

3. Policy Statement

Council's records are a unique and vital asset that cannot be easily reconstructed or replaced. They exist for a variety of administrative, functional, historical and legal reasons. Their existence protects Council's interests and the interests of the community served by Council. The effective management and preservation of Council's records is intrinsic to both the decision-making process and productivity within the organisation.

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.

4. Records Management Program

Under the State Records Act 1998 public offices, such as Murrumbidgee Council, are required to establish and maintain a records management program in conformity with standards and codes of best practice approved by the State Records Authority.

Murrumbidgee Council's records management program will:

- Ensure that the management of Council's information resources provides timely and comprehensive information to meet operational business needs, accountability requirements and community expectations.
- Ensure the preservation of Council's corporate memory through sound recordkeeping practices and the accurate capture of information to meet legal, evidential and accountability requirements.

5. Responsibility

The State Records Act 1998 requires Council to make and keep full and accurate records as evidence of business activities.

Council is responsible for the protection, safe custody and return of all State Records under its control, ensuring accessibility to all equipment or technology dependant records.

Under the State Records Act (Part 2 Section10) the General Manager is responsible for ensuring that Murrumbidgee Council complies with the regulations and requirements of the Act.

The Corporate Records Manager is the Manager, Corporate and Community Services. The Corporate Records Manager has the responsibility and authority to set and issue corporate standards, and to monitor and audit compliance with these standards throughout Council.

The Manager, Corporate and Community Services is operationally responsible for the efficient management of Council records, incorporating sound recordkeeping principles and records management best practice guidelines. They will also assist staff in fulfilling their recordkeeping responsibilities and provide advice and training on compliance with this policy and its associated procedures.

All Managers and Supervisors are responsible for ensuring their staff receive training in records management and the use of Council's record management systems. They are also responsible for ensuring appropriate records management facilities are in place for their business functions and that their staff comply with all recordkeeping requirements.

All public sector employees need to be aware of the recordkeeping requirements that affect the performance of their duties.

Council staff have a number of basic obligations regarding records, including:

- Make records to support the conduct of their business activities
- Create records that would not otherwise be created, e.g. file notes
- Capture records into the corporate record management systems
- Learn how and where records are kept within Council
- Do not destroy Council records without authority from the Manager, Corporate and Community Services
- Handle records with care and respect with a view to prolonging their life span
- Do not alter, damage or lose records

- Do not remove records from Council buildings without the permission of the Director Planning, Community & Development or the Manager, Corporate and Community Services
- Maintain confidentiality of records to which they have access
- Be aware of records management procedures

Councillors/Elected Members

Elected members must display sound recordkeeping practices. In the “Good Conduct and Administrative Practice 2017” 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 in the course of their duties.

Note: Councillors should follow the same prescribed obligations as Council staff (see above).

6. Records Management Functions

Murrumbidgee Council operates under a centralised records management model, where corporate records management activities are carried out by the Manager, Corporate and Community Services within the Planning Community and Development section.

Records Management Systems

Murrumbidgee’s Councils principal recordkeeping system is Content Manager.

In addition, Council operates various specific purpose systems, where records are created and stored. These include, but are not limited to: Authority, Asset modules and Outlook.

Records are the property of Murrumbidgee Council and electronic documents must be stored on Council’s servers only. Information on desktop computers, notebooks, memory keys, external drives or CD/DVD discs is not admissible as a record of Council and is in breach of the State Records Act 1998, Council policies and administrative practices. External and temporary devices are to be used for copies of records stored on Council’s servers only.

File Creation and Classification

File or container creation within Council’s electronic management system is monitored by the Manager, Corporate and Community Services and select staff who have received specialised training. This allows files to be controlled and consistently named within the system.

The application of classification, using Government Authority 39 (GA 39), issued and authorised by NSW State Records, allows the allocation of security and sentencing to records.

Registration

Inwards correspondence is registered into Content Manager after initial appraisal by the Information Services Officer based on legal, evidential and accountability requirements.

A unique identifier is assigned to each record, and a date and time stamp affixed as it is entered into Content Manager. Metadata is captured at the point of registration, along with details such as author, version and assignee.

This registration process provides evidence that a record has been created into Content Manager and enables the management of the record over time.

Storage, Access and Security

The system provides a multi-level security facility which can be applied to individual documents, containers or specific classifications.

Security levels based on the organisational structure and individual's log in is applied to control access on a 'read only' or 'edit' level.

Records are available to all authorised staff who require access to them for business purposes. Access is restricted on the written request of departmental managers based on the protection of personal privacy. Staff access to records is monitored by the Manager, Corporate and Community Services.

All access to Murrumbidgee Council records by members of the public will be at the discretion of the Public Officer and in accordance with the Government Information (Public Access) (GIPA) Act 2009.

Originals of imaged records are retained for a period of 6 months. These are placed in date order in batches and stored in the records storage area of Council. Exceptions to this are originals of imaged records that have been identified as State Records, have a legal or locally significant function or are part of a Development Application.

Hard copy files are maintained for these records. A report library is also operated. These physical documents replicate records registered into Council's electronic document management system and are maintained by the Information Services Officer.

Legal documents and Council Business Papers are stored in the strong room of the Council's branch offices. All other physical records, including semi active, inactive and archived files, are located in records storage in Archives Room and Fireproof Storage Rooms. All areas used for records storage to have controlled access. Council's legal documents are retained by Council's solicitors being Kell Moore (Albury) and Farrell Goode (Narrandera).

Active hard copy files stored within each department are the responsibility of that department and do not constitute official Murrumbidgee Council records.

Tracking

Content Manager facilitates tracking of electronic documents by providing the functionality of auditing and reporting.

Murrumbidgee Council also uses a manual system to track its active physical files. It is based on the premise of consideration and awareness of the value of records.

Physical files are not to be removed from their location for prolonged periods nor are they to be removed from the Council administration building without the permission of the Director Planning, Community & Development or the Manager Corporate and Community Services.

Monitoring and Maintenance

The management of records within Murrumbidgee Council is constantly monitored. Recordkeeping systems, processes and procedures are regularly reviewed and opportunities for improving effectiveness and/or efficiencies identified.

Regular planning for records management will be undertaken through specific strategic and operational plans, which will be reviewed on a regular basis.

Disposal

Murrumbidgee Council records must be protected, maintained, retrievable and usable for their total retention period as outlined by the Government Authority 39 (GA 39), and disposed of in accordance with the State Records Act 1998.

Council's records are appraised and sentenced through the application of classification. A retention period and disposal action, determined by GA 39, is applied to all classes of activities.

Hard copy documents of short term value which have been scanned and captured into Council's electronic document management system are disposed of in accordance with the Government Authority 28 (GA 28) "General Retention and Disposal Authority – Imaged Records".

Council's method of destruction is shredding. This activity is carried out by an independent contractor under the supervision of the Information Services Officer.

No records of Council are to be destroyed without authorisation from the Manager, Corporate and Community Services.

7. Definitions

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.

State Records - any record made or 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...'

8. Exceptions

None

9. Legislation

- State Records Act 1998
- Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009
- Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998

10. Policy Review

This Policy:

- To be reviewed within the first year of the new Council term;
- May be reviewed and amended at any time at Council's discretion (or if legislative or State Government policy changes occur).