

Our survey

In September we invited our government clients to complete a short survey about our services. We had 53 responses. This is our summary of the survey results and planned next steps.

Thank you so much if you were one of the people who took the time to give us their thoughts. We received a great deal of useful information.

How we are seen

Several survey respondents told us that our low profile is an issue as 'the people who most need us often don't know we exist or what kind of help is available.' We need to do more to promote ourselves to our stakeholders.

We were also told that we aren't seen as particularly powerful, therefore our communications might be ignored or given a low priority.

Our website is difficult to navigate and documents are dense and not always easy to use, particularly for people who aren't records managers. The site isn't easy to find.

What respondents said they want

Explain more clearly to stakeholders, including non-records managers, what State records are, what they're used for, and the implications of not managing them well.

Provide practical, plain English examples and templates outlining minimum requirements aimed at end users or executive levels. These should explain the value or risk associated with advices or guidelines – eg 'do this, to gain these benefits ... or to avoid these situations ...'

Provide whole-of-government standards to address issues all agencies deal with – this will improve consistency across departments.

Provide hands-on assistance and continue to offer advice.

Run training, workshops and low cost forums on specific subjects, in person or online.

Update our website so it is easy to navigate, and it contains up-to-date information written in plain English, with a limited number of documents. Respondents told us that the following pages were important and should be retained:

- Publications
- Legislation
- Standards
- Guidelines and Advices
- Disposal Schedules

Provide realistic advice. Suggest incremental and achievable improvements for agencies that don't have the resources or support from senior management to reach full compliance.

Disposal was a recurring topic in this survey. One suggestion was for us to administer a central user group to assist with records destruction – networks could assist people across the state who need to do this work. Another suggestion was to allow online lodgement for disposal schedules and audit documents.

We should play a key role in **enabling IT and records management departments to work together** to make the best decisions about the management of State records. Training and advice should emphasise both electronic and other forms of records, and how all these should be managed. The overlap between roles and resulting conflict between records management and IT was frequently cited as a problem in this survey.

Our staff should be present and active within working groups that may be making decisions that involve the capture, organisation and sharing of state records. We should be an active participant when legislative changes are made, helping to either avert records-related complications, or to advise agencies on how to manage record keeping after legislative changes.

Work closely with groups like LGAT to enable them to share information with their stakeholders (local councils) to prevent duplication of effort among stakeholders with similar record-keeping requirements.

The vast majority of respondents thought that we could play a valuable role in **helping Tasmanian records managers to form networks to facilitate information sharing** within and between agencies. Many cited existing networks, for example within Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC), and there were suggestions that we should act as the subject matter experts within existing networks to ensure that current, accurate information was being shared.

Next steps

We've received valuable guidance from responses to the survey, along with other stakeholder feedback. We will be taking the following actions:

Elevating our profile so our role is clearer

Our new name is Office of the State Archivist (OSA), reflecting our core function of providing support and guidance to stakeholders in implementing requirements under the Archives Act 1983.

This will help us to position ourselves as the trusted authority on the management of State records.

Working to address common challenges that arise between records management process, computer systems and the various groups responsible for these

We're aware of the various challenges raised by technology and the way this affects which records are acquired, managed, shared and/or disposed of, and how this is done. It's not enough for an agency to have a sound records management plan only to find that one of their departments has purchased a new business information management system that doesn't allow archiving rules to be set up, for example.

It came through loud and clear in this survey that many records managers are frustrated because their organisation often doesn't consider records management within the context of their IT or business systems, and that there is often inadequate coordination between the various departments.

OSA is working closely with the Office of eGovernment to develop a framework for managing information assets and the systems that they reside in.

Providing training and assistance

We hear that many agencies need hands-on help and advice from us. We were pleased to get plenty of feedback that people appreciate our existing training and assistance. We're in discussions about how to keep providing and possibly even expand the practical help we offer.

Updating the website

Thanks to the feedback we received through this survey, and from many conversations over the previous six months, we will develop a site that retains the information you use frequently, while aiming to make it easier to search and navigate. We'll reduce the number of documents and update them so they're written in language that is friendly and easy to understand.

Considering options to facilitate knowledge sharing

Overwhelmingly, respondents said they would like us to help records managers to form networks. Many of you are already involved in active and supportive networks.

We're considering a range of possible ways that we might usefully support networks and ensure that the most up-to-date information is shared.

Keeping the conversation going

Please get in touch if you have any questions about this survey or if you need any help with managing state records. We always keen to hear from you.

Please contact us on: 6165 5581 or via email: osa@education.tas.gov.au