

## Information Management Advice 54 Records Management Toolkit for Local Government

### FACT SHEET I - Basic Records Management - Mail processing

#### Introduction

*This Fact Sheet is part of a sub-set of Advice 54, and focuses on the operational tasks of a records management program. Templates are provided to assist agencies to establish and implement recordkeeping controls and procedures. Agencies with very small records operations, those who do not have dedicated RM resources, and those who have not yet implemented specialised EDRMS software, may find these Fact Sheets particularly beneficial.*

#### Records program operations

Daily operations are the basis for the development of a procedure manual for the records team. This promotes consistency of process, and information sharing, in the event of new staff, volunteers or contractors. Procedure manuals should be regularly reviewed and updated as required to allow for organisational and procedural change. Whether paper or electronic recordkeeping systems are in place, key functions include:

- Record identification
- Record capture
- Registration
- Indexing
- Classification
- File creation and closure
- Distribution & tracking
- Search & retrieval
- Access
- Security
- Storage
- Scheduling, retention & disposal
- Records transfer
- e-discovery & Disposal Freezes
- Vital Records
- Disaster Management
- QA & Auditing
- Monitoring (program, processes and people) & reporting on activities, performance and compliance
- Resourcing

## Tools you may need

If your system is paper-based consider:

- Date stamp
- Incoming mail register (may be excel spreadsheet or bound register)
- Letter opener
- Plastic ziplock wallets or similar for distribution
- Stationery (pencils, markers, paperclips, etc)

If your system is electronic or hybrid consider:

- Date stamp
- Letter opener
- Plastic ziplock wallets or similar for distribution
- Stationery (pencils, markers, paperclips, etc)

## Record identification

In order to establish procedures for the day-to-day management of records, staff need to identify record types and sources, and associated relevant management procedures. This includes records received via incoming mail (post); via email (corporate email addresses); via faxes; those internally created by staff or received 'over the counter' (customer service areas, remote sites); social media and web (Twitter, Facebook, corporate website, electronic surveys); and those created and/or maintained in business systems & databases; etc.

Many of these types of records may be individually managed by information custodians or 'owners' in specific departments. Formal procedures should be documented and endorsed to ensure corporate information is managed appropriately and consistently across the agency, and responsible staff informed of agency requirements in this regard. Such information should be included in agency induction manuals or programs. Staff who are required to routinely assess on a 'case by case' basis whether corporate information constitutes a record, should receive at least introductory level records management training.

For staff responsible for managing incoming correspondence/mail, there are some general recommendations to establish consistent work procedures. Grouping physical mail into 'letters', 'junk mail', 'invoices' and 'remittance/cheques' tends to work well in the main, with invoices and cheques being sealed into ziplock plastic wallets for safekeeping and hand delivered (or collected) by Accounts staff for processing. Some agencies may also require the completion of manual registers for audit purposes for invoices/cheques received – this will need to be discussed in collaboration with the Finance team.

Junk mail – such as unsolicited sales/marketing brochures, flyers, catalogues, Christmas cards, calendars and other items that are not acted upon – can be distributed directly to a responsible officer. Alternatively, it may be accepted policy for unsolicited marketing materials to be binned, in accordance with the *Disposal Schedule for Short term value records (DA2158)* issued by TAHO.

The 'letter' or 'correspondence' pile is often the main source of records for capture into agency recordkeeping systems by Records personnel. Correspondence can be broken further into Urgent and Routine – with the Urgent items receiving priority.

When managing central email folders, procedures should be established to reflect similar management/distribution patterns – remittance advice and scanned invoices should be distributed to an accounts inbox, ‘junk’ mail can be simply forwarded to an appropriate recipient’s email, and correspondence either registered to an EDRMS, or in the case of paper systems, printed and distributed on file to an Action officer. Email inboxes should not be used as filing systems themselves.

## Record capture

To function as evidence over time, records should be managed in official records systems. These maintain and demonstrate the connection between a record and the business it documents. Capturing involves registration of paper documents and attaching them to appropriate files, registration of electronic documents to virtual files, and using business systems to record transactions.

Records capture ensures records are:

- Accessible to all who require them
- Controlled and managed according to policy and procedure
- Secure and protected from tampering, unauthorised access or deletion
- Disposed of promptly in accordance with legislative requirements

For agencies that use scanning technology and register items electronically in an EDRMS system, standards should be developed that define appropriate quality including resolution; image size; colour/greyscale/black and white settings; optical character recognition (OCR); simplex/duplex; file format (PDF/A, JPEG, Tiff, PNG, etc), and QA processes for comparison between ‘source’ record and the scanned image. For agencies working within an electronic system, appropriate quality controls allow the destruction of the ‘source’ record in many instances, allowing for considerable reduction of physical storage requirements and associated costs.

Destruction of these source documents can be undertaken in conjunction with the *Disposal Schedule for Source records (DA2159)* issued by TAHO.

For those agencies that are working with hybrid systems, or exclusively paper records, it is worth noting that the National Archives of Australia have established an end date on the acceptance of paper records of 2015. All other jurisdictions are similarly moving towards the identification of an end date for paper records acceptance into the Archives, so agencies are advised that they need to be making decisions on the transition to an electronic environment for recordkeeping.

## Registration

Registration of records provides evidence of receipt or creation of records. It involves recording descriptive information about the record, and assigning the record a unique identifier. It may be performed at either the document level, or the file level. (In some cases, a whole database may be registered where the records it contains relate to the same activity, are of similar formats, and relate to the same function – and can therefore be managed as a ‘series’. Think of databases managed by dog registration auditors as one example where this might be applicable).

For paper-based RM programs, see Appendix I – Incoming Mail Register template. This template allows the capture of information relevant to individual pieces of correspondence received by the agency.

Correspondence identified as corporate records should be logged daily as part of the mail registration and distribution process. If emails cannot be managed electronically, these must also be printed and put on file, and should be added to the register.

Information captured during registration to electronic EDRMS may include:

- Unique identifier (assigned automatically by EDRMS systems)
- Date created and/or received
- Date registered
- Record title/description
- Author
- File reference
- Internal or external reference information (complaint numbers, case numbers, etc)
- Correspondent (agency, ratepayer, etc)
- Information security classification

With an electronic system, certain fields may be automated, such as registration date, and the allocation of a unique identifier. Other fields will need to be populated by the officer registering and indexing the document to the system, including the document description field, the author field, and selection of an Action officer. This discrete information contributes to the 'metadata' of an individual document.

In either case, each item should be receipted (date stamped) before any further activity is undertaken. A consistent approach is recommended where possible, both in information captured, and location of the stamp on documents. Generally, top or bottom right hand corners of the leading page are appropriate, as this is easily visible. A combined date stamp is often effective, whether systems are paper, electronic or hybrid. Additional fields may include some or all of the following:

- action officer
- registration officer
- scheduling information
- file reference
- location
- tickbox to indicate whether item was forwarded hard copy/electronically

## Indexing

Indexing helps to find records when they are needed. Related to classification, and often part of the process (as terms from a thesaurus are frequently used as indexing terms) indexing helps to find records by attaching consistent, common use terms. This controlled vocabulary means you don't have to try and work out what someone else may have called the record. Classification is usually done at the file level (refer Fact Sheet 2 – File Management) and is used to link records to their business context.

If you manage indexing outside of an EDRMS, and manage a register in Word or Excel, it is relatively easy to find records by using the FIND function to search. If you do not use any software to manage records control systems, and instead use a paper file register, you will need to develop an indexing system to help users to find files, similar to traditional library index cards. This should present the index terms alphabetically, and link these to the appropriate files to which they have been applied.

## Recommended Reading

State Records Guideline 1- Records Management Principles

State Records Guideline 8 – Digitisation and Disposal of Source records

TAHO Advice 3 – Day batching of Source records

TAHO Advice 4 – Managing electronic communications as records

**Appendices:**

Template – Incoming mail register (Appendix 1)

Sample mail receipt stamps (Appendix 2)

DA2200 sentencing ‘cheat sheet’ for routine mail (Appendix 3)

## Further Advice

For more detailed advice, please contact:

Government Information Strategy Unit  
Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office  
91 Murray Street  
HOBART TASMANIA 7000  
Telephone: 03 6165 5581  
Email: [gisu@education.tas.gov.au](mailto:gisu@education.tas.gov.au)

## Acknowledgements

- National Archives of Australia *Sentencing December 2007*<sup>1</sup>
- Australian Standard AS ISO 15489.1 & Guidelines 15489.2<sup>2</sup>
- NSW State Records
- Glenorchy City Council
- Kingborough City Council
- Launceston City Council
- Library and Archives Canada *Mail Management in Government Departments and agencies*

## Information Security Classification

This document has been security classified using the Tasmanian Government Information Security classification standard as PUBLIC and will be managed according to the requirements of the Tasmanian Government Information Security Policy.

## Document Development History

### Build Status

Version	Date	Author	Reason	Sections
2.0	May 2014	Christine Woods	Template	All
1.0	February 2014	Sam Foster-Davies	Initial Release	All

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.naa.gov.au/Images/Sentencing\\_tcm16-47302.pdf](http://www.naa.gov.au/Images/Sentencing_tcm16-47302.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.saiglobal.com/Information/Standards/>

**Amendments in this Release**

<b>Section Title</b>	<b>Section Number</b>	<b>Amendment Summary</b>
All	All	Document imported into new template

**Issued: June 2014**

**Ross Latham**  
State Archivist



## Appendix 2 Sample mail stamps from other Councils

Sample document stamps (used in conjunction with date stamp):

Doc No:	_____
Receive Date:	_____
Box No:	_____
Retention Ref:	_____
GLENORCHY CITY COUNCIL	

Kingborough Council	
Index	.....
Schedule	.....
Batch	.....
Box	.....
DW Doc	.....

Sample document stamp (integrated date stamp):

FILE No.			
EO	OD	Box	
RCVD - 4 FEB 2014 LCC			
Doc No.			
Action Officer	Noted	Replied	

When the following are ticked:

EO = electronic copy only will be tasked within in ECM application

OD = original document will be issued in addition to electronic copy task

Box = original will be boxed - either when it's scanned, registered and tasked (EO), or when OD is returned.

## Appendix 3 DA2200 Sentencing 'cheat sheet'

Description of document (alphabetical)	Retention Code - DA2200
Abandoned vehicle notification	19.11.02/2D
Animal Management Record of Investigation (domestic animals)	01.04.01/5D
Animal complaints (domestic animals)	01.07.01/2D
Animal Man - Unregistered Dog Notice	01.05.03/2D
Annual reports (External organisations)	01.01.01/MISC (DA2158)
Apprenticeships/Traineeships	21.06.01/7D
Aurora - Faulty power poles	28.10.04/2D
Aurora notice of works/permits - reticulation sketches relating to subdivisions	18.02.01/P
Available grants/funding	15.01.01/2D
Backflow reports	02.05.02/7D
Bankrupt administration	12.01.08/7D
Boundary fences & quotes	23.07.09/2D
Building notification - minor works	02.05.03/2D
Building/Plumbing Applications - (domestic)	02.02.03/MISC
Building/Plumbing Applications - (heritage significance)	02.02.02/P
Bylaws - development and review	19.08.02/MISC
Centrelink information enquiries (eg ratepayer details/salary details)	14.01.03/MISC
Certificates of currency (contractor details)	06.04.04/7D
Certificates of title (council property)	23.02.07/MISC
Change of address (ratepayers)	25.03.05/MISC
Change of details (Local Govt agencies)	14.05.03/2D
Change of details (State Govt agencies)	14.09.03/2D
Change of name (ratepayers)	01.01.07/MISC (DA2158)
Claims against Council (insurance)	27.01.06/7D
Claims against Council (personal injury)	27.01.02/7D
Claims against Council (property damage)	27.01.04/7D
Conferences, seminars, workshops (organised externally from Council)	06.03.03/MISC
Contracts (formal) **see <b>Tenders</b> for EOI's, Tender submissions, etc	06.04.03/7D (except contracts under seal)
Cooling towers monitoring	23.07.06/7D

132 Certificates (as issued)	25.02.02/2D
337 Certificates (as issued)	19.04.01/7D
Crown land - notice of sale or lease by third party (for rates)	14.09.04/2D
Crown land - leased by Council	23.02.04/7D
Crown land - change of lessee information (for rates)	14.09.04/2D
Damage to Telstra property	27.01.06/7D
Death Certificate (dogs)	01.08.01/3D
Deceased Estate - <b>change of address for rates notices</b>	25.03.05/MISC
Deceased Estate - request for rates due or payment delay/arrangement	25.03.02/Misc or 25.07.03/3D
Direct debit arrangements	12.04.03/MISC
Dishonoured cheque	12.01.03/7D
Dog registration	01.08.01/3D
Donation request (charities etc)	04.19.02/7D
Fire Hazard abatement ( <b>non</b> council properties)	19.09.01/7D
Fire Hazard management (Council property)	11.12.03/7D
Fleet vehicles - registration	22.06.06/2D
Fleet vehicles (heavy) & machinery/plant - fuel/servicing	22.08.01/MISC
Fleet vehicles (light) - fuel/servicing	22.07.01/2D
Food licences (food vendors/businesses)	19.07.02/MISC
Food Premises Audit	24.05.02/MISC
Food sampling certificates - Microbiological testing of foods	24.05.03/MISC
General enquiries about Council services (ie from Political candidates, or public)	04.09.01/2D
Grant applications (made to <b>OR</b> by Council)	various - see 15.02.00 to choose appropriate class
Heating appliance installation	02.05.02/7D
Hire agreements for use of Council buildings/facilities (Community or sporting groups)	23.20.02/2D
Hire agreements for use of Council premises/Pool etc (Commercial)	23.20.01/7D
Immunisation - general enquiries & provision of routine information	24.03.01/2D
Immunisation clinics - arrangements & operational matters	24.13.01/7D
Immunisation consent forms	24.11.02/MISC
Immunisation program scheduling	24.10.01/MISC
Incident/Accident reports (Council vehicles)	22.06.01/7D

Incident/Accident reports (involving employees)	various - see 21.13.00 to choose appropriate class
Incident/Accident reports (involving public)	various - see 27.01.00 to choose appropriate class
Infringement notices correspondence/withdrawal requests (animal/parking/fire abatement)	19.05.02/3D
Inspection reports - Waste Water Treatment systems (eg Ozzi Kleen / Envirocycle / Supertreat / etc)	24.05.02/MISC
Invitations to Councillors	04.21.00
Invitations to staff to attend external functions/celebrations	01.01.01/MISC (DA2158)
Invitations to staff to conferences (arranged by external orgs)	06.03.03/2D
Job applications (advertised positions)	21.18.01/2D
Job applications (general enquiries)	21.18.02/MISC
Kennel licences	19.07.02/MISC
Leases/Licences of Council properties	23.06.02/7D
Memberships of Organisations (eg RMAA, WMAA etc)	06.11.02/3D
Minutes & Agendas - Exec Management, Senior Committees, etc	06.02.01/P
Minutes & Agendas - external Committees	various - see 06.02.00 to choose appropriate class
Minutes & Agendas - internal working groups and administrative Committees, etc	06.02.02/7D (for adhoc meetings also see 06.12.01)
Minutes & Agendas (master set) - Council Meetings, Council Committees, Special Committees	13.04.01/P
Notice of Heritage Decision for Works Application (refers to DA)	18.02.01/P
Notice of property sales	25.03.03/3D
Notifiable diseases from Public Health	24.06.02/MISC
Notification of <b>Proposed</b> telecommunications facility upgrade - request for comment/consultation	06.11.02/3D
Notification of Telecommunications facility upgrades/works (not requiring a DA)	28.10.04/2D
Ombudsman investigation	14.04.03/2D OR 14.04.01/P
Parking Infringements/Courtesy Reminders	19.05.02/3D
Parking prosecutions	19.05.01/7D
Place of Assembly licences	19.07.02/MISC
Planning/Development applications	18.02.01/P
Pollution complaints (Major/significant environmental disasters) contaminated air, water, soil	11.07.03/P
Pollution complaints (minor) contaminated air, water, soil	11.07.04/MISC
Pollution complaints (noise)	11.07.02/MISC

Precincts/Community Participation programs	04.07.01/7D
Price increases - suppliers	01.01.01/MISC (DA2158) <b>OR</b> 06.04.04/7D if part of an existing contract
Price lists/catalogues	01.01.01/MISC
Projects (Design & Construction of minor or major infrastructure, capital works, etc)	Various - check 08.03.00 <b>OR</b> 23.04.00 <b>OR</b> 23.019.00 <b>OR</b> 28.06.00 <b>OR</b> 29.02.00 <b>OR</b> 30.03.00 for appropriate function/class (depends on purpose of project)
Public Health Risk Activity Applications (tattoo shops/beauty shops/piercers etc)	24.07.01/7D
Publications (by Council) - Master copies	16.09.03/P
Publications (by Council) - promotional items	16.09.04/MISC
Publications for distribution by Council to community (other Government Agencies)	16.09.05/MISC
Purchasing cards (cardholder acknowledgement & declaration) for staff	12.04.01/7D
Rates - default on payment arrangement - legal enforcement (court)	19.13.01/7D
Rates - default on payment arrangement - property seizure/sale	25.07.05/P
Rates - default on payment arrangement - routine penalty (interest etc)	25.07.06/7D
Rates - debt recovery proceedings (before formal enforcement)	12.01.08/7D
Rates - direct debit arrangements	12.04.03/MISC
Rates Payment Applications	25.07.03/3D
Rates exemption request (charities etc)	25.06.01/P
Rates Remission Application (Pensioner)	25.07.04/3D
Rates Notice - Return to Sender	25.03.06/2D
Requests by community groups/orgs for financial assistance (Mayors charitable fund /Council Community Grants programs)	15.02.03/7D
Requests for Section 132 (rates certificate)	25.02.01/MISC
Requests for Section 337 (council rights over land)	19.04.01/7D
Road Opening Permits (Tas gas/telstra etc)	28.11.03/7D
Seasonal greetings (incoming)	01.01.01/MISC
Solicitor Monthly Status Reports (external)	20.09.01/MISC
Solicitor Trust Statement of Account	20.09.04/2D
Sponsorship requests - sporting representatives	12.15.02/MISC
St John Ambulance Duty Sheet (event)	26.02.03/2D

Stable licences	19.07.02/MISC
Street Trees/plantings	23.05.05/MISC
Superannuation scheme statements	21.25.01/2D
Supply request for details - Council	14.05.03/2D
Surveys - Australian Bureau of Statistics	Various - search "bureau" in DA2200 to identify correct class (2D)
Surveys - Miscellaneous industry surveys/questionnaires	Various - search "reporting" activity in DA2200 to locate correct class.
TBCITB Funding approvals	21.26.01/7D
Telstra - notice of development (no DA required)/notice of upgrade to Telecommunications installations	28.10.04/2D
Tenders	various - see 06.19.00 in DA2200 to choose appropriate class
Term Deposits	12.09.01/7D
Traineeships/Apprenticeships	21.06.01/7D
Training administration, confirmation, course notification	21.26.02/2D
Training Courses - course outlines & attendance details	21.26.01/7D
Tree application / removal request	11.09.02/7D
Unsolicited letters/promotional material for services or goods	01.01.01/MISC
Water sampling (beaches/natural areas)	11.07.05/2D
Water sampling (pools)	23.07.06/MISC
water sampling (stormwater)	08.07.03/2D
Weighbridge applications	19.07.02/MISC
Wheelie bin applications/replacements	30.10.05/2D
Workers Comp claims	27.01.01/MISC
Workers Comp medical accounts	27.01.01/MISC