

# Implementation Tool

## Keep the Knowledge – Make a Record

What every Tasmanian government employee needs to know about records

This Fact Sheet supports the *Information and Records Management Standard*.

---

### What is a record?

Records provide evidence of business activity.

All information created, sent and received in the course of carrying out your job is potentially a record.

Whether something is a record or not depends on the information it contains and the context. For example, a letter sent to a client or colleague granting approval is a record, whereas a letter to a friend about something personal is not.

Records can be in paper, electronic or many other formats. Examples include:

- databases
- documents
- emails
- letters
- maps and plans
- minutes
- photographs
- policy and briefing papers
- samples and objects
- social media
- spreadsheets
- research data
- text messages
- transactional information in business systems

Regardless of their format, records enable you to explain or justify what you have done, show the extent of your responsibility for decisions taken, and show the order of events and your role in them.

## Why do records matter to me?

Managing your information and records effectively makes good business sense. It makes your job easier and helps your colleagues.

If you regularly make records and keep them in the right places, it will be easier to:

- locate information when needed
- reuse good work that you or someone else has done in the past
- determine the most recent version of a document
- produce evidence as to why a particular decision was made
- protect yourself, your clients, citizens and the Tasmanian Government.

In the long term, the records you make may also become part of Tasmania's documentary heritage in the State archives.

## What are my recordkeeping responsibilities?

All staff, board members, elected representatives, volunteers and contractors have recordkeeping responsibilities. These include:

- making work-related records
- keeping records in your organisational recordkeeping system
- ensuring you don't dispose of records without authorisation
- complying with your organisational recordkeeping policies and procedures

## When should I make or keep a record?

Some records – such as those in workflow or other business systems are automatically created for you. At other times, you must make a conscious decision to make or keep a record. Do so if you need to show:

- what happened, when it happened or who was involved
- what was decided or recommended and by whom
- what advice or instruction was given
- the order of events or decisions

If you are not sure, ask yourself:

- did I write, send, use or keep this in the course of my work?
- am I (or is someone else) required to act on this?
- will this information be needed in the future?

If you answer 'yes' to any of these questions, you should make or keep a record.

## How should I title or name records?

Have you ever had trouble finding an email, document or file? Good titles and names make it easier to find the information you need. Find out if your organisation has guidelines to follow, such as a file plan or naming conventions.

Some general tips for naming records include:

- be meaningful – people should be able to understand what the record is about by reading the title
- avoid vague terms like 'miscellaneous' or 'general'
- provide details that distinguish between similar records – eg date, version or time period
- spell out abbreviations and acronyms

## Where should I keep records?

Always keep records where your organisation needs them to be kept, that is, in approved locations.

If you keep records in your organisation's corporate records management systems or other approved locations, you don't have to worry about how long they need to be kept. Other people will look after them once they are in the right place.

## Can I delete or destroy records?

Not all records need to be kept indefinitely.

The retention or destruction of records is governed by legislation, and you should always follow your organisation's procedures when destroying or deleting records.

Some records have short-term value and may be destroyed when you are finished with them. See DA 2158 Disposal Schedule for Short Term Value Records.

## Where can I get help or more information?

For specific information about your organisational policies or procedures, contact your organisation's Records Manager.

The Office of the State Archivist provides whole-of-government policy advice and support on information and records management. For more information, visit our website at < insert url >

## Acknowledgement

This Fact Sheet is reproduced by agreement between the Office of the State Archivist and the National Archives of Australia. Text © Commonwealth of Australia 2002.