

Information management

Policy, procedure, protocol	Policy
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Author	Tim Howarth
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Objective	5.2 We will have an effective and efficient organisation
Strategy	5.2.11 Ensure compliance with Statutory and Regulatory reporting requirements

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1. Purpose, authority and application of this Policy

1.1 Purpose of this Policy

The purpose of the Information Management Policy is to ensure that full and accurate records of all activities and decisions of Council are created, managed and retained or disposed of appropriately, and in accordance with relevant legislation. This will enable Council to achieve information accessibility, business enhancement and improvement. It will also meet its obligations for accountability while ensuring that it protects the rights and interests of Government, the organisation, its staff, clients and the community.

1.2 Authority of this Policy

This Policy has been authorised by the Council and the General Manager has been delegated authority for its implementation. It has been developed in consultation with Council staff and will be revised on a regular basis. Ownership of the Policy rests with the Manager Information & Communication Services who is responsible for reporting to Council regarding compliance with legislative requirements and recordkeeping standards.

1.3 Application of this Policy

All staff must comply with this Policy, and associated *Information Management Procedures*, in their conduct of official business for Council. This Policy applies to records in all formats, including electronic records.

2. Records as a resource

Council recognises that records are a vital asset to:

- facilitate information accessibility, and enhance business by supporting policy delivery, management and administration
- deliver customer services in an efficient, fair and equitable manner
- provide evidence of actions and decisions and precedents for future decision making, and
- protect the rights and interests of Government, Council and its clients and citizens.

A small percentage of Council's records will become archives, part of the cultural resources of the State.

3. Information Management Policy

3.1 Objectives of the Information Management Policy

An Information Management Policy is a planned, co-ordinated set of procedures, people, systems and activities that are required to manage records.

The Council's Information Management Policy seeks to ensure that:

- it has the records it needs to support and enhance ongoing business and customer service, meet accountability requirements and community expectations,
- these records are managed efficiently and can be easily accessed and used for as long as they are required,

- records are stored as cost-effectively as possible and when no longer required they are disposed of in a timely and efficient manner,
- Council complies with all requirements concerning records and records management practices including the NSW Government's objectives for recordkeeping,
- records of longer term value are identified and protected for historical and other research and
- digital and other technology dependent records are maintained in an authentic and accessible form for as long as they are required.

3.2 Organisation and Management of Council's Information Management Policy

Council's Information Management Policy is managed within the Information Services team. All record management activities, including data creation, integrity, security, access, maintenance, storage, destruction and archiving, are undertaken by the Information Services staff on behalf of users.

All staff members are responsible for managing paper and electronic records in accordance with Council policies and procedures. Staff members receive training on how to use the software and each Section is responsible for creating and maintaining physical and electronic files documenting the business of the unit. Ongoing training will be coordinated through the HR team. Managers of each Section are responsible for ensuring that their staff are aware of this Policy and that their staff are actively meeting the requirements of this Policy.

The records management software (ECM) allows records to be shared between the various Council offices and this promotes consistency within the organisation. This structure is effective in meeting business needs, ensuring compliance and provides effective service delivery.

The Manager Information & Communication Services is responsible for the management and administration of the Information Management Policy and the Corporate Information Coordinator is responsible for the day to day operation of the Policy.

3.3 Elements of the Information Management Policy

3.3.1 Creation and capture

Staff must ensure that they create official records of all decisions and actions made in the course of their official business. For example, if business is transacted by telephone, file notes of the key points in the conversation need to be documented. Official meetings must include the taking of minutes.

Council requires its employees to make and keep records that fully and accurately document their operations and administration, this includes:

- All forms of records created or received either written or verbal
- Electronic mail (email, internal and external)
- Facsimiles
- Voicemail
- Customer requests
- Complaints

To assist in promoting the responsible creation of records, the capture of essential information and the management of records over time, the Council has developed the following:

- corporate electronic templates
- Information Management Plan

All records defined by the organisation as important to create must be captured into Council's recordkeeping system (ECM) so they can be managed appropriately.

The three main types of documents, based on their importance and relevance to the Council are:

a) Corporate Documents

Documents that are used by Council in the course of its business and are judged to have on-going value are corporate documents. This includes documents kept for legal and audit requirements, and those that originate outside and have reached a stage of development and quality that warrants them becoming part of the corporate record. These records substantiate 'what, where, when and why' you did something and 'who' was involved. These are an important asset of the Council. They must be created, registered and protected.

Depending on the security requirements, these documents will be readily accessible to those who need to use them.

b) Working Documents (Transient Documents)

Documents which are either copies of existing corporate documents that are in the process of further development, or documents that relate to policy, program or management issues which, when they reach an appropriate level of development and quality will be registered as corporate documents, i.e. that they are the substantive record and contain valuable information.

Working document examples may include background notes and reference materials that are used to prepare or complete other documents such as a copy of another council's procedure manual.

c) Personal Documents

Documents that are the concern of the individual only, and include documents such as personal notes, which maybe used in the development of working documents but are not intended to be in themselves corporate documents. For example; a notation made on the relevance of an item for possible inclusion into a corporate document or notes taken during a demonstration or training session.

Records must be placed on an official index. Documents are registered in ECM and given a unique number. All official outgoing communications, including letters, faxes, e-mails etc need to contain reference to the document number.

Whenever new databases and automated systems are being designed, the Manager Information & Communication Services or the Systems Administrator must be consulted to determine what records need to be created and captured by the system and the recordkeeping rules and tools that need to be accommodated.

3.3.2 Storage

Current hardcopy records will be stored in designated storage areas with access restrictions as outlined in the relevant *Information Management Procedures*.

Rarely used records or records no longer in use for official purposes that are still required to be retained in accordance with the current Retention and Disposal Authority must be forwarded to the Corporate Information Co-ordinator for action.

3.3.3 Maintenance and monitoring

The location of each record needs to be recorded and updated at every movement of the record. This ensures that records, as assets, can be accounted for in the same way that the other assets of Council are. Staff members must update file locations or notify the Records Team when passing records on to another officer.

The Senior Records Officer is responsible for ensuring that records and environmental conditions are monitored regularly to protect records. This includes checking temperature and humidity levels in dedicated records storage areas for paper records.

The Manager Information & Communication Services is responsible for ensuring that digital records are backed up when scheduled, when new storage devices and media are being installed or when degradation is detected.

Maintenance of electronic records can also entail the migration of data. Migrations must be authorised by the Manager Information & Communication Services and must produce authentic, complete, accessible and useable records.

Council has implemented a number of security and business continuity measures, including information security policies, as part of its Information Services Strategic Plan (ISSP), for safeguarding its information assets. Staff must abide by these measures at all times.

3.3.4 Disposal

Council is required to comply with the State Records NSW General Authority

- GA39 – General retention and disposal authority for local government
- GA45 – Original or source documents that have been copied
- GDA16 – Local Government records affected by boundary changes
- GDA8 – Video/Visual Surveillance Records
- GDA11 – Audio/Visual Programs and Recordings
- GA33 – Source records that have been migrated

Administrative records such as financial and personnel records are also covered under general retention and disposal authorities compiled by State Records. Council recommends that disposal actions are assigned to records in all formats on creation to ensure they are managed appropriately. The *Information Management Plan* and associated procedures contain information on how this is achieved.

No records of Council can be disposed of unless in accordance with the applicable GA. Any sentencing of records must be supervised by the Manager Information & Communication Services and the Corporate Information Coordinator. Approval and signed authorisation for retention, destruction or transfer of records must be sought from the Manager Information & Communication Services before any disposal takes place.

3.3.5 Transfer

Council has a records repository for the storage of physical records that are infrequently used for business purposes but still need to be retained according to the Retention and Disposal Authority. The Senior Records Officer is responsible for transferring these records to the facility.

Records required as State archives in the GA39 will be transferred by the Senior Records Officer to their repository in Armidale NSW when no longer in use for official purposes, in accordance with the Information Management Plan and associated procedures.

In the event of administrative change, e.g. the transfer of functions from Council to another organisation, the Manager Information & Communication Services and the Corporate Information Coordinator will advise staff on transfer procedures for records.

3.3.6 Access

Records must be available to all authorised staff that require access to them for business purposes. Reasons for restricting access are outlined in the *Records Management Plan* and associated procedures.

All access to Council's records by members of the public, including requests under the Government Information Public Access (GIPA) legislation, will be in accordance with the *Information Management Plan* or associated procedure. Access directions have been made for all records transferred as State archives.

3.3.7 Contractors and outsourced functions

All records created by contractors performing work on behalf of Council belong to Council and are covered under the *State Records Act 1998*. This includes the records of contract staff working on the premises as well as external service providers.

Contracts will clearly state that ownership of records resides with Council, and instructions regarding creation, management, and access to the records created.

Where Council is contracted or part of a Joint Venture with State or Federal Departments, Council will comply with the relevant Disposal schedules applicable to those jurisdictions.

4. Responsibilities

4.1 General Manager

- Ensures that Council complies with the requirements of the *State Records Act 1998* and the standards and requirements issued under the Act. This includes the requirement for the Council to ensure that any records requiring technology to be read and understood remain readable and available for as long as they are required (section 14)
- Complies with other legislation relating to records management and recordkeeping
- Ensures that the Information Management Policy is adequately resourced
- Represents records management interests on the Executive

4.2 Manager Information & Communication Services

- Has ownership of the *Information Management Policy*
- Ensures the preservation of digital records is addressed in policy, planning and implementation of the Council Records Management Policy
- Ensures that the essential characteristics of digital records are identified prior to any preservation process taking place

- Reports to the Executive on the Information Management Policy
- Develops strategic and operational plans for the Information Management Policy
- Provides support and infrastructure to ensure that records kept in electronic form are managed so that they are accessible, readable, inviolate, complete, comprehensive, and authentic for as long as required
- Ensures that information management policies and projects take into account the special nature of records
- Ensures appropriately detailed audit logs are created
- Implements information security measures at the network level
- Performs routine and comprehensive system backups of data
- Establishes and maintains a customised recordkeeping metadata schema and business rules regarding how metadata is to be managed
- Ensures the migration of digital records or digital control records/metadata is conducted carefully and in line with the conditions stated in the General Retention and Disposal Authority.
- Ensure that training material is developed in accordance with Council Policy and Procedures.

4.3 Corporate Information Coordinator

- Compiles *Information Management Policy* and *Procedures* and standards in relation to all aspects of records management
- Monitors compliance with the *Information Management Policy* and *Procedures* and standards across Council and makes recommendations for improvement or modification of practices
- Assists with automated metadata capture, for example, ensuring that details of format are automatically saved into ECM with digital records (in liaison with information technology staff)
- Manages the ECM records management software
- Has responsibility for the conduct of records management operations
- Organises the disposal of records, in liaison with relevant authorising manager
- Ensures that all staff are aware of their recordkeeping responsibilities
- Coordinates a records management training policy
- Assists in developing strategic and operational plans for the Information Management Policy
- Formulates and maintains GA39 indexes
- Formulates and maintains vital records lists and counter disaster plans
- Ensures the migration of digital records or digital control records/metadata is conducted carefully and in line with the conditions stated in the *General Retention and Disposal Authority*
- Liaises with the Manager Information & Communication Services regarding counter disaster planning for electronic records
- Implements information security measures at the user level

4.4 Managers

- Ensure that records are created and managed within their section in a way which complies with the Information Management Policy and Procedures
- Ensure that documents of corporate significance are identified and registered in accordance with Council's procedures
- Ensure staff comply with the document management policy and procedures
- Ensure staff are trained in the Corporate Document Management System (ECM)
- Ensure staff are aware of their recordkeeping responsibilities
- Ensure staff are aware confidential information is to be only used for business purposes in accordance with Council's Code of Conduct
- Inform Information Services Section of staff changes so that security and access controls for the system can be maintained
- Identify and advise of potential improvement and possible problem areas in the system
- Provide feedback on the successful migration processes to help ensure that records remain authentic, complete, accessible and useable
- Ensure that staff are trained in how to create and manage records
- Consult with the Records team when introducing new activities and systems to ensure that records are created, and that relevant terms appear in the thesaurus
- Determine legislative requirements for records relating to their specific activities
- Ensure that contract with service providers contain records management clauses in accordance with this *Information Management Policy*

4.5 All staff

- Comply with *Information Management Policy* and procedures
- Create full and accurate records of their business activities, including records of all decisions and actions made in the course of their official business.
- Ensure that all records are saved into the organisation's recordkeeping systems.
- Create, register and protect records, until their authorised disposal.
- Not compromise the value of a document by ensuring records are not defaced or altered.
- Ensure records are made at the time of or as soon as practicable after the event or transaction to which they relate.
- Adhere to corporate standards for document style, format and document description i.e. précis.
- Use corporate templates.
- Make use of spelling and grammar checkers and approved corporate terminology and abbreviations.

- Record information about each document created or received to enable others to locate the document in the future.
- Not compromise security by sharing passwords or other actions.
- Ensure that other staff have appropriate access to documents and tasks as required
- Not use password protection on documents registered in ECM.
- Ensure records are not destroyed or deleted without formal authorisation from Information Services.
- Ask for training if unable to achieve these responsibilities.

4.6 Contractors

- Manage records that they create on behalf of the Council according to the terms of their contract.
- Ensure that all correspondence is forwarded to Council for registration in the records management system (ECM).

4.7 Councillors

- Councillors are responsible for records in their conduct of official business for Council. Official business includes business relevant to the performance of the function and duties of the office of Councillor.
- Create, register and protect records, until their authorised disposal, in accordance with the standard on full and accurate recordkeeping; corporate business rules and procedures.
- Ensure records are made at the time of or as soon as practicable after the event or transaction to which they relate for accuracy and completeness of records.
- Ensure records are not destroyed or deleted without formal approval.
- Training shall be provided to assist Councillors in discharging their recordkeeping responsibilities as required.