

Public Access Policy: Handling Guidelines for Archival Public Records

1. Policy Statement

This policy establishes required procedures for the handling of archival public records in the Public Search Room at Queensland State Archives. The policy provides detailed instructions and is based on recognised preservation standards developed to prevent damage so that archival public records remain available for future access. The policy also provides guidelines for the reporting of damaged records or the potential of damage to records through use, to Public Search Room staff. The Policy is to be read in conjunction with other Public Access policies and is subject to the *Public Records Act 2002*.

2. Policy Objective

The objective of this policy is to set minimum standards for the physical handling of records and includes information on general care and handling, stationery items which are approved for use when handling records, information on items that may not be consumed when handling records and general information on assistance which is available from Public Search Room staff.

3. Policy Scope

The policy applies in the Public Search Room at Queensland State Archives and applies to all researchers, including officers from government agencies. The policy applies to all formats of archival public records, including documents, registers, photographs, maps, plans and microfilm.

4. Policy Procedures

4.1 Physical handling

- 4.1.1 Records must be handled with care at all times. Only one item (box, bundle, register, map, microfilm etc) is to be issued at any one time. Where more than one item is required at any one time, approval must be given by the Reference Archivist.
- 4.1.2 Always ensure that the item is set safely on the work table. Do not allow any overhang or place anything on top of the item. Avoid carrying bundles by the fastener (string, tape etc). Do not lean on the item. Take care when turning pages and do not moisten fingers or use rubber finger stalls.
- 4.1.3 Records must remain in their original order and individual items must not be removed from a file, bundle or other type of folder. Paper flags are available for place marking. Do not use post-it notes, cardboard, pens, pencils or note pads to mark relevant places.
- 4.1.4 Records must not be marked by highlighting or underlining. Tracing of any item is not permitted.
- 4.1.5 Take care with tightly bound volumes. Ensure that volumes are fully supported at all times and request assistance from Public Search Room staff for special supports which assist in avoiding strain to bindings. Do not leave any open volumes lying face down.
- 4.1.6 Do not attempt to flatten tightly folded documents without seeking advice from Public Search Room staff. Preservation Services has developed a range of approved archival supports for use with archival public records.
- 4.1.7 Researchers are requested not to rewrap records when finished. Bundles are to be returned to the *Record Returns* table.
- 4.1.8 At some times, Public Search Room staff will request that cotton gloves be used when handling items, especially photographs.
- 4.1.9 At all times, original records will not be issued in the Public Search Room if a copy of the record is available.
- 4.1.10 At all times, pencils only are permitted for writing in the Public Search Room.

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4.2 Consumption of foodstuffs and requirement for clean hands

- 4.2.1 Eating and drinking are not permitted in the Public Search Room. This applies to the consumption of all food and drink including lollies, lozenges, gum and water.
- 4.2.2 If gloves are not worn, ensure that hands are clean and dry. Hands should also be free of creams and lotions which could stain records.
- 4.2.3 Eating and drinking is permitted only in the Readers Lounge or on the patio areas outside the building.

4.3 Fragile and damaged records

- 4.3.1 Please report to Public Search Room staff any damaged or fragile records that may be discovered during the course of your research. If it appears that damage may occur as a result of using the record, please advise the Reference Archivist who will seek advice from Preservation Services on how the record may be accessed.
- 4.3.2 If records are extremely fragile, a staff member from Preservation Services may be required to supervise access to the record.
- 4.3.3 In some cases, due to advanced stages of deterioration or fragility, the State Archivist may refuse access under *s18 (3)* of the *Public Records Act 2002* if access to the record would be detrimental to its preservation.

5. References

For further information relating to this policy, please contact the Manager, Public Access on 3131 7777.

*Approved by: State Archivist
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