

Queensland State Archives

Managing Records of Online Resources and Services Policy

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Managing Records of Online Resources and Services **Policy Statement**

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1: Policy Background

This policy has been developed to assist public authorities to capture records of the resources and services that are made available online. The policy is to be used by public authorities to develop strategies for creating and managing records of online activity and retaining them for as long as they are required to meet legislative, accountability, business requirements and cultural expectations.

Further advice regarding the records management of online activities is given in the publication, *Managing Records of Online Resources and Services **Guideline*** which accompanies this policy.

Records and information management specific terms are defined in Queensland State Archives' [Glossary of Archival and Recordkeeping Terms](http://www.archives.qld.gov.au), available online from <http://www.archives.qld.gov.au>. A glossary of terms specific to this policy has been included in Appendix A of the accompanying guideline.

1.1 Authority

The State Archivist has issued this policy in accordance with s.25 of the *Public Records Act 2002* (the Act). This policy forms part of a wider framework that aims to ensure best practice recordkeeping and information management occurs in Queensland public authorities.

Under the Act, the Chief Executive Officer of a public authority is responsible for ensuring that the authority makes and keeps full and accurate records of its activities, and has regard to relevant policy, standards and guidelines made by the State Archivist, such as this policy and its related guideline.

Hence public authorities are responsible for determining what public records they should create and maintain as a result of administering online resources and services.

1.2 Scope

This policy applies to all Queensland public authorities as defined in Schedule 2 of the Act and which use the online environment to deliver resources or services. This policy covers commonly used information resources such as public websites, intranets and extranets. It replaces the *Managing Records of Webpages and Websites*, Policy statement, principles and guidelines, version 1.01.00, April 2002.

This policy applies to any public records that are held by an authority, or that are kept temporarily by private or Commonwealth agencies under contractual agreements with a Queensland public authority.

This policy and associated guidelines **do not address** the recordkeeping requirements for electronic messages, such as email. Recordkeeping advice on electronic messages can be found in Queensland State Archives' publication, *Managing Electronic Messages as Records*.

1.3 Relationship to other parts of the recordkeeping framework

1.3.1 Public Records Act 2002

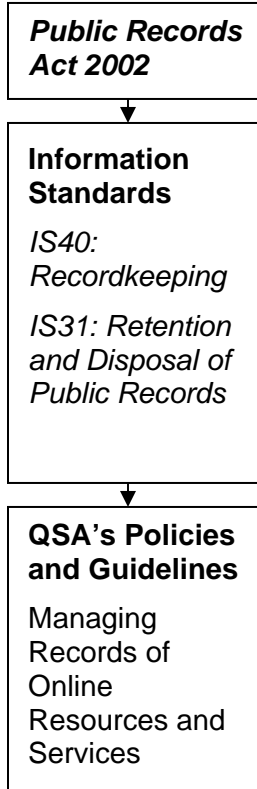
The State Archivist has issued this policy in accordance with s.25 of the *Public Records Act 2002* (the Act). The executive officer of a public authority must have regard to the policy and associated guidelines under the Act.

1.3.2 Information Standards

Information Standard 40: Recordkeeping provides the principles for managing public records in Queensland. *Information Standard 31: Retention and Disposal of Public Records* provides principles that complement the retention and disposal requirements for government information.

1.3.3 QSA's Policies and Guidelines

This policy and guideline complement the Information Standards by providing specific advice for the management of online resources and services. All of QSA's policies and guidelines can be found on the website, <http://www.archives.qld.gov.au>.



1.4 Key definitions

The following definitions have been provided to ensure common understanding of the terminology used in this document.

Term	Definition
Business system	Organised collections of hardware, software, supplies, policies, procedures and people, which store, process, control and provide access to information. Business systems may or may not incorporate recordkeeping functionality.
Online resources and services	Resources and services accessible via a device connected to the Internet or a private network. See Guideline Appendix A for more detail.
Public Record	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a record made for use by, or a purpose of, a public authority, other than a Minister; • a record received or kept by a public authority, other than a Minister, in the exercise of its statutory, administrative or other public responsibilities or for a related purpose; • a Ministerial record. <p>A public record includes a copy of a public record, and a part of a public record, or a copy of a part of a public record.</p>
Recordkeeping system	An information system that captures, manages and provides access to records through time. Recordkeeping systems should support the authenticity, reliability, integrity, and useability of records (see AS ISO 15483.1 – 2002 Records Management Part 1: General).

Web Content
Management System/
WCMS

A Web Content Management System (WCMS) supports the creation, management, distribution and retrieval of online content. WCMS are used to streamline the management of materials on websites and intranets, allowing them to grow and change rapidly while consistently meeting organisational standards. WCMS are not recordkeeping systems.

2: Policy Principles

When creating, managing and retaining records of online activities, public authorities should ensure that they:

- meet all relevant legislative and regulatory requirements relating to such activities (see section 2.1);
- capture appropriate records in a recordkeeping system or a business system with adequate recordkeeping functionality, as part of an information and records management strategy (see section 2.2); and
- manage and preserve records over time (see section 2.3).

2.1 Meeting Legislative and Regulatory Requirements

Online resources and services contain and generate public records, and are subject to legislative and regulatory requirements for recordkeeping.

The following legislation and regulations must be followed to ensure adequate records are created to meet accountability and business requirements and cultural expectations.

2.1.1 Legislative Requirements

Public records are subject to the *Public Records Act 2002*, and a number of other legislative requirements which contain recordkeeping provisions.

The following table provides examples of common legislative and regulatory requirements with recordkeeping provisions that apply to different types of public authorities in Queensland.

Legislation relevant to all Public Authorities

<u>Public Records Act 2002</u>	The purpose of this Act is to ensure that public records are made, managed, kept and, if appropriate, preserved in a useable form for the benefit of present and future generations; and to ensure public access to records is consistent with the principles of the <u>Right to Information Act 2009</u> .
<u>Electronic Transactions Act 2001</u>	This Act provides a framework that facilitates the use of electronic transactions and enables business and the community to use electronic communications in their dealing with government.
<u>Evidence Act 1977</u>	This Act provides the basis for the laws of evidence in Queensland.
<u>Information Privacy Act 2009</u>	This Act provides safeguards for the handling of personal information in the public sector environment, and allows access to and amendment of personal information.
<u>Judicial Review Act 1991</u>	Establishes the right of a court to ask for documents to be produced (meaning they should have been created in the first place). Under s54 the court can order that these documents be officially amended.
<u>Right to Information Act 2009</u>	This Act recognises the right of the community to have access to government documents and to ensure that personal information held by the government is accurate, complete, up-to-date and not misleading.

Additional legislation relevant to State government departments and some statutory entities includes:

- the [Financial Accountability Act 2009](#)
- the [Financial and Performance Management Standard 2009](#); and
- the [Public Service Act 2008](#).

Additional legislation relevant to local governments includes:

- the [Local Government Act 2009](#); and
- the [Local Government Finance Standard 2005](#).

This list is not exhaustive or comprehensive. Public authorities should also be aware that they may be subject to additional sector-specific legislation or regulations that can impact on recordkeeping requirements. Public authorities, especially statutory entities and Government-Owned Corporations (GOCs) may choose to seek legal advice on the application of the listed legislation to their operations.

2.2 Information Standards

The Queensland Government Information Standards assist agencies by defining and promoting best practice in the acquisition, development, management, support and use of the information systems and technology infrastructure which support Queensland Government business processes and service delivery. The current Information Standards can be accessed from the Queensland Government Chief Information Office:

<http://www.qgcio.qld.gov.au/qgcio/architectureandstandards/informationstandards/current/Pages/index.aspx> .

A number of Information Standards are relevant to making and keeping public records, and are outlined in the following table.

The following table summarises the Information Standards that apply to different types of public authorities in Queensland.

Standards relevant to all Public Authorities	
<u>IS40: Recordkeeping</u>	Public authorities are required to make 'complete and accurate records' in accordance with the <u>Public Records Act 2002</u> (the Act). The primary purpose of this Standard is to help public authorities meet their recordkeeping obligations under the Act.
<u>IS31: Retention and Disposal of Public Records</u>	The purpose of this document is to complement the retention and disposal requirements for government information as described in IS40, the disposal provisions of the <i>Public Records Act 2002</i> and the <i>Financial Management Standard 1997</i> .

Additional Standards that are relevant to State Government Departments (further information available from

<http://www.qgcio.qld.gov.au/qgcio/architectureandstandards/informationstandards/current/Pages/index.aspx>):

- [IS18: Information Security](#);
- [IS26: Internet](#);and
- [IS34: Metadata](#).

2.3 Creating and Capturing Records

Records of online resources and services should be captured as full and accurate records within a recordkeeping system.

Managing the records of online resources and services needs to be one part of an information and records management strategy that encompasses all the information created or received by a public authority that is evidence of its business activity, including both paper-based and electronic records.

Public authorities may wish to regularly revise their information management plans to ensure that their recordkeeping activities of online resources and services continue to meet business and legislative requirements and community expectations.

2.3.1 Records that need to be created

Public authorities are required to create full and accurate records of their online resources and services and to manage them in accordance with Part 2 of the Act. Some records will be generated online by the activities themselves.

Examples of additional records that may be required to be captured include¹:

- Instructions on what records will be created and how they will be created for interactive sections of web sites;
- information relating to the addition, modification and removal of resources and services (including applicable policies and procedures);
- evidence of any transactions or communications carried out online;
- details of any outsourcing arrangements;
- information about visual elements used when delivering online resources and services, such as arrangements for drafting and developing presentation elements or the commissioning of logo designs;
- intellectual property agreements for content used in the online environment;
- information about any accessibility arrangements and testing;
- details of system functionality issues such as encryption methods employed or remote access arrangements;
- records documenting the use of copyrighted material in the online environment (including applicable policies and procedures); and
- information relating to the technology used to enable an authority's online presence, such as the selection or customisation of web content management systems used by a public authority.

¹ Adapted from U.S. National Archives & Records Administration (2005) *NARA Guidance on Managing Web Records*, available online: http://www.archives.gov/records_management/policy_and_guidance/managing_web_records_ind ex.html

2.3.2 Characteristics of Records

Records reflect communications, decisions or actions of public authorities. Records should also be associated with metadata to provide essential contextual information.

Records are distinguished from other forms of information by the characteristics of authenticity, reliability, integrity and useability.

An **authentic** record can be proven

- to be what it purports to be;
- to have been created or sent by the person purported to have created or sent it; and
- to have been created or sent at the time purported.

To remain authentic, records must also be protected from unauthorised addition, deletion, alternation, use and concealment.

Reliable records can be trusted as full and accurate representations of transactions, activities or facts. The reliability of records is increased if they are created at, or close as possible to, the time of the transaction, decision or action.

The **integrity** of a record refers to it being complete and unaltered.

A **useable** record is one that can be located, retrieved, presented and interpreted.

More information on the characteristics of a record can be found in AS ISO 15489.1-2002 *Records Management*².

Public authorities must ensure that the records of online activity that they create have the characteristics of authenticity, reliability, integrity and useability. The guideline that accompanies this policy statement provides advice on how agencies can create and keep such records.

2.3.3 Recordkeeping Systems

Public authorities need to establish recordkeeping systems to ensure that records are routinely created, stored and remain accessible for as long as the records need to be retained.

A well-functioning recordkeeping system has the characteristics of reliability, integrity, compliance, comprehensiveness and is systematic.

A **reliable** system is one that is capable of continuous and regular operation in accordance with responsible procedures.

The **integrity** of a recordkeeping system can be maintained using internal or external controls to prevent unauthorised access to, destruction, alteration or removal of records.

Recordkeeping systems need to be **compliant** with the requirements of the business and regulatory environment in which the organisation operates.

² Available from Standards Australia, <http://www.standards.com.au>.

Recordkeeping systems need to manage records resulting from the complete range of business activities for the organisation, or section of the organisation in which they operate (they should be **comprehensive**).

A recordkeeping system should support the **systematic** creation, maintenance and management of records, including the ability to purge records once they have been kept for the approved retention periods.

More information on the characteristics of a records system can be found in AS ISO 15489.1-2002 *Records Management (section 8)*³.

Recordkeeping systems also need to include strategies to ensure that electronic records remain accessible over time. This includes considering the issues of media, file format and other types of technology obsolescence and planning for migration of electronic records to new systems to keep them accessible for their entire retention period.

³ Available from Standards Australia, <http://www.standards.com.au>.

2.4 Maintaining and Preserving Records

Records of online resources and services should be managed and preserved over time.

Managing and preserving public records over time provides one mechanism to ensure accountability for a public authority's decisions to the Queensland Government and its citizens.

Public authorities must develop strategies to ensure that the records of online resources and services are preserved and remain accessible for the approved retention period. If records are kept in electronic form, preservation strategies should include consideration of the longevity of file formats used and other issues of technological obsolescence.

As with other public records, records of online resources and services may only be disposed of with the permission of the State Archivist, given through an approved retention and disposal schedule. *Information Standard 31: Retention and Disposal of Public Records* and *Information Standard 40: Recordkeeping* outline recordkeeping obligations under the Act.

The failure to maintain and preserve records over time can result in records becoming inaccessible. For example, if data is not fully migrated when new databases are commissioned, records may be lost or become inaccessible as the old system is retired from an organisation. If records become inaccessible, public authorities do not meet the requirements of the Act to keep full and accurate records of their activities.

Contact Details

Queensland State Archives welcomes feedback on this policy statement. Comments and queries about this matter should be addressed to:

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