

## Public Records Brief

A RECORDKEEPING UPDATE FOR QUEENSLAND PUBLIC AUTHORITIES – FIRST ISSUED MAY 2005  
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## Business Classification Schemes and Thesauri

*Information Standard 40, Recordkeeping*, endorses a functional approach to managing records, where records are classified and arranged according to the functions and activities they document. This offers a number of benefits including:

- The ability to link classification to disposal, access and security decisions.
- Ease of retrieval through consistent language.
- Linking records to their business context.
- Consistency across business units and agencies.

Business Classification Schemes (BCS) and Thesauri are primary tools in achieving these outcomes.

### What are they?

BCS and thesauri are both tools that support effective records management practices. They are linked together and usually developed in tandem.

- A BCS is derived from a detailed analysis of the business processes of an organisation. It is usually hierarchical with:
  - the top level representing the business function,
  - the second level representing the activities that make up the function, and
  - the third level the transactions that take place within each activity.
- A thesaurus is an alphabetical list of approved terms that controls the language used for the titling and indexing of records. It provides definitions of the terms in the form of scope notes and controls the hierarchical relationships between broader and narrower terms. It also provides cross-references between related terms and non-preferred terms. It is based on the BCS, tailored to how a public authority wishes to create and keep its records in a particular recordkeeping system.

### Example:

The BCS may show several transactions for the activity of meetings, such as:

- preparing agendas;
- circulating discussion papers; and
- writing minutes.

In reality these documents can be grouped together for filing purposes, or meeting records may be grouped with other documents as part of a consultation file for a particular project.

In practice, public authorities usually do not draw a distinction between the two products and simply add traditional thesaurus features such as non-preferred terms and scope notes to a BCS. If this approach is followed, there is a risk that the resulting product does not provide clear guidance on how records should be created and managed.

The tool used for classifying and titling records, whether a BCS, a thesaurus or a hybrid, should be based on an analysis of both the functions and activities of the public authority and of how records should be grouped and filed for ease of retrieval, use and disposal.

### Developing a BCS and Thesaurus

Developing a BCS and thesaurus is a significant project that requires resources and commitment from management. It can form part of a larger project such as the implementation of an electronic document and records management system (eDRMS). It involves:

- Researching the functions and activities of the public authority.
- Identifying recordkeeping requirements.

- Consulting with business areas to identify the appropriate terms that will be accepted for general use.
- Understanding how the BCS or thesaurus will be implemented in the eDRMS or other recordkeeping system.

For more information on the process, please see the guidelines referred to below.

### **Keyword AAA, Keyword for Councils and QKey**

*Keyword AAA* and *Keyword for Councils* are standard thesauri developed by State Records NSW and available free of charge to Queensland public authorities under a whole-of-Government licence agreement. To obtain a copy of either product and details of licence conditions contact Queensland State Archives.

*Keyword AAA* is a thesaurus of common administrative terms, covering functions common to many public authorities such as personnel, strategic management and financial management. Public authorities using *Keyword AAA* will need to develop a BCS or thesaurus to cover their unique business functions, and merge this with *Keyword AAA*.

*Keywords for Councils* is the local government equivalent of *Keyword AAA*. Unlike *Keyword AAA*, it is intended to encompass all the functions performed by local authorities, such as public health and water supply, in addition to administrative functions. This means that local authorities generally do not need to add their own specific function terms to the list in *Keyword for Councils*. Since *Keyword for Councils* was developed primarily for New South Wales authorities there may be some need to add or amend terms.

*QKey* is a derivative of *Keyword AAA* that was developed under licence by the Shared Service Solutions' Document and Records Management sub-program as part of the Queensland whole-of-Government eDRMS project. *QKey* is available under similar licence conditions as *Keyword AAA*. Distribution of *QKey* is currently managed by the CorpTech Document and Records Management sub-program. Any enquiries about *QKey* should be directed to CorpTech.

### **More Information**

The process of analysing the functions and activities of a public authority is described in the Designing and Implementing Recordkeeping Systems (DIRKS) methodology, in particular, Step B. See:

- National Archives of Australia (2001) *The DIRKS Manual: A Strategic Approach to Managing Business Information*. Accessed 22 July 2009 at <http://www.naa.gov.au/records-management/publications/DIRKS-manual.aspx>
- State Records Authority of NSW (2003) *Strategies for Documenting Government Business: The DIRKS Manual*. Accessed 22 July 2009 at <http://www.records.nsw.gov.au/recordkeeping/dirks>

For information on developing a thesaurus for records titling, after identifying functions and activities, see:

- State Records (2003) *Guidelines for Developing and Implementing a Keyword Thesaurus*. Available online at <http://www.records.nsw.gov.au/recordkeeping/government-recordkeeping-manual/guidance/guidelines/guideline-15>

For information on using and implementing *Keyword AAA* or *Keyword for Councils*, see:

- Queensland State Archives (2003) *Using Keyword AAA: A Guideline for Queensland State Government Agencies, Statutory Authorities and Government Owned Corporations*. Available online at <http://www.archives.qld.gov.au/government/guidelines.asp#KAAA>.
- Queensland State Archives (2003) *Using Keyword for Councils: A Guideline for Queensland Local Government Authorities*. Available online at <http://www.archives.qld.gov.au/government/guidelines.asp#KFC>.

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For more information on the management of public records, visit the Queensland State Archives' website at <http://www.archives.qld.gov.au>, or contact us on:

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