

## Results of feedback on *Developing an e-Government Policy Framework for Electronic Records Management Discussion Paper*

In June 2006 Queensland State Archives released a Discussion Paper on *Developing an e-Government Policy Framework for Electronic Records Management*. The Discussion Paper sought feedback from public authorities on three main issues:

1. The reengineering of the recordkeeping policy framework, managed by Queensland State Archives, to provide additional practical policy advice in the area of electronic records management for Queensland public authorities
2. Whether there is a continued need for *Information Standard 41: Managing Technology-Dependent Records (IS41)*, or whether it could be subsumed into *Information Standard 40: Recordkeeping (IS40)*, and
3. Preliminary planning for a future digital archive.

This Public Records Brief provides an overview of the feedback received from a total of 98 public authorities.

Overall, the consultation process generated widespread support from public authorities for all of these policy initiatives being planned by Queensland State Archives.

### 1. Developing an expanded policy framework for Electronic Records Management

The consultation process revealed strong support for the development of an expanded policy framework for the management of electronic records. The Discussion Paper sought feedback from public authorities on whether they required policy, technical or practical advice on a range of issues in this area.

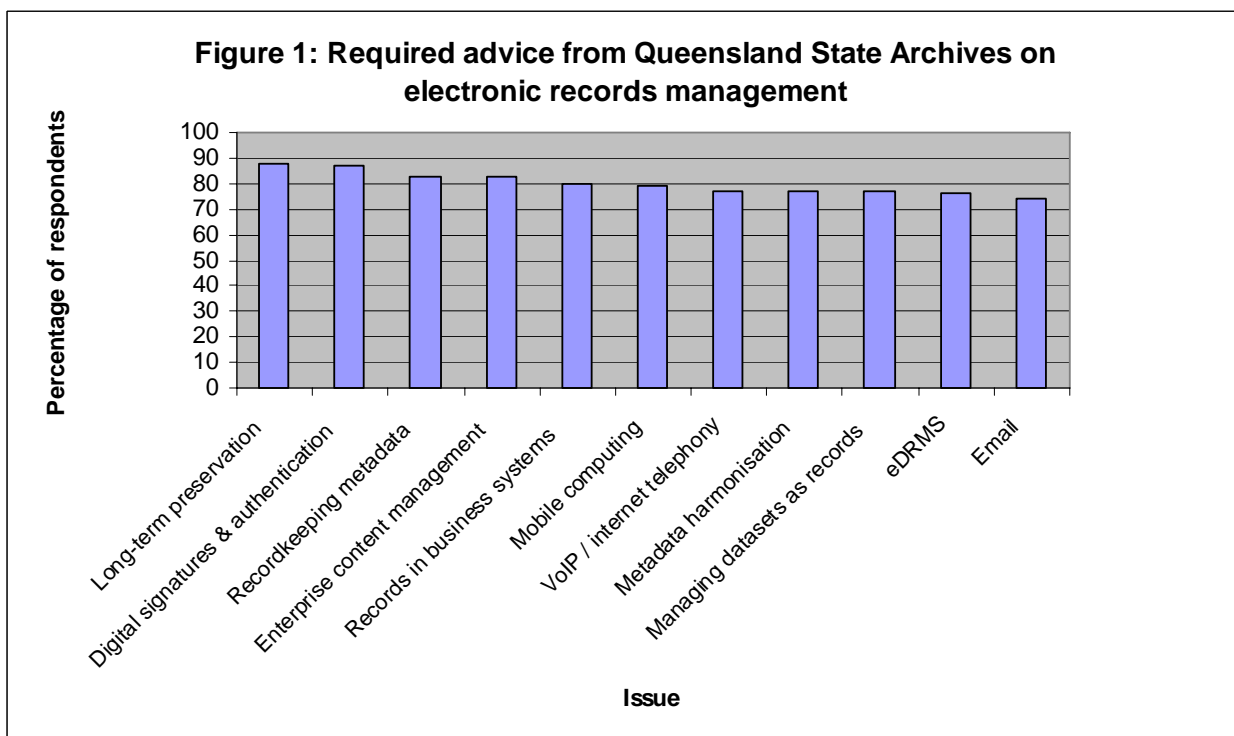


Figure 1 illustrates public authorities' ranking of the particular advice they require on issues associated with the management of electronic records. It shows compelling demand for additional policy advice to be developed by Queensland State Archives, with more than 70% of agencies requiring some form of advice on every issue raised in the Discussion Paper. This feedback will be used to inform Queensland State Archives' future policy program.

## **2. Continued need for *Information Standard 41: Managing Technology-Dependent Records***

A large majority – 83% – of respondents saw no continued need for IS41 and supported subsuming it into *Information Standard 40: Recordkeeping (IS40)*. The feedback showed a strong awareness that the principles of recordkeeping are the same for both electronic and traditional records. The majority of agencies expressed a preference for one high-level document or policy statement regulating records management, regardless of format, across Queensland Government, rather than numerous documents.

As a result of this feedback, work has commenced on subsuming aspects of IS41 into IS40. It is expected that IS41 will be formally revoked in 2007, and public authorities will be advised accordingly.

## **3. Preparedness for a Digital Archive**

The Discussion Paper asked a series of questions relating to long-term preservation of electronic records and public authorities' preparedness for a Digital Archive, operated by Queensland State Archives, to manage their electronic records of permanent retention value.

An important component of long-term preservation strategies is knowledge of, and control over, file formats as software obsolescence is a key risk in effectively managing electronic records over time. Feedback showed that:

- 78% of respondents do not have a formal policy on what digital formats can be used in their agency, and
- 59% of respondents do not maintain any information about what file formats are in use.

The Discussion Paper also asked public authorities to gauge their confidence in the continued accessibility of their electronic records. It found that:

- 34% are not confident in the future accessibility of their electronic records or have already lost access to some of their electronic records due to technological obsolescence.
- Conversely, 53% were reasonably confident, and 13% fully confident, of their ability to access electronic records over time.

It is of concern that of the 66% of public authorities which are confident or reasonably confident of making their electronic records accessible into the future, a number of these stated that this assessment was based on their implementation of an electronic document and records management system (eDRMS). While an eDRMS is a key tool in the appropriate management of electronic records, it does not manage all electronic records of an organisation, nor does it have the functionality to deal with the issues of technology obsolescence.

## **Conclusion**

Queensland State Archives is working with other archival institutions in Australia and internationally on holistic solutions for the long-term management and preservation of electronic records. Queensland State Archives will continue to publish information on its research and development program as well as develop practical policies, guidelines and tools for Queensland public authorities in this critical area.