



Australian Government



NATIONAL  
ARCHIVES  
OF AUSTRALIA

General records authority 31

2015/00499297

**Destruction of source or original  
records after digitisation,  
conversion or migration**

2015



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## PURPOSE OF THIS AUTHORITY

The purpose of this general records authority is to permit the destruction of information and records in accordance with Section 24(2)(b) of the *Archives Act 1983* after they have been successfully copied, converted from an analogue to a digital format, or migrated from one system to another. This permission is subject to the exclusions and conditions included below and is on the proviso that the original or source records are no longer needed in their original or existing format for agency or National Archives of Australia purposes.

This authority can be used by the National Archives for eligible records in its custody, in consultation with the agency currently responsible for the business documented in the records, and by other Australian Government agencies for eligible records in their care.

This authority does not permit destruction of any digital information after it has been converted to paper or other physical formats.

This authority commences on the date it is issued. It supersedes the earlier version of 'General Records Authority 31 – for source (including original) records after they have been copied, converted or migrated' (31 October 2012) which cannot be used after the date of issue of this authority.

Appendix 1 provides advice on identifying records with intrinsic value.

## CONTEXT

This general records authority supports the Australian Government Digital Transition Policy, the Digital Continuity 2020 Policy and other whole-of-government initiatives designed to ensure that government digital information is available for use now and into the future. Information in digital formats is more accessible, usable and interoperable and enables better government processes, outcomes and accountability. Destruction of information in paper formats after digitisation reduces the cost of managing Commonwealth information assets.

This authority is a key element in the suite of tools created by the National Archives to foster digital business processes and digital information management for efficiency purposes. It supports the Archives [Digital Continuity Plan](#) by allowing the digitisation of Commonwealth information assets through the conversion of paper and other physical formats into digital formats. It also supports digital to digital migrations and other digital transformation and preservation processes.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

For assistance with this authority or for advice on other records management matters, please contact the National Archives' Agency Service Centre.

Queen Victoria Terrace  
Parkes ACT 2600  
PO Box 7425  
Canberra Business Centre ACT 2610

Tel: (02) 6212 3610  
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# AUTHORISATION

## RECORDS AUTHORITY 2015/00499297

**Person to whom notice of authorisation is given:**

Heads of Commonwealth Institutions under the Archives Act 1983

**Purpose:**

Authorises arrangements for the disposal of records in accordance with Section 24(2)(b) of the *Archives Act 1983*.

**Application:**

This authority permits the destruction after digitisation, conversion or migration of source or original records in certain categories, subject to exclusions and conditions.

This authority gives permission for the destruction of the records described. It will apply only with the consent of the agency currently responsible for the business documented in the records described.

**Authorised by**

David Fricker  
Director-General  
National Archives of Australia

**Date of issue**

26 October 2015

## CLASS

Class no	Description of records	Disposal action
61979	<p>Subject to the Exclusions and Conditions below, original or source records in any format that have been digitised, converted or migrated in the following categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Original or source records created before 1 January 1980 which are identified as temporary in a current records authority issued by the National Archives of Australia.</li> <li>• Original or source records created on or after 1 January 1980.</li> </ul>	<p>Destroy after confirming that the Exclusions and Conditions below have been observed</p>

## EXCLUSIONS

The following records are not covered by this authority.

1. Records which have been identified for permanent retention ('retain as national archives' or 'retain permanently') **and** that have special or intrinsic value in the original medium which would be lost if the content were converted to another medium. See Appendix 1.
2. Records which are subject to specific legal or administrative requirements such as:
  - a) legislation that requires retention of the original or source record in a specified form; or
  - b) a government policy or directive not to destroy the original or source record.
3. Digital original or source records which have been converted to paper or another physical format.

## CONDITIONS

1. Source records which were created before 1 January 1980 and which have been identified for permanent retention (RNA or RP) may not be destroyed without specific approval from the National Archives. These will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Please contact the Agency Service Centre for more information.
2. Agencies must consider the risks and may need to seek legal advice before destroying source or original records which are subject to specific legal or administrative requirements such as:
  - a) they are likely to be required as evidence in a current judicial proceeding or a judicial proceeding that is likely to commence; or
  - b) they are the subject of a current application for access under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*, *Archives Act 1983* or other legislation.

In general, this authority may be applied to source or original records subject to a disposal freeze or retention notice provided that the terms of the disposal freeze or retention notice do not specifically exclude application of this authority. In particular, this authority may be applied to records subject to the [disposal freeze for records relating to Cornwell-type superannuation claims](#) with confirmation from the Department of Finance.

3. Agencies must ensure that all copies or reproductions that have been created as a result of digitisation, conversion or migration are at least functionally equivalent to the source or original records for business, legal and archival purposes.

Functional equivalence means that copies or reproductions have the same degree of authenticity, integrity, reliability and usability as the source or original records.

4. Source or original records must be kept long enough to complete quality control processes on the copies or reproductions.
5. Digitisation processes must meet National Archives' standards, specifications and guidelines. This includes scanning specifications for paper records that have been digitised, and technical specifications for digitising audio visual records.
6. Agencies must maintain digital information in accordance with National Archives' standards and guidelines and retain information and records according to the relevant records authority.
7. The creation date of the source or original record is to be used as the creation date of the copy or reproduction for the purposes of the *Archives Act 1983*.

## APPENDIX 1. IDENTIFYING INTRINSIC VALUE

Intrinsic value refers to the qualities and characteristics inherent in the original medium which contribute to its archival value. These qualities and characteristics may be lost or diminished if the record is converted to another medium, thereby compromising its archival value. Intrinsic value may be physical or intellectual as defined below.

### Physical qualities

- Records on rare or obsolete formats. This may include particular types of paper, vellum, objects, volumes with unique form or binding, magnetic storage devices, punch cards, wax cylinders, glass negatives gramophone discs, etc.
- Rare or original objects such as mint issue stamps or coins, rare books or seals where monetary value may be a factor.
- Unique or curious physical features, such as wax seals, watermarks, cross-written correspondence or scrapbooks with rare and unique content.
- Records where the original medium conveys meaning such as overlay drawings. This includes records where the information cannot be accurately reflected in digital format.
- Records of artistic or cultural significance, or with aesthetic quality such as art, cultural artefacts, photographs, architectural drawings, illuminated manuscripts, copyright exhibits, design drawings.
- Questionable authenticity, date, author, or other characteristic that is significant and ascertainable by physical examination, or where controversy around the subject may warrant the original to be retained for later forensic proof (for example, purchase documents for artworks or other valuable items).
- Value for use in exhibits, where the record itself imparts a sense of historical significance or of the significance of a person or event to which it relates.

### Intellectual qualities

- Original documents of general and substantial public interest due to a direct association with famous or historically significant people, places, things, issues, or events such as the Prime Minister or Governor-General, the Constitution or treaties.
- Primary establishment documents with significance to the establishment or continuing legal basis of an agency or institution, the functions or powers of government, or the formulation of the highest levels of legislation.
- Policy documents with significance to the formulation of the highest levels of policy.
- Significance or value to individuals as an artefact or evidence of their ancestry or heritage which contain original photographs, handwriting etc.