

What you need to know about
managing records when working for
the Australian Government

Keep the **Knowledge** *make a record*



Key message

Everyone working for the Australian Government, from entry level to heads of agencies, is required to make and keep records of their work.



What will be covered?

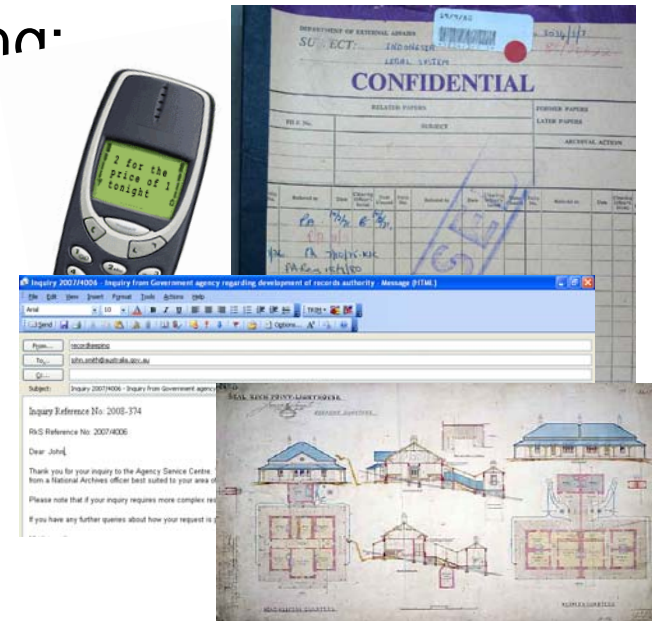
- What is a record?
- Why do records matter?
- What are your responsibilities?
- When should you make or keep a record?
- Where should you keep records?
- Can you destroy records?
- When should records have restricted access?
- Where can you get help?

What is a record?

All information you create, send and receive in the course of carrying out your job is potentially a record.

Records exist in various formats including:

- email
- letters
- Blackberry and SMS messages
- information in business systems
- photographs and images



Why do records matter?

- Accountable and transparent government, including:
 - Freedom of Information Act
 - Public Service Act / APS Values and Code of Conduct
 - Financial Management and Accountability Act
- Good business practice:
 - efficiency and corporate memory
- Protection of rights and entitlements

Why do records matter?

In your everyday work, making and keeping records makes it easier to:

- find and use information
- share information
- produce evidence



What are your responsibilities?

As an Australian Government employee you need to:

- make records of what you do
- capture your records where your agency keeps them
- give your records meaningful titles
- handle and store records appropriately

What are your responsibilities?

- Only destroy, delete, alter or remove records if you have appropriate authorisation.
- Take care to prevent records being lost or damaged.
- Check security and access controls on records and ensure they are managed appropriately.

How can supervisors and managers help?

- Know your agency's records management requirements.
- Provide training and guidance for staff.
- Encourage good team practices.



When should you make or keep a record?

Make or keep a record when you need to show:

- what happened, when it happened and who was involved
- what was decided or recommended and by whom
- what advice or instruction was given
- the order of events or decisions

What if you are not sure?

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Did I write, send, use or keep this in the course of my work?
- Am I (or is someone else) required to act on this?
- Will anyone need this information in the future?

If the answer is yes to any of these questions – make or keep a record!

Situations where records might be necessary

You might need to make or keep a record of the following business activities:

- phone calls and conversations
- meetings
- advice or directions
- approvals and decisions

Use your judgement about whether a record is required in the circumstances.

How should you name records?

Always give records titles or names that:

- are meaningful and easy to understand
- avoid vague terms like 'miscellaneous'
- distinguish between similar records
eg include date or version information
- spell out abbreviations and acronyms



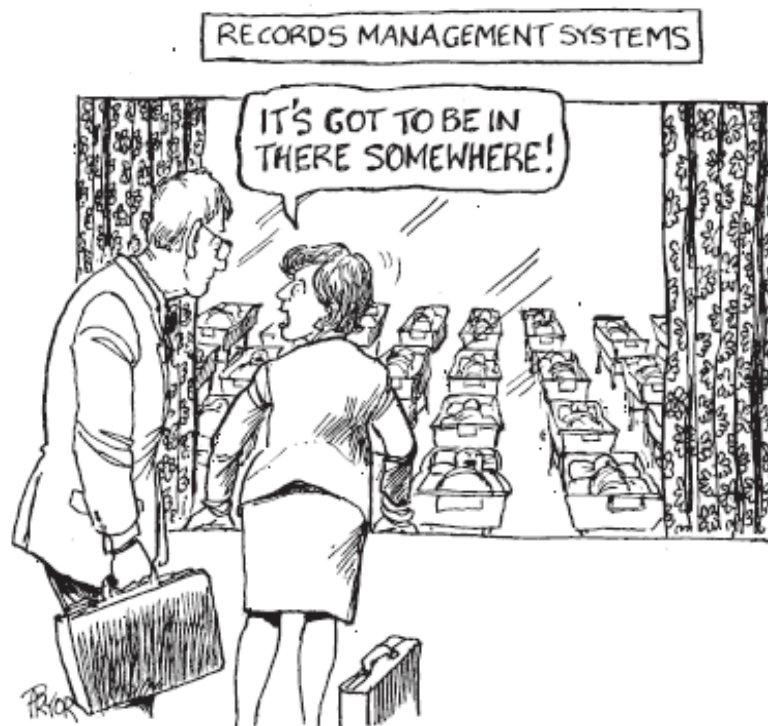
Meaningful titles?

Are the following titles meaningful and easy to understand?
Why or why not?

- Personnel – Flex Sheets – Joseph M Smith 2009
- Software file
- FW: Grants application from RAIA
- Allegations of fraud – J Smith

Where should you keep records?

Keep records in corporate locations and systems approved by your agency.



Where should you keep records?

Do not keep information where it is inaccessible to others, such as:

- personal email folders
- computer hard drives

Laptops, USBs and CDs are easily misplaced, lost or stolen - which places information at risk.



Can you delete or destroy records?

The destruction of records is governed by the Archives Act and other legislation.

Before you make decisions to delete or destroy records you must:

- find out which records you are responsible for keeping
- find out which records you can delete or destroy
- follow authorised procedures
- ask your supervisor or records manager if you are not sure what to do

How should you manage email?

Business related email should be managed as records:

- Understand when you are responsible for capturing email.
- Not all email you receive needs to be captured (eg personal or for information only email).
- Capture email in corporate locations and systems.



How should you protect sensitive information?

Records should be accessible within your agency, unless they relate to:

- national security
- privacy of individuals and organisations

Records that need to be protected for these reasons must be given a classification rating and captured in an appropriate secure location.

Can you provide public access to records?

Public access to government information is regulated by legislation including:

- Freedom of Information Act
- Privacy Act
- Archives Act

You can only provide public access to government records and information with the approval of your agency.

Knowledge check

Are the following statements true or false?

- An email sent to a client in the course of your work is a record.
- It is a core responsibility of Australian Government employees to create and manage records in accordance with records management requirements.
- Records do not help you produce evidence when you are required to explain a decision.
- I should keep records I create where no-one else can see them.
- Supervisors and managers should ensure time and resources are made available for records management in their teams.

You are now able to:

- describe what a record is
- understand why records matter
- describe your records management responsibilities
- understand the role of supervisors in supporting records management
- decide when to make or keep a record
- understand the importance of keeping records in the right locations

Where can you get help or more information?

For more information about the requirements, guidelines, processes and systems in your agency:

- speak with you supervisor
- contact your records or information management area



National Archives of Australia

This presentation was developed by the National Archives for all Australian Government employees.

The National Archives plays the lead role in promoting good information and records management across the Australian Government.

Visit naa.gov.au for more information.

