

National Library of Australia
National Archives of Australia
National Office for the Information Economy

Keeping Government Publications Online

A GUIDE FOR COMMONWEALTH AGENCIES



NATIONAL
ARCHIVES
OF AUSTRALIA



NOIE

The National Office for the
INFORMATION ECONOMY

www.nla.gov.au/guidelines/govpubs.html



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WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO ENSURE LONG-TERM ACCESS TO ONLINE PUBLICATIONS?

An important responsibility of government is to provide to the Australian people information on government policy, business and activities. More and more government information is published online and this trend is likely to continue.

Government publications form part of the documentary heritage and social and intellectual capital of Australia. They have enduring value and significance as a vital source of evidence of government activities and decisions and are an important source of corporate memory for the government and the people. Government agencies are democratically and legally accountable for the information they publish on their web sites. This accountability persists long after the currency of the online information expires.

This brochure explains how collaboration between agencies, the National Library of Australia and the National Archives of Australia will help to ensure that online Commonwealth Government publications remain available to Australians into the future. Without that collaboration, government information will be lost to future generations of Australians.

This guide is supported by the National Office for the Information Economy (NOIE). NOIE coordinates a whole of Government approach to support Commonwealth agency efforts to improve the access to government through the application of new technologies to government administration, information and services.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES

All government agencies have some responsibility for government information of which there are two broad types. All agencies produce records of their business and activities and must store and preserve them using appropriate records management systems. Many agencies also publish information. It is important that these publications are created, managed and distributed in ways that will support their ongoing availability.

All publications are also government records. The National Library and the National Archives have legislated and complementary responsibilities for ensuring long-term access to and preservation of government information. The National Library collects, preserves and makes available to the public both print and online publications. In 1996 it established the PANDORA Archive

<http://pandora.nla.gov.au/index.html> of Australian online publications, which already contains many government titles. The National Archives takes care of valuable Commonwealth Government records to make them available for future generations and archives any Commonwealth Government publications that are not collected by the National Library. It assists agencies by developing policies, standards, guidelines and providing training and advice about modern recordkeeping.

WHAT IS MY AGENCY'S ROLE?

While the National Library and National Archives have ultimate responsibility for the preservation of government information, all agencies have initial responsibilities that play a crucial role in enabling long-term preservation to occur. This brochure outlines what these responsibilities are and the sources of information that are available to support your work.

OBSERVE LEGAL AND MANDATED REQUIREMENTS

In publishing government information online, there are legal and other mandated requirements which agencies must meet. It is your responsibility to be aware of your obligations and responsibilities in this regard. The first three sources cited below under 'Use Better Practice Guidelines' provide descriptions of the legal environment.

- *Online Information Service Obligations(OISOs)*, August 2001, describes obligations that, when complied with, guarantee public access to a minimum level of information across all Commonwealth agencies. The OISOs were released as part of the Government Online Strategy in April 2000 and have since been updated.

<http://www.govonline.gov.au/projects/standards/oiso.htm>

(archived at <http://nla.gov.au/nla.arc-24804>)

USE BETTER PRACTICE GUIDELINES

Using better practice guidelines has positive benefits. Unless there are strong reasons to do otherwise, a policy of using very widely accepted standards is highly recommended.

This approach will support the widest possible access as well as making long-term access more likely.

- *Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers*, sixth edition, John Wiley & Sons Australia for the Department of Finance and Administration, 2002. The Manual contains detailed advice about various aspects of publishing in both print and electronic formats and includes a number of checklists, including for the production of electronic documents.

- *Guidelines for Commonwealth Information Published in Electronic Formats*, version 1.1, January 2000, by AusInfo (DoFA), gives detailed information about publishing processes, benchmarks and practices.

<http://nla.gov.au/nla.arc-10413>

- *Internet Delivery Decisions: A Government Program Manager's Guide*, April 2001, by the Australian National Audit Office.

<http://nla.gov.au/nla.arc-24805>

- *Better Practice Checklists*

The National Office for the Information Economy, provides information on better practice, including better practice checklists on archiving web resources and metadata.

http://www.govonline.gov.au/projects/strategy/better_practice/checklists/7_Archiving.htm

http://www.govonline.gov.au/projects/strategy/better_practice/checklists/6_metadata.htm

- *Safeguarding Australia's Web Resources: Guidelines for Creators and Publishers*, revised edition, June 2002, by the National Library of Australia, outlines practices that will contribute to keeping publications available.

<http://www.nla.gov.au/guidelines/webresources.html>

- *Archiving Web Resources: Policy and Guidelines for Keeping Records on Web-based Activity in the Commonwealth Government*, January 2001, by the National Archives of Australia, will help you to establish internal mechanisms and strategies to create, manage and retain web-based records for as long as they are required.

http://www.naa.gov.au/recordkeeping/er/web_records/intro.html

OBTAIN AN ISSN OR AN ISBN

International Standard Serial Numbers (ISSN) and International Standard Book Numbers (ISBN) were designed for print serials and books respectively but many online publications are also eligible for these numbers. They identify them uniquely and enable more efficient management of publications, especially by libraries and publishers.

- *Services for Publishers*, by the National Library of Australia, provides links to information about ISSN and ISBN and how to obtain them.

http://www.nla.gov.au/services/serv_pubs.html

ASSIGN A PERSISTENT IDENTIFIER

A persistent identifier is a unique name for a digital object, which remains the same regardless of where the item is located, that is, regardless of change of URL. This means that as long as the persistent identifier is maintained and resolved, links to it on the web will remain actionable.

Broken links are very common on the web. A publication may have been removed from a web site, or moved to another location on the site. There may be a change of domain name, or a change of ownership, which mean the publication has acquired a different URL.

At the very least, organise your site in such a way to minimise the need to change the URLs of publications. Note too that if you give the National Library permission to collect your publication, a persistent identifier will be assigned to the copy collected and archived. You could refer to it on your site.

The National Library is currently investigating options for a national persistent naming and resolving service.

- *Managing Web Resources for Persistent Access*, May 2001, by the National Library of Australia, lists actions that can be taken to minimise broken links and keep publications available.
<http://www.nla.gov.au/guidelines/2000/persistence.html>

APPLY AGLS METADATA

Applying AGLS metadata to your publication enhances the likelihood that libraries and members of the public will be able to find it through resource discovery services, such as search engines.

- *Commonwealth Implementation Manual: Australian Government Locator Service (AGLS) Metadata*, version 1.0, July 2001, by the National Archives of Australia, provides practical advice and direction for Commonwealth agencies wishing to adopt the AGLS standard.
http://www.naa.gov.au/recordkeeping/gov_online/agls/cim/cim_manual.html

CATALOGUE YOUR PUBLICATIONS

Ask your agency library to catalogue your publications on to the National Bibliographic Database (NBD). The NBD is an online national union catalogue that contains records of publications and information about where they are located. It is maintained by the National Library and access to it is delivered through the Kinetica Service. Including your

publications in the NBD is another way of ensuring that the public will be able to find them.

- *Kinetica*, by the National Library of Australia, provides more information about this service.
<http://www.nla.gov.au/kinetica/>

NOTIFY THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF YOUR PUBLICATIONS AND GIVE PERMISSION TO ARCHIVE

The legal deposit provisions of the *Copyright Act 1968*, section 201, do not yet cover electronic publications, though a proposal to amend the provisions is currently being developed. In the meantime, the National Library is archiving online publications with the permission of their publishers. To assist the Library to identify what has been published, agencies are encouraged to notify the Library of online publications as they become available and to give permission for the Library to archive them. Note: When granting permission, agencies should check that they do in fact own copyright and that there is no third party copyright involved.

- A *Notification Form* is available at
http://pandora.nla.gov.au/registration_form.html

SENTENCE RECORDS

Sentencing is the process of identifying and classifying records according to a disposal authority and applying the disposal action specified in it.

Sentence records against an appropriate records disposal authority and arrange for records identified as national archives to be transferred to the National Archives. Records disposal classes under the Publication function in the AFDA (see below) are of particular relevance.

- *Administrative Functions Disposal Authority (AFDA)*, by the National Archives of Australia, authorises agencies to dispose of the common administrative records generated by most Commonwealth agencies.
<http://www.naa.gov.au/recordkeeping/disposal/authorities/GDA/AFDA/summary.html>

DEFINITION OF PUBLICATION

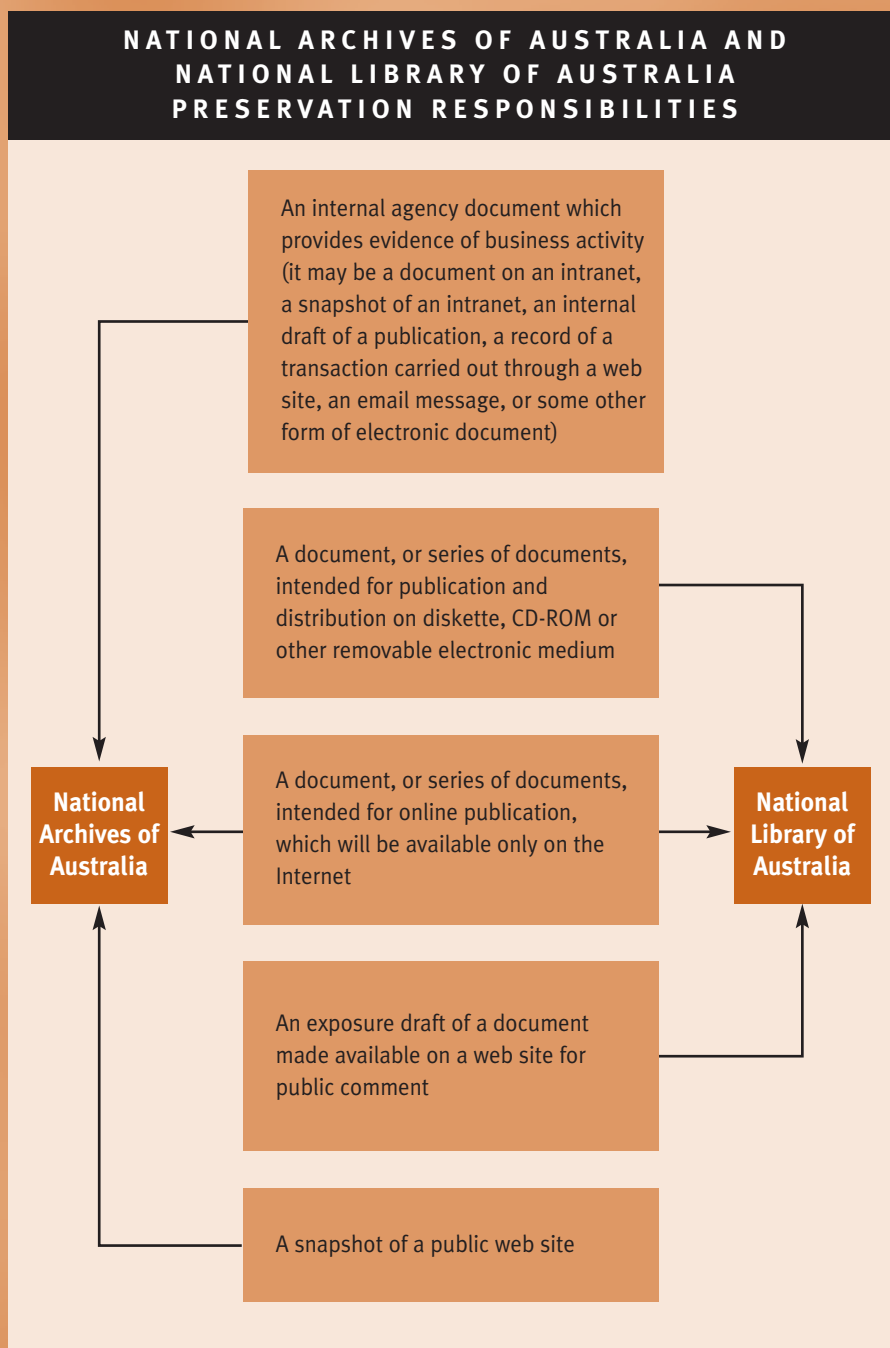
A publication is information, regardless of its format, that is made available to the general public, or to an identified public, either free of charge or for a fee. In theory, this includes everything on every publicly available Commonwealth Government web site. In practice, the National Library will archive only certain types of online publications including both those that are free of charge and those for which there is a fee for access:

- Journals, newsletters and other serials
- Research papers
- Discussion papers
- Technical reports
- Annual reports
- Fact sheets
- Manuals (not those for internal agency procedures) e.g., the AGLS Manual
- Public accountability documents such as environmental impact statements and exposure drafts for public comment
- Conference proceedings where the full text of presentations is provided
- Databases of information for public access
- Substantial ministerial and departmental speeches
- Any document that would formerly have been published in print
- Any document eligible for an ISBN or an ISSN
- Every new edition/version of any of the above (this does not include minor changes)
- Web sites or parts of a web site, which provide substantial, unique information about an initiative, project, event or subject area.

DEFINITION OF RECORD

'Information created, received and maintained as evidence and information by an organisation or person, in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business.' (Source: AS/ISO 15489, *Information and Documentation – Records Management*, Sydney: Standards Australia, 2002).

Publications are also records. Under the *Administrative Functions Disposal Authority* classes 1933 and 1935, publications (including online publications) are to be retained as national archives. Those online publications that are not archived by the National Library may be transferred to the custody of the National Archives as soon as is convenient for the agency. The Archives is currently building a digital repository for the storage of these and other digital archival records.



NATIONAL LIBRARY OF AUSTRALIA RESPONSIBILITIES

- Assists agencies to meet their obligation to keep publications accessible by collecting and preserving Commonwealth Government publications, in both print and electronic formats
- Archives freely available and commercial online publications with the permission of publishers. It manages the latter in such a way that publishers' commercial interests are not undermined and it is happy to negotiate periods of restriction on access
- Catalogues publications in the National Bibliographic Database and makes them accessible through the national resource discovery service called Kinetica
- Preserves Australian publications for long-term access. It participates at an international level in research and development of strategies for the preservation of online publications
- Provides advice and guidelines to assist creators and publishers to manage online publications.

Contact details

Manager Digital Archiving
National Library of Australia
Canberra ACT 2600
Email: elecunit@nla.gov.au
Fax: (02) 6273 4322
Phone: (02) 6262 1140

NATIONAL ARCHIVES OF AUSTRALIA RESPONSIBILITIES

- Issues standards, policies, and guidelines on making, keeping and managing Commonwealth records
- Authorises the disposal of Commonwealth records
- Selects and preserves Commonwealth records that have value for retention as national archives
- Approves custodial arrangements for taking into archival custody Commonwealth records that need to be retained
- Ensures public accessibility of Commonwealth records that are over 30 years of age
- Maintains the AGLS metadata standard and the AGLS user documentation on its web site
- Provides advice on the interpretation and implementation of its various standards, policies and guidelines and assists agencies to analyse and identify the recordkeeping requirements and develop suitable records disposal authorities.

Contact details

National Archives of Australia
Canberra ACT 2600
Phone: (02) 6212 3610
Email: recordkeeping@naa.gov.au

NATIONAL OFFICE FOR THE INFORMATION ECONOMY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Works with departments and agencies to address issues related to the use of new technologies for information and service delivery, and administration
- Develops and coordinates Commonwealth responses to strategic issues affecting the information economy
- Facilitates research and innovation that maximises the opportunities and benefits for government agencies to put information and communication technologies to effective use
- Facilitates exemplar projects
- Captures and shares the results of research
- Provides information and advice

Contact details

National Office for the Information Economy
Canberra ACT 2600
Email: better.practice@noie.gov.au
Phone: (02) 6271 1514