

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

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





Why do records matter to me?

Managing your information and records effectively makes good business sense. It makes your job easier and helps your colleagues.

If you regularly make records and keep them in the right places, it will be easier to:

- locate emails, documents or information when needed
- reuse really good work that you or someone else has done in the past
- determine the most recent version of a document
- produce evidence as to why a particular decision was made
- protect yourself, your clients, citizens and the Australian Government.

Making and keeping records of your work is an essential requirement of a diligent, efficient and responsible Australian Government employee, contractor or consultant.

What do I need to know?

You don't need to be an expert to keep your records well.

You should understand your basic responsibilities (as outlined in this card) and find out what your agency's specific requirements are.

It's as simple and clear as that.

Did you know?

The FOI Act, the Public Service Act and the APS Values and Code of Conduct carry the same message – we need to be accountable for our actions. Records are essential to this.

What is a record?

Records provide evidence of your agency's business.

All information created, sent and received in the course of carrying out your job is potentially a record.

Whether something is a record or not depends on the information it contains and the context.

For example, a letter sent to a client or colleague granting an approval is a record, whereas a letter to a friend about something personal is not.

Records can be in paper, electronic or many other formats. Examples can include:

- emails
- faxes
- spreadsheets
- databases
- maps and plans
- samples and objects
- information in business systems
- letters
- Blackberry and SMS messages
- minutes
- policy and briefing papers
- photographs
- research data

Did you know?

Work-related records do not belong to you. They contain corporate information and are valuable assets that belong to your agency.

Are my emails records?

The business-related emails you send and receive are records.

These should be managed as records according to your agency's procedures and business rules.

Ask your supervisor or records manager if you need more information.

Records management is a bit like brushing your teeth. If you do it regularly, you hardly notice the time it takes, and it prevents potentially painful and expensive problems in the future.

When should I make or keep a record?

Some records – such as those in workflow and other business information systems – are created automatically for you.

At other times, you must make a conscious decision to make or keep a record. Do so if you need to show:

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

Did you know?

You should make a record when important decisions are made on the telephone, at meetings or during conversations.

If you are not sure, ask yourself:

- 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 this information be needed in the future?

If you answer 'Yes' to any of these questions, you should make or keep a record.

How should I title or name records?

Have you ever had trouble finding an email, document or file? Good titles and names make it easier to find the information you need.

Find out if your agency or work area has guidelines to follow, such as a file plan or naming conventions.

Some general tips for naming records include:

- be meaningful – people should be able to understand what the record is about
- avoid vague terms like 'miscellaneous' or 'general'
- provide details that distinguish between similar records – eg date, version or time period
- spell out abbreviations and acronyms.



Where should I keep records?

Always keep records where your agency needs them to be kept, that is, in approved locations.

Corporate systems and locations for keeping records in your agency might include:

- electronic document and records management systems (EDRMS)
- business information systems specific to your agency's business
- paper registry files.

Information kept in these places can be:

- accessed by those who need it for their work
- secured from unauthorised access, tampering, deletion or loss.

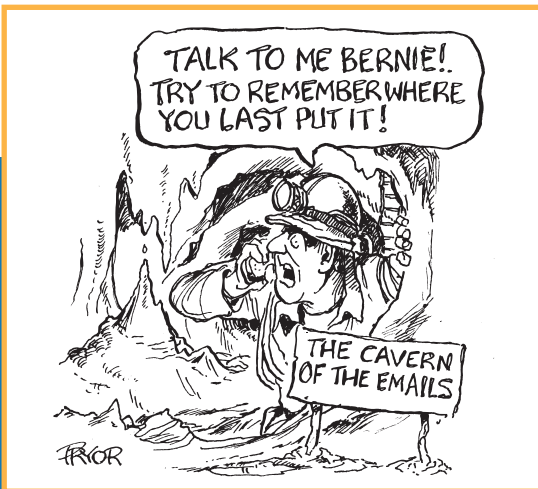
Did you know?

Keeping important business emails in your personal email folders means other people can't find or access the information when they need to.

Find out from your supervisor or records manager where you should be keeping records.

Do not keep important business information in personal locations, such as your email folders or computer hard drive, where it is inaccessible to others.

Also, do not keep sensitive or important information on laptops, USBs and other portable storage devices that can be easily misplaced, lost or stolen.



Can I delete or destroy records?

Not all records need to be kept indefinitely.

The retention or destruction of records is governed by legislation, and you should always follow your agency's procedures when destroying or deleting records such as email.

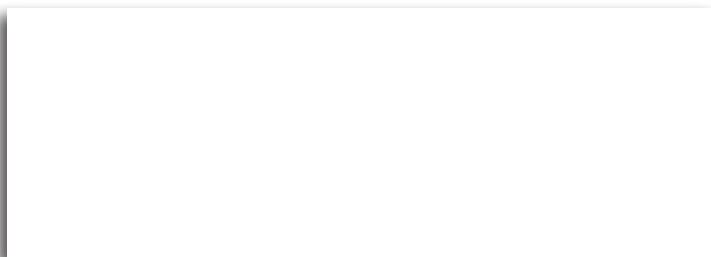
If you keep records in your agency's corporate records management systems or other approved locations, you don't have to worry about how long they need to be kept. Other people will look after them once they are in the right place.

Everyone working for the Australian Government – from APS 1 level to heads of agencies – is required to make and keep records of their work. This includes non-ongoing contractors and consultants.

Where can I get help or more information?

This card provides general information from the National Archives about everyone's responsibilities to make and keep records in the Australian Government.

For more specific information about the requirements, guidelines or processes in your agency contact:



The National Archives plays the lead role in promoting good information and records management in Australian Government agencies. For more information, visit our website at www.naa.gov.au

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