

Archiving Websites: Advice and Policy Statement

This advice explains the classes in the Administrative Functions Disposal Authority (AFDA) and AFDA Express that apply to the capture of websites and website content. For advice on how and when to capture websites, contact the National Archives at recordkeeping@naa.gov.au

Websites are used by agencies throughout the Australian Government not only to support business functions but also as the means for customer and other stakeholder interactions. Websites are Commonwealth records and should be managed in accordance with the *Archives Act 1983*.

Policy Statement

Websites, and website content, are retained in accordance with classes in AFDA and AFDA Express, the legal instruments that set out requirements for agencies to keep, destroy or transfer Australian Government administrative records.

AFDA and AFDA Express classes

There are various classes in AFDA and equivalent classes in AFDA Express under the *Publication* function that can be applied to websites as a whole as well as to the content and objects found within a website.

Three of those classes, 1935 and 1936 in AFDA and 20329 in AFDA Express, require action to be taken 'in accordance with the National Archives policy on archiving websites', as stated above.

AFDA classes 21188 and 21189, and AFDA Express classes 20329 and 20331, described below, cover the content of websites.

Classes 1935 and 20329

AFDA 1935	Snapshot of agency's public website taken in accordance with National Archives policy on archiving websites	Retain as national archives
AFDA Express 20329	The following significant records: ... and Snapshot of agency's public website taken in accordance with National Archives policy on archiving websites.	Retain as national archives

Agencies should take snapshots of their entire website¹, at predetermined triggers. These triggers are determined by the agency in consultation with the National Archives of Australia and will vary between agencies. However, all agencies should take snapshots when there is major change to, or decommissioning of, the website. These snapshots are 'Retain as national archives' records (i.e. they have been assessed as having ongoing archival value) under AFDA class 1935. Once an agency has no further need of these snapshots, they may be transferred to the National Archives.

Agencies may choose to take more frequent snapshots of their websites for their own needs. When they are no longer needed for agency business these snapshots may be destroyed using the agency's Normal Administrative Practice (i.e. agency policy covered by section 24 of the Archives Act to dispose of records of transitory or ephemeral value).

Classes 1936 and 20337

AFDA 1936	Snapshots of agency's intranet site, extranet sites and websites hosted on behalf of other organisations taken in accordance with National Archives policy on archiving websites	Destroy when reference ceases
AFDA Express 20337	Records documenting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • routine operational administrative tasks supporting the function; and • publication activities, other than those covered in classes 20329 to 20336 	Destroy 7 years after action completed

Intranets and extranets are often repositories of information used by staff in their day-to-day work. The information they contain often exists elsewhere within the organisation, with a copy located for convenience on an intranet or extranet. For this reason, snapshots of intranets or extranets are not required to be retained beyond the business needs of the agency.

If there is material on intranets or extranets that is not captured elsewhere, that content should be treated as individual records and captured, classified and reviewed under the agency's own records authority or using AFDA class 21189 or class 20331 in AFDA Express (see below).

¹ The approach required to comply with taking a snapshot is subject to the technology used in the website and capabilities of the agency. For further information and guidance on taking snapshots of websites, please contact the National Archives of Australia.

Classes 21188 and 20329

AFDA 21188	Publications produced only in an electronic format on an agency's public website	Retain as national archives
AFDA Express 20329	The following significant records: ... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publications produced only in an electronic format on agency's public website; ... 	Retain as national archives

Classes 1935 and 1936 described above refer to a snapshot of the website as a whole and treat that snapshot as a record in itself. Classes 21188 and 21189, in contrast, cover the individual pieces of content within the website.

Class 21188 is for publications that are found solely in electronic format on a website and carry the same weight as 'formal' publications that would qualify for an ISBN. These publications are 'Retain as national archives' but it is assumed that they will be rare. For other content found on an agency's website it is recommended that Class 21189 be used.

Classes 21189 and 20331

AFDA 21189	Agency publications other than those paper publications lodged with the National Library of Australia (NLA) under legal deposit or electronic publications selected for preservation by the NLA's Pandora project (eg procedures, manuals and circulars)	Destroy according to disposal action directed under a relevant function in this Authority [AFDA] or an agency's RDA
AFDA Express 20331	Agency publications other than those paper publications lodged with the National Library of Australia (NLA) under legal deposit or electronic publications selected for preservation by the NLAs Pandora project (eg procedures, manuals and circulars).	Destroy according to disposal action directed under a relevant function in this Authority or an agency's RDA

Class 21189 covers the individual pieces of content within the website. The majority of an agency's website records will be covered by this class. It provides coverage for those records that make up the content of a website. The content, or individual documents, are classified and managed in accordance with the relevant class that they fall under in AFDA or in the agency's own records authority. These records will therefore have variable retention periods depending on their nature and their individual disposal coverage. It is important to note that they do not need to be kept as 'Retain as

national archives' unless the disposal action relevant to them specifies this action. This applies whether the information provided on a website is captured elsewhere within the agency or whether it exists solely on the website. However, if information is found only on a website and is subsequently removed, it is important that this information is then captured elsewhere in order to satisfy the applicable retention period.

Example of how the National Archives applies the AFDA classes to its own records

The National Archives of Australia provides advice on its website about 'managing records on mobile devices'. Applying Class 21189, the final copy of the advice is classified under *Information Management Standards and Operations – Advice* using the National Archives' own records authority which requires that the final version be retained as a national archive.

In this case, the final version of the advice is captured into the Archives' recordkeeping system until such time as it is transferred as a national archive.

If the advice existed only on the website, at the time it was decided to remove it from the website, it would need to be captured into the Archives' recordkeeping system for eventual transfer as a national archive.

Under Class 1935 the same advice on 'managing records on mobile devices' would also be routinely captured as a component of the agency website snapshots. The National Archives, based on its own risk assessment, only captures snapshots of its website at times of significant change.