



Australian Government



NATIONAL
ARCHIVES
OF AUSTRALIA

Why Records are Kept: Directions in Appraisal

National Archives of Australia

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CONTENTS

1.	FOREWORD	4
2.	WHY KEEP COMMONWEALTH RECORDS?	3
3.	WHY AREN'T ALL RECORDS RETAINED?	3
4.	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR RETENTION AND DISPOSAL DECISIONS?	4
5.	OUR APPROACH TO APPRAISAL	4
	Standard appraisal model	5
	Why use a functions-based approach?	6
	Importance of metadata	6
	The Archives' role	7
6.	SELECTION OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES	7
	Objectives	7
	Recordkeeping issues	10
7.	THE ARCHIVES' EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS FOR RECORDS CREATION AND MAINTENANCE	10
	Assessment of needs	11
	Expectations and requirements	11
8.	NOTES ON THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES' SELECTION OBJECTIVES	15
	Interpretation of objectives	15

FOREWORD

Appraisal is a process that identifies the need for records. The outcomes of appraisal are decisions and plans that set out the actions to be taken for the creation, capture, maintenance and disposal of records. The National Archives plays a key role in the appraisal of Commonwealth government records because our permission is required for disposal.

While our principal appraisal concern has been the determination of retention periods and disposal actions, we are now seeking to foster a more holistic approach to Commonwealth recordkeeping, including wider use of modern appraisal techniques. To do this, we are modifying our current approach to make it more relevant to the assessment of a broader range of recordkeeping needs.

We also need to address issues concerning which records should be regarded as national archives – those records that we most need to preserve. The application of our existing criteria has resulted in the retention of such large quantities of records that it is beyond our capacity to preserve them all and make them accessible. In 1998 we published the discussion paper *Making Choices: Deciding Which Records to Keep for Posterity*, (now archived) seeking views on this issue. Our deliberations have benefited from the views expressed and we wish to thank all who responded.

Why Records Are Kept: Directions in Appraisal outlines the appraisal framework we are adopting for Commonwealth records and our revised objectives and criteria for the selection of records as national archives.

Ross Gibbs

Director-General

WHY KEEP COMMONWEALTH RECORDS?

Commonwealth records are records of the Australian Federal Government and its agencies. They are an important, unique source of evidence and information about the nature of the Commonwealth Government and its activities. The creation, maintenance and accessibility of Commonwealth records are not only essential for the conduct of Commonwealth administration but also:

- assist the Government and the public to scrutinise the decisions and activities of Commonwealth institutions;
- allow the community to retain and transfer knowledge, learn from past experience, and protect the interests of Australians collectively and individually; and
- help satisfy people's interest in the decisions and actions of Government that affected their and previous generations' lives or shaped the development of Australia.

Commonwealth records, therefore, have the potential to benefit the Government and the community in a variety of ways.

Careful attention to recordkeeping from the outset is needed to realise the benefits that records can provide. We want to ensure that Australian Government agencies create full and accurate records of their activities and decisions, and maintain those records appropriately for as long as they are required. We will promote good recordkeeping to enhance the value of Commonwealth records as evidence for administrative purposes, accountability, and as a resource for research. We will provide agencies with standards and guidelines for good recordkeeping and information about our requirements for records creation and maintenance.

WHY AREN'T ALL RECORDS RETAINED?

Not all records are kept indefinitely. There are pragmatic reasons for this, and community attitudes to recordkeeping also play a part.

The Commonwealth creates vast quantities of records every year, and there is strong pressure to economise in the areas of records storage, maintenance and servicing. Most records are in formats that deteriorate over time or require constant vigilance to keep accessible. Attempting to preserve them all indefinitely would be prohibitively expensive and futile under current technological and resource constraints.

Just as important is the prevailing view, within the community, that not all records need to be retained; that it is acceptable or desirable to dispose of records when they are no longer required. This view is reflected in standard business practice and at all levels of public administration in Australia. The Government's funding for the management of Commonwealth records is premised on the assumption that only a very small proportion of all records created will be retained indefinitely.

In this environment the Archives operates on the general principle that Commonwealth records should not be retained longer than reasonably required.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR RETENTION AND DISPOSAL DECISIONS?

The Archives is responsible, under the Archives Act 1983, for ascertaining the archival resources of the Commonwealth – that is, determining which records continue to be required – and for authorising the disposal of Commonwealth records that are no longer required. The process of appraisal underpins both. The term ‘disposal’ covers the destruction, alteration and transfer of records out of Commonwealth custody or ownership. We also determine appraisal and disposal policy and procedures for Commonwealth records. Because of the scope of Commonwealth activity, Commonwealth organisations and the Archives have to share the overall workload of appraisal and disposal.

Deciding which records continue to be required, and which do not, raises a number of complex issues of theory and practice, such as:

- whose interests to take into account;
- whose interests should prevail;
- when to make decisions; and
- how to apply criteria and requirements, in practice, to existing and/or future records.

There appear to be no simple answers to some of these issues. Both appraisal and disposal carry with them degrees of risk and subjectivity.

OUR APPROACH TO APPRAISAL

We are introducing a new framework for appraisal, which we intend to use to regulate disposal. In so doing, we will try to ensure that the requirements for, and various interests in, Commonwealth records are taken into account and that records are authorised for disposal only after due consideration of the risks, benefits and costs.

This process will involve identifying the stakeholders with interests in Government functions and activities and associated records, and examining the risks of not meeting those interests. Where there are conflicting interests it will be necessary to weigh the case for maintaining the records against the case of other stakeholders who would want the records destroyed or otherwise disposed of. Our task is to make these judgements on behalf of the Government and the Australian community. We need to consider the resources available for storage and the other costs of maintaining records when evaluating stakeholders’ interests. We also need

to ensure that those records that are retained as national archives can benefit the wider community.

Overall, we are aiming for a balanced, accountable approach that is open to the range of uses that Commonwealth records have for different stakeholders over time. Faced with limited resources, however, we must set priorities for the preservation of records and make difficult decisions. We recognise that any record potentially has some value to someone, depending on the nature of that person's interest, and that perceptions of what is valuable may shift over time. It is inevitable that some records not selected for preservation will still be of interest to some people.

Standard appraisal model

We have adopted the model for appraisal in Standards Australia's Australian Standard for Records Management, AS ISO 15489 – 2002. This is a generic model that requires some adaptation for use in the Commonwealth.

The AS ISO 15489 model has several elements which we believe are now needed in the Commonwealth recordkeeping regime. These are:

- a top-down approach to appraisal, starting with an analysis of the functions and activities of organisations, as opposed to commencing appraisal with accumulations of records;
- assessment of the need for, and uses of, records before or from the point of their creation;
- consideration of the range of stakeholder interests in, and uses of, records;
- the use of risk management techniques in deciding which records to keep; and
- functions-based classification as the means of control over records creation, management and disposal, reducing the risks associated with sentencing by third parties at a later stage.

Under the model, emphasis is placed on developing an understanding of an organisation and its operating environment. The organisation's functions and activities are identified, analysed and classified, and the need for records is explored. Stakeholders with an interest in the functions and activities, or in the associated records, are also identified and mapped. From this platform, organisations can plan for the creation and capture of records in sound recordkeeping systems and also make arrangements for their maintenance, retention or disposal. Decisions about the need for records, including retention periods, are made with reference to:

- business needs;
- the requirements of organisational accountability; and
- community expectations.

The Archives' interpretation of these areas is set out in the statement 'The Archives' expectations and requirements for records creation and maintenance', which can be found later in this document.

Why use a functions-based approach?

We cannot review the need for records item by item – some form of grouping or classification has to be used. We have decided to base retention and disposal decisions on classes that reflect the functions and activities of Commonwealth organisations. We consider functional classification to be the most appropriate framework for appraisal because this form of classification has clear links to the administrative context in which records are created and used, and can be applied during current use by people who understand the purpose and status of the records.

All Commonwealth records are generated and used in the course of administering functions and activities. This relationship, which exists from creation and throughout a record's existence, provides a consistent basis for developing retention and disposal arrangements across the Commonwealth. By tying appraisal and disposal to functional classification, we hope to encourage Australian Government organisations to use their classification schemes to implement further aspects of AS ISO 15489. It will also provide us with a useful basis for monitoring the extent and nature of disposal authority coverage within organisations and across the Commonwealth, because the classification schemes provide a meaningful reference point that is external to the records themselves.

Importance of metadata

For the appraisal model to succeed, however, records must be conspicuously and permanently linked to the functions and activities to which they relate. Anyone who has experienced the process of sentencing (that is, matching real records to authorised retention/disposal classes) is aware that this process is not always straightforward. It can also be a relatively high-risk process: a great deal depends on the skills and experience of the people whose job it is to interpret the classes and recognise the relevant records. If we can bring about a closer alignment between retention and disposal classes and the way records are created and classified by using a functions-based classification scheme, the sentencing process will be easier and the outcomes more predictable.

Classification schemes based on functions may not align well with the topics or themes people are interested in. As we intend sentencing using functions-based disposal classes to become the norm, we will only request sentencing on the basis of the subject or thematic content of records where there is good cause and a reasonable prospect of success. Electronic systems with sophisticated search capabilities may help to identify and sentence records retrospectively using such non-functions-based parameters as subjects or themes. However, this will depend on information about the subject or theme being included in the records themselves

or specifically referenced in descriptive data (metadata) or indexing information about the records.

The attachment of effective classification and descriptive data to electronic records during their administrative use is crucial for those records' proper interpretation and subsequent management. Efforts to appraise and sentence electronic records at any stage, but particularly after current administrative use has ceased, will be unsatisfactory or futile if essential information about their administrative context is not documented adequately or has not been properly maintained. Agency staff are in the best position to know their records and how they relate to particular transactions and, therefore, to document their context in this way.

The Archives' role

Under the new appraisal model, we will continue to exercise our statutory responsibility for authorising disposal. We will issue disposal authorities when we are satisfied that our requirements have been met and we have the consent of the Australian Government organisation or organisations concerned. Classes of records that must be retained will also be mentioned in these authorities, which are generally available for public inspection.

We will inform organisations of our objectives and criteria for the selection of national archives. Where appropriate we will consult stakeholders and undertake our own investigations as part of the appraisal process. As in the past, we must rely heavily on Australian Government organisations to identify those of their records that are, or could be, national archives and to manage them appropriately while in their custody.

SELECTION OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES

We have identified five objectives which appraisers must take into account when considering whether records should be regarded as national archives. Records selected as national archives should contribute to meeting one or more of these objectives. The objectives apply to records in any format.

In setting the objectives, we acknowledge a community view that Commonwealth records may have value or significance in a variety of contexts, and that we should not pursue narrow selection policies. Accordingly, we will maintain our position that records may be selected as national archives because of their administrative or functional significance or because they are significant or useful in other contexts. However, the scope of our statutory role requires that our foremost consideration be the relevance of records to documenting Commonwealth activity.

Objectives

The records identified under the objectives, together, should provide an adequate account of the activities concerned, the authority under which they were carried out

by the Commonwealth and Commonwealth institutions, how implementation was effected, who was involved and affected, and the nature and extent of the outcomes. The first four objectives relate to functional context: governing Australia and its people. The fifth objective takes in records which may have significance in other contexts.

Our first objective is:

To preserve concise evidence of the deliberations, decisions and actions of the Commonwealth and Commonwealth institutions relating to key functions and programs and significant issues faced in governing Australia.

In relation to this objective we will concentrate on Commonwealth records that provide the best evidence of decisions and activities that relate to issues affecting the nation as a whole. The records selected will include those that document the background to, basis for and outcomes of those decisions and activities.

The significance of functions, programs, issues and associated decisions and actions will be assessed in relation to:

- how critical they are, or were, in the administration of the Commonwealth or Commonwealth institutions; and
- their actual or potential influence or impact (whether positive or negative) on Australian and world affairs.

Assessments of significance will be imputed to the relevant records. Where the functions and activities of Commonwealth institutions regularly intersect with high profile or significant issues, all records generated in the undertaking of the function may be retained.

Our second objective is:

To preserve evidence of the source of authority, foundation and machinery of the Commonwealth and Commonwealth institutions.

We will focus on records that underpin the structure and functioning of the Commonwealth and Commonwealth institutions and define the nature and extent of their jurisdictions, obligations and powers.

Our third objective is:

To preserve records containing information that is considered essential for the protection and future well-being of Australians and their environment.

We would expect such records to comprise unique, irreplaceable information that is needed by national governments now and, probably, in perpetuity for effective planning, decision-making and transfer of knowledge in matters such as health and safety, security, social cohesion and environmental management. The capacity of records to be used for these purposes should be clearly evident.

Our fourth objective is:

To preserve records that have a special capacity to illustrate the condition and status of Australia and its people, the impact of Commonwealth government activities on them, and the interaction of people with the government.

This objective will focus on records that exemplify or characterise the implementation and impact of major government functions and programs. These records may embrace both routine and exceptional cases, including personal case records. Complete runs of case records may be preserved where it is evident that the government functions and programs to which they relate were, or are, of great significance in the government or development of Australia, or to the community.

Our fifth objective is:

To preserve records that have substantial capacity to enrich knowledge and understanding of aspects of Australia's history, society, culture and people.

Although Commonwealth records arise from and document government activity, their significance may lie in contexts other than their functional context. For example, a Commonwealth record documenting the routine approval of a construction project may concern a building that is later renowned for its architectural significance. The significance of the record, here, largely derives from its associations outside and beyond government.

We will take into account assessments by appraisers and stakeholders as to the significance that Commonwealth records may have because of their association with events, phenomena, persons, places or themes. Beyond functional context, we will select as national archives only those Commonwealth records that we are convinced have the highest levels of historical, social, aesthetic, scientific, research or technical significance. Preference will be given to records that can provide a broad community benefit.

In addition, some types of records may be kept because the Australian community holds them, or the information they contain, in high esteem. This may be evident, for example, from continuing high usage rates or by the community expressing its concerns to the responsible authorities.

Recordkeeping issues

There are several recordkeeping issues, some of them of a technical nature, which may also affect the Archives' decisions concerning preservation and disposal of records. If records have serious technical defects, such as being unreliable, incomplete or inaccessible, we may decide to destroy them.

Other factors being equal, we will give preservation priority to records that are technically good records; that is, they are complete, reliable, authentic and accessible. The existence of adequate information about the organisational, functional and recordkeeping contexts of records will be an important consideration. Evidence of recordkeeping strategies that comply with AS ISO 15489 and meet the requirements of full and accurate records will also be a factor. The areas that we will assess include:

- provenance/authenticity – whether records are what they purport to be;
- integrity and completeness – whether records have been securely maintained to prevent deliberate or accidental unauthorised access, alteration or removal, and whether they have context and structure as well as content;
- accessibility and useability;
- preservation feasibility – whether it is technically possible to prevent or control unwanted alteration or deterioration;
- recordkeeping relationships and dependencies – for example, where records depend on the existence of other records or materials to render them accessible and meaningful; and
- maintenance risks (including costs).

We will be using these criteria and the five selection objectives to guide appraisal decision-making. This will be within the framework of the appraisal model suggested by AS ISO 15489, so all records should be maintained for as long as they are required to meet business needs, accountability requirements and community expectations, even if they are not selected as national archives.

THE ARCHIVES' EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS FOR RECORDS CREATION AND MAINTENANCE

The National Archives has adopted Standards Australia's Australian Standard for Records Management, AS ISO 15489 – 2002, as the general appraisal model for Commonwealth records. We have the role of authorising body mentioned in the standard in regard to the disposal of Commonwealth records.

Under this appraisal model, we expect government agencies to:

- comply with legislation, standards and accountability requirements to create and retain records;

- analyse the recordkeeping requirements of their business activities comprehensively and keep those analyses up-to-date;
- document their decisions not to maintain records in accordance with identified recordkeeping requirements;
- capture adequate records in recordkeeping systems; and
- maintain adequate records in those systems in accessible form for the agreed retention periods, migrating them between systems as required.

Appraisal is, therefore, broader than identifying values and retention periods to be applied to records once they exist. In the new appraisal model the need for records should be considered in relation to stakeholders' interests and resources, including the need to make records and maintain them in accessible condition to meet business needs, the requirements of organisational accountability and community expectations. Appraisal should be conducted within a framework of functional analysis and underpinned by business classification schemes.

Agencies must submit documentary evidence of the analysis of their business activities, including appraisal aspects, before we will consider disposal authorisation. The documentation should also be available for audit and monitoring purposes.

Assessment of needs

There are three broad areas for Commonwealth organisations to consider when researching and assessing the need to create, capture, maintain or dispose of records. They are:

- business needs;
- the requirements of organisational accountability; and
- community expectations.

The same record may fulfil more than one need, eg both a business need and an accountability requirement.

The principal assessment technique to be used is risk management, specifically looking at the risks of not meeting identified requirements for records. Legal compliance issues must be given due consideration when applying risk management principles. Cost-benefit analyses may also be used.

Expectations and requirements

We cannot specify in detail the particular needs for records that organisations may have, because these needs are principally identified during the research and analysis phase. However, the three broad areas (business needs, accountability requirements and community expectations) can be broken down further and considered in relation to the need to create or capture records and the need to

maintain or dispose of records. Also, the Australian Standard for Records Management sets out some standards that should be applied in relation to particular types of transactions.

We expect Commonwealth organisations, in relation to their functions and activities, to identify stakeholders and analyse requirements to create, capture, maintain and dispose of records. The results should be recorded in a formal recordkeeping requirements document. (For information about documenting recordkeeping requirements, see *Designing and Implementing Recordkeeping Systems: Manual for Commonwealth Agencies, Step C*).

The Archives has taken responsibility for identifying the need for records in relation to the general administrative functions included in the Keyword AAA classification scheme.

Business needs

We will interpret 'business needs' as an organisation's need for records to support the efficient and effective performance of its operational and housekeeping functions, more or less free from the constraints of regulatory requirements or community pressures. Business needs would also include consideration of records required for the strategic positioning and survival of an organisation. The organisation, the business areas, and its officers, in this context, are the sole stakeholders.

Create/capture

We expect organisations to make records as necessary:

- for the efficient and effective performance of the organisation's current functions and activities, eg records of the policies, directives and procedures in force at a given time, and records of information upon which subsequent action relies;
- to protect the financial, legal and other interests of the organisation; and
- where not having appropriate records would constitute a moderate or higher risk of poor or inconsistent performance, or loss of continuity.

Maintain/dispose

We expect Commonwealth organisations to maintain records in accessible form for as long as needed to meet their operational needs.

When authorising disposal, we usually accept an organisation's recommendations in relation to business needs, provided the organisation can demonstrate that its appraisal process took all internal stakeholders' needs into account. Where there are no accountability or community interests at stake in relation to particular functions and activities, we may give organisations discretion to tailor disposal arrangements to meet changing business needs. Existing disposal authorities which give permission to destroy records should not be implemented while there is a continuing business need for the records concerned.

We may authorise destruction or other disposal on the basis of a future date or event on or after which the organisation says that its business needs will expire or reduce to a point where the risks of disposal are low, or it is not cost-effective to retain the records.

Requirements of organisational accountability

We will interpret these requirements primarily as an organisation's legal or formal obligations to make, keep, or retain records; plus any requirements imposed by stakeholders such as recognised controlling, audit or monitoring authorities; plus any standards or codes of practice to which an organisation openly claims it subscribes. The requirements of organisational accountability include the requirements specified by the Archives for Commonwealth recordkeeping and the retention of records as national archives.

Create/capture

We expect Commonwealth organisations to make records:

- to meet internal accountability needs, ie to allow reasonable scrutiny and analysis of programs, systems, use of resources and activities of employees (including managers) by organisation management, for the purposes of management and to help meet external stakeholders' requirements;
- to meet regulatory requirements, eg where records are required by law to be created or kept, or are required by a recognised controlling, audit or monitoring authority to which the organisation is subject;
- that are required by standards, codes and practices the organisation is obliged to meet or has voluntarily adopted; and
- where not having appropriate records would constitute a moderate or higher risk of being unable to account to relevant regulatory bodies for the decisions, actions, resource use or standard of performance of the organisation.

Note that accountability to the Parliament, Ministers, the Courts, statutory bodies and the community depends to a large degree on the existence of records which document administrative decisions and actions, the reasons for them and decision-making processes that were followed. The points at which major or non-routine decisions are taken in relation to policy or implementation in relation to any function should be especially well documented and recorded together with any supporting material needed to understand the matter.

Maintain/dispose

We expect Commonwealth organisations to maintain records in accessible form if:

- there is a law or other instrument that says or implies that they must be kept and/or maintained for a defined period of time (while within that period), but no longer than the maximum retention period specified by a law;
- it is reasonable to believe that the records may be required for a judicial proceeding;
- destruction or disposal would compromise existing or future claims in relation to the rights and entitlements of persons with whom the organisation or its predecessors has dealt, where those rights and entitlements are known or projected at the time of appraisal;
- destruction or disposal would damage the organisation or the Commonwealth;
- the Archive's permission is required to dispose of the records and such permission has not been communicated in writing (as required by law), or an earlier permission has been rescinded;
- the records belong to a class of records, however based, that has been nominated by the Archives as needing to be retained in the public interest as national archives.

We will not knowingly authorise disposal, and existing authorities should not be implemented, while formal processes are in train or pending to see or use the records concerned. The Archives may authorise destruction or other disposal on the basis of a future date or event on or after which accountability requirements are expected to expire.

Community expectations

We will interpret a community expectation as being a widely held view of acceptable or appropriate practice in relation to recordkeeping at the time of any analysis of requirements. The view must also be well known or readily discoverable within the community. Such a view may be in advance of legal or other accountability requirements. It also may be at odds with current or previous practice. The 'community' concerned may consist of stakeholders such as the relevant industry sector, the general community, or groups within the community to which the organisation has special responsibility in carrying out its functions and activities.

Create/capture

We expect Commonwealth organisations to make records where a community expectation has been identified and where not having appropriate records would pose a moderate or higher risk of damage to the organisation. Such damage may come, for example, from a public relations perspective, or because the organisation would be unable to account adequately to the community for the decisions, actions, resource use or standard of performance of the organisation.

Maintain/dispose

We expect Commonwealth organisations to maintain records in accessible form if they are aware of a community expectation that records relating to their functions or activities should or will be retained and there is a moderate or higher risk of damage to the organisation, the Commonwealth or the public were disposal to proceed.

NOTES ON THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES' SELECTION OBJECTIVES

These notes provide information about the objectives that underpin the selection of Commonwealth records as national archives and their interpretation. The notes will also contain a list of topics of particular interest to the Archives and its users, when available.

The types of records listed under the objectives are indicative only: the objectives and other criteria should be used to assist in framing and assessing retention and disposal recommendations for particular cases. Our determinations and descriptions of the records concerned will be included in retention and disposal authorities.

We will update these notes periodically in the light of experience.

Interpretation of objectives

Objective 1

Context: Governing Australia and its people.

To preserve concise evidence of the deliberations, decisions and actions of the Commonwealth and Commonwealth institutions relating to key functions and programs and significant issues faced in governing Australia.

Records being sought

This objective relates to records which provide the best evidence of:

- major decisions in relation to a function, especially those that are made on behalf of the nation or which have national application or implications, signal a new or changed policy, or involve substantial expenditure; including records that reveal the background to, and reasoning behind, decisions and actions;
- the means and manner of implementation of major decisions, eg through the formulation of policies, procedures and strategies.

The significance of functions, programs and issues, and associated decisions and actions, should be assessed according to:

- how critical they are, or were, in the administration of the Commonwealth or Commonwealth institutions; and

- their actual or potential influence or impact (whether positive or negative) on Australian and world affairs.

The following factors should be considered when assessing significance. The greater the magnitude of the influence or impact of the factor, the more important the records should be considered for archival purposes.

- Economic impact
- Environmental impact
- Extent of profound changes to lives of individuals, families or communities
- Extent of the population affected in a general way
- Government expenditure or commitment
- International reaction
- Political or legal ramifications
- Public reaction or sensitivity
- Significance to defence and national security
- Social impact

In relation to a substantive function of a Commonwealth institution, activities likely to give rise to such records include:

- formulating, determining and interpreting policy and procedures;
- rejecting or diverting from higher level policy;
- monitoring and analysing policy and procedures;
- reviewing, interpreting and developing legislation;
- negotiating and committing to high-level treaties or agreements;
- negotiating and committing to major or innovative contracts; and
- strategic management of an organisation and its functions.

Objective 2

Context: Governing Australia and its people.

To preserve evidence of the source of authority, foundation and machinery of the Commonwealth and Commonwealth institutions.

Records being sought

This objective relates to the most authoritative formal instruments that underpin the existence of the Commonwealth and Commonwealth institutions and define the nature and extent of their jurisdictions, functions, obligations and powers.

Activities likely to give rise to such records include:

- passing and promulgating legislation;
- authorising the establishment, functions and operations of a Commonwealth institution or of a major office;
- authorising changes to the functions or operations of, or the disestablishment of, a Commonwealth institution or a major office;
- delegating legal authority to perform duties and functions; and
- making judgements or rulings in relation to jurisdiction and powers.

Objective 3

Context: Governing Australia and its people.

To preserve records containing information that is considered essential for the protection and future well-being of Australians and their environment.

Records being sought

This objective relates to records comprising unique, irreplaceable information that is needed by national governments now and probably in perpetuity for effective planning, decision-making and transfer of knowledge in matters such as health and safety, security, social cohesion and environmental management. The records and the information they contain should have a clear role in transferring vital knowledge for the benefit of future generations.

This objective relates to continuing, ultra long-term administrative needs.

Activities likely to give rise to such records include:

- identifying and monitoring toxic sites;
- recording the status of persons in relation to rights, entitlements and obligations that historically have had very long-term administrative and/or social relevance, eg land ownership and citizenship;
- recording of data on the spread and control of diseases or biological agents; and
- recording of environmental observational data.

Objective 4

Context: Governing Australia and its people.

To preserve records that have a special capacity to illustrate the condition and status of Australia and its people, the impact of Commonwealth government activities on them, and the interaction of people with the government.

Records being sought

This objective relates to records that exemplify or characterise the implementation and impact of major government functions and programs, and records that show the nature and extent of Commonwealth government intervention in people's lives and the interaction of people with the government.

This may include records:

- identifying the persons, groups or areas affected by the implementation of policy decisions (whether positively or negatively);
- of individual cases, to the extent necessary to indicate the nature of routine and non-routine implementation; and
- of the outcomes of the decisions and their implementation, whether successful or unsuccessful, eg through statistical analyses, reports, reviews, precedents and amendments.
- Complete runs of case records may be preserved where it is evident that the government functions and programs to which they relate were, or are, of great significance in the government or development of Australia, or to the community.

Activities likely to give rise to such records include:

- documenting the progress of significant infrastructure and development projects;
- documenting aspects of life and conditions, eg to inform policy making or for historical or propaganda purposes;
- inquiring into, reviewing, reporting on or studying issues, policies and actions;
- processing representations or appeals;
- surveying, polling or consulting the community or interest groups on policy proposals and changes;
- auditing performance; and
- informing or educating the public or sections of the community with a view to influencing their behaviour and practices, eg through advertising campaigns.

Objective 5

Context: Principally other, non-government related contexts.

To preserve records that have substantial capacity to enrich knowledge and understanding of aspects of Australia's history, society, culture and people.

This objective should be kept in mind when assessing the significance or uses that records may have outside their functional context. It is not necessary to make assessments in relation to this objective if the records or class of records concerned are being retained under any of the other objectives.

Significance statements, where prepared and submitted by appraisers or interested persons, should identify the records concerned as clearly as possible and follow generally accepted approaches for assessing cultural significance. Archives' delegates should select as national archives only those Commonwealth records that they are convinced have the highest levels of historical, social, aesthetic, scientific, research or technical significance. Preference is to be given to records that can provide a broad community benefit.

Records being sought

This objective relates to records that:

- constitute a rich, concise source of genealogical information not readily available elsewhere; or
- shed light on significant events, phenomena, persons, places or themes in Australian history and society.
- Topics of archival interest
- A list of topics of particular interest to the Archives and its users will be prepared from the findings of our research projects. A topic may relate to any of the selection objectives. The presence of a topic on the list would indicate that the topic has been perennially popular with, or is currently in strong demand by, our clients. The expectations of clients and the risks that not meeting these expectations would pose to the achievement of the Archives' corporate goals need to be considered in the appraisal process.