



Australian Government

National Archives of Australia

Records Authority

2025/00922141

Federal Executive Council

Business Management

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

2025



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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	4
APPLICATION OF THIS AUTHORITY	4
CONTACT INFORMATION	5
AUTHORISATION	6
FEDERAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL BUSINESS MANAGEMENT.....	7

INTRODUCTION

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) and the National Archives of Australia have developed this records authority to set out the requirements for keeping or destroying records for the core business of Federal Executive Council Business Management. It represents a significant commitment on behalf of PM&C to understand, create and manage the records of its activities.

This authority is based on the identification and analysis of the business of PM&C. It takes into account the agency's legal and organisational information management requirements, and the interests of stakeholders, the agency and the National Archives.

The authority sets out those records that need to be retained as national archives and specifies the minimum length of time that temporary records need to be kept. This authority gives PM&C permission under the *Archives Act 1983*, for the destruction of the temporary records described after the minimum retention period has expired. Retention periods for these temporary records are based on: an assessment of business needs; broader organisational accountability requirements; and community expectations and are approved by the National Archives on the basis of information provided by the agency.

As changes in circumstances may affect future information management requirements, the periodic review of this authority is recommended. All amendments must be approved by the National Archives.

APPLICATION OF THIS AUTHORITY

1. This authority is to be used to determine how long records must be kept. Records are matched to the relevant core business and records class in the authority.
 - where the minimum retention period has expired and the records are not needed for PM&C business they should be destroyed as authorised in this authority
 - records that have not reached the minimum retention period must be kept until they do
 - records that are identified as 'retain as national archives' are to be transferred to the National Archives for preservation.
2. This authority permits the former Great Seal of Australia to be defaced as part of its decommissioning after a new Great Seal is formally issued. Only after decommissioning are the negative and positive dies of the former Great Seal to be transferred to the National Archives.
3. This authority should be used in conjunction with general records authorities such as:
 - [*Administrative Functions Disposal Authority \(AFDA\) Express Version 2*](#) issued by the National Archives to cover business processes and records common to Australian Government agencies; and
 - [*General Records Authority 31 - Destruction of source or original records after digitisation, conversion or migration*](#) (2015).
4. The normal administrative practice (NAP) provision of the *Archives Act 1983* gives agencies permission to destroy certain records without formal authorisation. This usually occurs where records are duplicated, facilitative or for short-term use only. NAP does not replace arrangements agreed to in this authority but can be used as a tool to assist in identifying records for destruction together with an agency's records authority or authorities, and with *AFDA Express Version 2*. The National Archives recommends that agencies develop and implement a NAP policy. Advice and guidance on destroying records as a normal administrative practice and on how to develop a NAP policy is available from the National Archives' website at www.naa.gov.au.

5. Records that are reasonably likely to be needed as evidence in a current or future judicial proceeding or are subject to a request for access under the *Archives Act 1983*, the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* or any other relevant act must not be destroyed until the action has been completed.
6. Records subject to a disposal freeze must not be destroyed until the freeze has been lifted. Further information about disposal freezes and whether they affect the application of this authority is available from the National Archives website at www.naa.gov.au.
7. Where the method of recording information changes (for example from an analogue system to a digital system, or when information is migrated from one system to a new system) this authority can still be applied, providing the records document the same core business. The information must be accessible for the period of time prescribed in this authority. PM&C will need to maintain continuing access to the information, including digital information, for the periods prescribed in this records authority or until the information is transferred into the custody of the National Archives.
8. In general, retention requirements indicate a minimum period for retention. PM&C may extend minimum retention periods if it considers that there is an administrative need to do so, without further reference to the National Archives. Where PM&C believes that its accountability will be substantially compromised because a retention period or periods are not adequate, it should contact the National Archives for review of the retention period.
9. Records identified within the 'retain as national archives' class in this authority have been determined to be part of the archival resources of the Commonwealth under section 3C of the *Archives Act 1983*. The determination of Commonwealth records as archival resources of the Commonwealth obliges agencies to transfer the records to the National Archives when they cease to be current and, in any event, within 15 years of the records coming into existence, under section 27 of the *Archives Act 1983*.
10. Records in the care of agencies should be appropriately stored, managed and preserved. Agencies need to meet this obligation to ensure that the records remain authentic and accessible over time. Under Section 31 of the *Archives Act 1983*, access arrangements are required for records that become available for public access including those records that remain in agency custody.
11. Appropriate arrangements should be made with the National Archives when records are to be transferred into custody. The National Archives accepts for transfer only those records designated as national archives. Records created digitally after 1 January 2016 can be transferred in digital formats only.
12. Advice on how to use this authority is available from the PM&C information manager. If there are problems with the application of the authority that cannot be resolved, please contact the National Archives.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For assistance with this authority or for advice on other information management matters, please contact National Archives' [Agency Service Centre](#).

AUTHORISATION

Records Authority 2025/00922141

Notice of authorisation

Person to whom notice of authorisation is given:

Dr Steven Kennedy PSM
Secretary
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
Andrew Fisher Building
1 National Circuit
Barton ACT 2600

Purpose

Authorises arrangements for the disposal of records in accordance with Section 24(2)(b) of the *Archives Act 1983*.

Authorises arrangements for the alteration of records over 15 years old in accordance with Section 26(2)(b) of the *Archives Act 1983* as described in the Application notes of this Authority.

Determines records classed as 'retain as national archives' in this records authority to be part of the archival resources of the Commonwealth under section 3C of the *Archives Act 1983*.

Application

All records relating to Federal Executive Council Business Management.

Authority

This authority gives permission for the destruction, retention or transfer to the National Archives of Australia of the records described. This authority will apply only with the consent of the agency currently responsible for the business documented in the records described.

This document has been authorised through a digital workflow [R1414682025]

Authorising Officer	Date of issue
Simon Froude Director-General National Archives of Australia	9 January 2026

Federal Executive Council Business Management

The core business of managing and supporting the provision of Ministerial advice to the Governor-General to authorise actions of the executive government. Ministers are appointed members of the Federal Executive Council by the Governor-General on the advice of the Prime Minister. The Federal Executive Council is the formal, constitutional and legal body whose members – Executive Councillors – advise the Governor-General for the approval of Ministerial recommendations to do something — for example, to make a regulation, ratify a treaty, or appoint a person to a position. Authorising these Executive actions is known as exercising the constitutional powers of the 'Governor-General in Council'.

The secretariat of the Federal Executive Council supports the processes involved in bringing matters before the Council. These processes ensure that Ministers' actions are documented and legally and constitutionally valid, and that the documentation, process and presentation requirements of the Governor-General and Executive Councillors are met.

The **core activities** include:

- convening and co-ordinating meetings
- preparing documentation for Federal Executive Council meetings
- advising the Governor-General on Federal Executive Council matters
- authorising actions under powers vested in the Governor-General in Council by the Constitution and legislation
- using, maintaining and decommissioning the Commonwealth of Australia's Great Seal.

Operational activities of the Secretariat of the Federal Executive Council include:

- assuring the quality of documentation of Ministerial recommendations to the Governor-General
- providing advice on Executive Council practices and requirements, in particular on the presentation of documents for the Executive Council, including the drafting and circulation of procedural circulars and the production of the Federal Executive Council Handbook
- liaising with the Official Secretary to the Governor-General and with Ministers' offices on Executive Council arrangements
- maintaining the records of the Executive Council
- managing and providing access to records of the Executive Council
- maintaining the Register of Civil Patents (a chronological list of commissions, other than Defence Force commissions, issued under letters patent)
- programming and providing secretariat support for meetings of the Executive Council including special meetings or where the Governor-General is in Australia but unavailable to attend, e.g. urgent meetings, 'three Minister' meetings
- preparing (agenda) 'blue' briefs

The performance of the core business is supported by **general activities** such as:

- ensuring that the documentation, process and presentation requirements of the Governor-General and Executive Councillors are met
- developing, implementing and reviewing processes, systems and procedures designed to support the Federal Executive Council
- liaising with stakeholders such as Executive Council Liaison Officers, Legislation business area of PM&C, Office of Parliamentary Counsel and other agencies,
- managing and responding to enquiries from Departments
- identifying, assessing and managing risk

Cross references to AFDA Express Version 2

For the master set of media releases, addresses and speeches made by the Vice-President of the Federal Executive Council or other Federal Executive Council members, use EXTERNAL RELATIONS.

For the development of high-level reports (e.g. annual reports, formal reports on the core business provided to the Government), use EXTERNAL RELATIONS.

For managing the agency's financial resources in the performance of its functions, use FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT.

For engaging the services of contractors and/or external consultants, and for the acquisition of goods, use PROCUREMENT.

For managing copyright arrangements for published reports, and for design, production and distribution of publications, excluding the Federal Executive Council Handbook, use PUBLICATION.

Cross references to all other records authorities

For the Departmental development of draft Federal Executive Council documentation for the Federal Executive Council, including meeting scheduling, use the relevant Retain as national archives classes in relevant records authorities issued to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

For records documenting the design, authorisation, production and replacement of the Great Seal of Australia and its predecessors, excluding the maintenance, use and decommissioning of the Great Seal, use the relevant Retain as national archives classes in relevant records authorities issued to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

For records documenting interactions between Ministers and the Prime Minister that have not been received by the Federal Executive Council Secretariat nor incorporated into the records of the Department of the Prime Minister & Cabinet, use General Records Authority 38 – Ministers of State – Ministerial Office and Portfolio Management.

For records documenting interactions between the Prime Minister and the Governor General or their offices that have not been received by the Federal Executive Council Secretariat, use General Records Authority 38 – Ministers of State – Ministerial Office and Portfolio Management.

For records documenting interactions between the Prime Minister and the Secretary to the Federal Executive Council that have not been received by the Federal Executive Council Secretariat, use General Records Authority 38 – Ministers of State – Ministerial Office and Portfolio Management.

For records documenting interactions between the Secretary to the Federal Executive Council and the Governor General that have not been received by the Federal Executive Council Secretariat, use Governor-General Support (2016/00476161)

Classes

Class no	Description of records	Disposal action
63297	<p>Records documenting the exercise of the powers of the Governor-General in Council including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • proclamations • regulations and ordinances • appointments, terminations and commissions of statutory offices, boards, commissions, courts, tribunals, diplomatic posts and the commissioning of officers in the Australian Defence Force • changes to the Administrative Arrangements Orders • writs for the election of Members of the House of Representatives and Senators for the Territories • approval of compulsory land acquisitions • approving Australia's international treaty actions, including signing, ratifying, amending, termination or withdrawal • government borrowings overseas • grants of land to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples • the issue of Treasury Notes and Commonwealth Inscribed Stock, and • issue of letters patent regarding Royal Commissions. <p>Final records documenting Federal Executive Council meetings including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formal minutes signed by the responsible Minister or Parliamentary secretary, recommending that the Governor-General take the desired action • explanatory memoranda describing the legal basis for action to be taken and providing a description of that action and the reason for taking it, initialled by the responsible Minister or Parliamentary secretary • formal instruments, (e.g. regulations, appointment instruments (where kept), or proclamations) approved by the Governor-General and countersigned by the responsible Minister or Parliamentary secretary. Includes associated information such as appendices and presentations • schedules of meetings– business lists or agenda; and approved record of meeting proceedings • attendance roster 	Retain as national archives

Class no	Description of records	Disposal action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • master set of meeting agenda documentation, including (agenda) 'blue' briefs prepared by the Secretariat <p>Records documenting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • requests for special Federal Executive Council meetings, including reasons for request • permission advice from the Governor-General to hold Executive Council meetings; • requests in writing for the withdrawal of items and for alteration of documentation for Executive Council meetings; • requests and approvals for consideration of late items including reasons for request; • first draft documents provided to the Secretariat with any mark-up comments • documents cleared through the Secretariat before finalisation for Ministerial signature, with any mark-up comments • major drafts and final versions of manuals, handbooks and procedures that provide guidance and direction for the management of Federal Executive Council business e.g. Executive Council circulars, the Federal Executive Council Handbook, <i>[For advice on the application of guidance and direction described by the content of manuals, handbooks and procedures, use class 63298]</i> • summary datasets, indices and registers e.g. Register of Civil Patents <p>Records documenting the maintenance, use and decommissioning of the Great Seal of Australia and its predecessors. Includes: negative and positive dies of each decommissioned Great Seal, and associated instruments of authorisation. Excludes records documenting the design, authorisation, production and replacement of the Great Seal of Australia and its predecessors.</p> <p><i>Note: refer to Application Note 2.</i></p>	
63298	<p>Records documenting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • routine operational administrative tasks supporting the function 	Destroy 7 years after last action

Class no	Description of records	Disposal action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">core Federal Executive Council Business Management activities, other than those covered in class 63297	