

SUBJECT: <i>INFORMATION MANAGEMENT POLICY</i>	FILE NO:	ADM/0300, ADM/0900
ADOPTED BY COUNCIL ON:	MINUTE NO:	
AMENDED BY COUNCIL ON:	MINUTE NO:	

### 1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance and direction on the creation and management of information and records and to clarify staff and elected members' responsibilities. Flinders Council is committed to establishing and maintaining information and records management practices that meet its business needs, accountability requirements and stakeholder expectations.

The benefits of compliance with this policy will be trusted information and records that are well described, stored in known locations and accessible to staff and clients when needed.

### 2. Policy Statement

Flinders Council's information and records are a corporate asset, vital both for ongoing operations and also in providing valuable evidence of business decisions, activities and transactions.

All agency records must be managed and maintained regardless of their format in an information management system. All agency staff are required to create and maintain authentic, reliable and useable information, documents and records, and protect their integrity for as long as they are required through:

- Ensuring that full and accurate records are created and maintained for each business process followed in the agency;
- Preserving records, whether hard copy or electronic, safely and securely;
- Ensuring that electronic records are saved and stored in the agency's recordkeeping system, with appropriate naming conventions used to enable their efficient retrieval and use;
- Ensuring records are accessible over time to support the conduct of business, and that they are only retained for as long as required by the agency and relevant legislation; and
- Assigning responsibilities for recordkeeping in the agency.

The agency aspires to proactively implement systems and processes which will enable records and information to be stored in an electronic format wherever possible. All practices and procedures concerning records management within the Flinders Council must be in accordance with this Policy.

### 3. Scope

This policy applies to the management and maintenance of records through their life cycle from creation, receipt or capture, to preservation and disposal under the provision of the *Archives Act 1983*. It includes records in any format held in the

agency's information systems. This policy covers the work practices of staff, elected members and consultants who:

- Create information;
- Access information;
- Have responsibility for information including storage, retrieval, dissemination and disposal;
- Have management responsibilities for officers engaged in any of these activities; and
- Manage or have design input into information technology infrastructure.

The key distinction between agency records and other types of information is that records provide evidence of business activities (refer to 'Definitions' section in this document for definition of a record). Records exist in a variety of formats including, but not limited to paper documents, electronic messages, word processed letters, web-pages, information in databases, photographs, film, charts etc. Regardless of format, records must be created, captured, maintained, secured and disposed of in accordance with the requirements of this Policy (refer to 'Requirements' section in this document).

#### 4. Goals

The goals of this Policy are:

- to ensure effective agency records management, covering the creation and maintenance of authentic, reliable and useable records;
- to ensure the agency's records support the accountability and transparency of its business functions and activities for as long as those records are required;
- to provide evidence of the agency's commitment to best practice records management;
- to set out the responsibilities of staff and elected members, clarifying their accountability for records and information management (refer to 'Responsibilities' section in this document); and
- to ensure that records and information management is done in accordance with our business and legislative requirements

#### 5. Relevant Legislation

State legislation and Australian Standards have been adopted as a requirement and code of best practice for the management of information and records within Council. They provide details of the conditions and standards by which information management and recordkeeping practices at Council will be guided.

The following information provides an overview of key standards and legislation applicable to Council:

*Archives Act 1983* establishes the requirement for Tasmanian government agencies to create and keep State records.

AS:ISO-15489.1 – Information and Documentation – Records Management provides clear guidelines for the establishment and application of records management

practices, procedures and systems that have been incorporated into information management programs.

*Corporations Act 2001* defines Council's responsibilities for keeping financial records which correctly record and explain its transactions and financial position and performance; and that enable true and fair financial statements to be prepared and audited.

*Crimes Act 1924* covers criminal activity including fraud.

*Electronic Transactions Act 2000* facilitates and promotes business and community confidence in the use of electronic transactions. It recognises the legal validity of transactions carried out electronically, and so permits the "recording and retention of information and documents in electronic form". Recordkeeping practices should be applied to all records regardless of the format of those records. Where records are created electronically they should be managed appropriately.

*Evidence Act 2001* describes the ways in which documents may be admitted as evidence into court. The Act describes the more acceptable formats and the features that would give more value or "weight" to records. Recordkeeping practices must ensure that the more appropriate format of the record is preserved.

*Financial Transaction Reports Act 1988* provides for the reporting of certain transactions and monetary transfers to the Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre (AUSTRAC) and specifies minimum retention periods for account and signatory information.

*Income Tax Assessment Act 1997* requires Council to keep records of income tax returns and assessments, and any related accounting documentation such as calculations, income and expenditure records.

*Limitations Act 1974* sets out time periods in which legal action can be taken in various instances. The Act imposes a number of limitations on specific types of actions.

*Local Government Act 1993* imposes a duty on Councils to create a wide variety of records.

*Personal Information Protection Act 2004* sets out rules about information handling, including how the agency may collect, use, store and disclose personal information.

*Right to Information Act 2009* provides for greater access to information held by Tasmanian government bodies and encourages proactive disclosure of information held by the agency as well as giving the public access to information upon request.

## 6. Definitions

### *Business Classification Scheme*

A hierarchical model of the relationship between the Council's functions, activities and transactions. It provides the core foundation for the development of the agency's recordkeeping tools including a retention and disposal schedule.

### *Destruction Authority*

A once-off authorisation from the State Archivist that permits destruction for a defined set of records.

### *Disposal*

Involves either the destruction of records; their transfer to the Tasmanian Archive & Heritage Office for retention as part of the State archives; their transfer to another custodian; or some other process approved by the State Archivist which removes them from the custody of the agency.

### *Record*

Information created, received and maintained as evidence and information by an organisation or person, in the pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business. (Source: *International Standard ISO 15489 - 2002, Records Management, Part 1: General, Clause 3.15*)

### *Retention and Disposal Schedule*

An ongoing authorisation from the State Archivist that specifies minimum retention periods and consequent disposal actions for a defined set of records.

### *State archive*

State record or any other record which is deposited and preserved permanently in the Tasmanian Archive & Heritage Office.

### *State records*

Records of State Government agencies/departments, State Authorities, or Local Authorities. These public bodies are defined in Section 3 of the *Archives Act 1983*.

## 7. Requirements

### *Creation and maintenance of records*

Business records must be created and captured by everyone subject to this policy. Business records should provide a reliable and accurate account of business decisions and actions. Therefore it is necessary to include all necessary information to support business needs including the names, dates and time, and other key information needed to capture the business context.

Records can be folders, documents or data created, received or maintained as evidence and information of work done for or on behalf of the agency. Records may be either hard copy or electronic.

Examples of the agency's records include (but are not limited to):

- Agendas, minutes and papers;
- Complaint correspondence;
- Contracts and agreements;
- Correspondence received from members of the public, private and public sector organisations that require action;
- Documents related to events organised with or for external organisations, students etc.;
- Facilities hire forms and documentation;
- Documents related to planning and development;
- Personnel recruitment and appointment documentation;
- Policies and guidelines;
- Reports and submissions;
- Risk management registers and documentation;
- Training program documentation; and
- WorkCover documents and files.

Ultimately, if the record contains a business transaction or evidence of any decision that has been made on behalf of the agency it must be kept for the required time as per an approved Retention and Disposal Schedule authorised by the State Archivist. Where no Retention and Disposal Schedule exists for the records they must be retained until such a time as they can be either destroyed according to a Destruction Authority authorised by the State Archivist, or transferred to the Tasmanian Archive & Heritage Office as State archives.

*Records that do not have to be kept*

Some records do not belong in the agency's recordkeeping system, including:

- External advertising material;
- Externally published newsletters that do not contain material created by or referencing the agency;
- Internal e-mails received by "carbon copy" (cc) or "blind carbon copy" (bcc);
- Junk e-mail;
- Personal items including e-mail;
- Rough notes, working papers and calculations used solely to assist in the preparation of other records such as correspondence, non-auditable reports and statistical tabulations;
- Copies of any documents, preserved solely for reference;
- Published material preserved solely for reference; and
- Electronic revisions of documents in the agency's recordkeeping system which can be purged/deleted when finalising documents.

Documents of this nature may be destroyed, as defined by the Tasmanian Archive & Heritage Office *Retention and Disposal Schedule for short-term value records (DA2158)*.

### **8. Systems used to maintain records**

Records generated within the agency in the course of normal business practice or received from an external source are to be registered and captured in the agency's recordkeeping system.

The following business and administrative databases and software applications are endorsed for the capture and storage of specific information and records. These include:

- Property Wise, a standalone database that contains property, rates, dogs, receipting and vaccinations records;
- Xero Accounting System, a cloud based program for financial and payroll information;
- Interplan, a cloud based program used for planning purposes;
- RecFind 6, a standalone Electronic Records Document Management System in use from 1996 to 2014;
- Shared Drive, for all records since September 2014;
- Finance Drive (restricted access), for financial records ;
- Management Drive (restricted access), for personnel and confidential records; and
- Central Records Drive (restricted access), for copies of permanent records.

These endorsed systems appropriately support information and records management processes such as creation and capture, storage, protection of integrity and authenticity, security, access and retention, destruction and transfer.

Corporate records must not be maintained in email folders, personal drives or external storage media as these lack the necessary functionality to protect business information and records over time. Records created when using social media applications or mobile devices may need to be captured into an endorsed system.

### **9. Access to records: sharing corporate information within Flinders Council**

Information is a corporate resource to which all staff may have access, except where the nature of the information requires restriction. Access restrictions should not be imposed unnecessarily but should protect:

- individual staff, or client privacy; and
- sensitive material such as security classified or material marked as confidential.

When handling information, staff and elected members are reminded of their obligations outlined in their statements of duties and under the Employee Code of Conduct Policy, the Elected Member Code of Conduct and the Personal Information Protection Policy.

### 10. Release of publicly available information

In accordance with our obligations under the *Right to Information Act 2009* access to publicly available information will be provided on our website. This is the responsibility of all staff.

The public have legislative rights to apply for access to information held by our organisation under the *Right to Information Act 2009*. This applies to all information held by the agency, whether in officially endorsed records management systems or in personal stores such as email folders or shared and personal drives. Responses to applications for access under Right to Information legislation are the responsibility of the Executive Officer.

### 11. Retention or destruction of records

Agency records are destroyed when they reach the end of their required retention period set out in Records Retention and Disposal Schedules issued by the Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office (TAHO). Retention periods in disposal schedules take into account all business, legal and government requirements for the records. Our agency uses the following general and agency-specific schedules to determine retention, transfer and destruction actions for its records:

- DA2200 Disposal Schedule of Functional Records of Local Government; and
- DA2158 Disposal Schedule of Short-term Value Records.

Records cannot be disposed of other than in accordance with all relevant Retention and Disposal Schedules and Destruction Authorities authorised by the State Archivist. In addition to this, records cannot be disposed of without the approval of the Corporate Services Manager and the manager of the business unit that is the owner or is responsible for the records.

Some records can be destroyed in the normal course of business. These are records of a short-term, facilitative or transitory value that are destroyed as short term value records. Examples of such records include rough working notes, drafts not needed for future use or copies of records held for reference.

Central to the agency's accountability process is the requirement it maintains a Register of Records Destroyed. This is the agency's formal evidential record of destruction and must be retained permanently by the agency. The Register must be clearly identified as the Register of Records Destroyed under Section 20(2)(b) of the *Archives Act 1983*.

### 12. Transfer of records

At times certain records may be required to be transferred out of the custody of Flinders Council. This occurs when records of archival value are no longer being actively used and/or are 25 years or older. In this instance Flinders Council transfers them to TAHO. We are still able to access records if a subsequent need arises to consult records in TAHO's custody.

Another instance where records may be transferred is when records are affected by administrative change and are transferred to an inheriting agency or to a private body. In either case, permission must be sought from TAHO before the records are transferred.

### **13. Monitoring the Records Management program**

The records management program will be monitored for breaches of this Policy by the General Manager who will facilitate training as required. Day-to-day records management audit activities will be coordinated by the Executive Officer.

### **14. Responsibilities**

All staff, elected members, consultants, and contractors employed or engaged by the agency are responsible for the management of all records created in the course of their work. This includes complying with this Policy at all times.

Staff must always be mindful that all records created in the course of their employment are the property of the agency.

Specific responsibilities and accountabilities for information and records management at the agency include:

#### *General Manager*

The General Manager is responsible for:

- Ensuring that Council's records management program satisfies operational and legislative requirements and obligations;
- Maintaining and extending the Business Classification Scheme according to Council's requirements following appropriate consultation;
- Implementing and continually improving the Council's information management program;
- Defining Council's requirements for information, records and document management;
- Ensuring that staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities relating to the management of information;
- Maintaining and reviewing this Policy and relevant documentation as required;
- Creating records that document their activities and decisions and saving them into Council's recordkeeping systems;
- Ensuring e-mail records are saved into Council's recordkeeping systems;
- Ensuring paper records are scanned to electronic format and saved into Council's recordkeeping systems; and
- Not destroying records without authorisation and adhering to Council's disposal requirements.

#### *Elected Members*

- Reviewing this Policy and relevant documentation as required;
- Creating records that document their activities and decisions to be saved into Council's recordkeeping systems;
- Ensuring e-mail records are saved into Council's recordkeeping systems;



- Ensuring paper records are scanned to electronic format to be saved into Council's recordkeeping systems;
- Not destroying records without authorisation and adhering to Council's disposal requirements;

### *Managers*

Council will support staff by:

- including records management training in induction programs; and
- arranging for refresher training sessions as required.

### *Executive Officer*

The Executive Officer is responsible for the efficient management of Council's recordkeeping system, ensuring that sound recordkeeping principles and records management best practice guidelines are followed and adhered to by providing support to staff in the use of the agency's recordkeeping system.

The Executive Officer is also responsible for:

- Arranging training sessions for staff in the use of Council's recordkeeping systems;
- Ensuring records are captured uniformly across Council and stored in approved systems;
- Maintaining the integrity and authenticity of records;
- Managing the storage of hardcopy records located onsite and offsite;
- Managing the disposal of records under approved disposal schedules and maintaining the register of destroyed records;
- Ongoing review and amendment of Retention and Disposal Schedules; and
- Responding to user requests for assistance with Council's recordkeeping systems or other records management issues.

### *Corporate Services Manager*

The Corporate Services Manager is responsible for:

- Administration and management of employee folders within the Management Drive; and
- Requesting the creation of personnel files.

### *Staff Members*

Staff members should take care to handle records sensibly, with care and respect to avoid damage to them and to prolong their lifespan. Staff must not damage, alter or destroy information and records of Council, without authorisation. Staff are responsible for using, maintaining and managing records in accordance with this Policy and records management procedures including complying by:

- Creating records that document their activities and decisions and saving them into Council's recordkeeping systems using specified filing and naming conventions;
- Ensuring version controls are captured and integrity and authenticity of records are maintained;
- Ensuring e-mail records are saved into Council's recordkeeping systems;

- Ensuring paper records are scanned to electronic format and saved into Council's recordkeeping systems;
- Storing hard copy records securely;
- Ensuring hard copy records are not hoarded in work areas and are captured in Council's recordkeeping systems in a timely fashion;
- Learning how and where records are kept within the agency;
- Not destroying records without authorisation and adhering to Council's disposal requirements;
- Not losing records; and
- Being aware of and this policy document and records management procedures.

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