

Records disposal schedule

Cabinet Office records

Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet

Disposal Schedule No. 2026/003

20/08/2026

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Preamble

Introduction

The *Information Act 2002* states that public sector organisations must safeguard their records and must not delete or otherwise dispose of a record unless authorised to do so¹. Disposal of records is permitted through the use of records disposal schedules and enable regular, planned and authorised disposal of records controlled by an agency.

Records retention decisions are based on:

- the current and future business needs of the organisation
- compliance with legal and governance requirements of the organisation
- the current and future needs of internal and external stakeholders, including the wider community
- analysis of the history of the functions and activities of the organisation and the use of the records created
- implementation review of previous disposal schedules for the function and related records.

Records disposal schedules provide continuing authorisation for the legal disposal of records and are authorised by the Records Service, Archives Service and Chief Executive Officer of the public sector organisation responsible for the schedule.

Records disposal schedules apply to records created and maintained in any format, including electronic records, records in business systems, and parts of records.

In the Northern Territory government (NTG) there are two types of records disposal schedules:

- general records disposal schedules that apply to records common to most or all NT public sector organisations
- functional records disposal schedules that apply to records specific to an NT public sector organisation or function.

Functional records disposal schedules should be used in conjunction with general records disposal schedules.

Structure of a records disposal schedule

Records disposal schedules set out minimum requirements for the creation, maintenance, retention or destruction actions to be taken in relation to existing or future records described in each class. Records disposal schedules specify:

- whether a class of record has temporary or permanent status
- the retention period for a temporary class of record
- authorised disposal actions for a class of record.²

Each class of records created by an agency is described using classifications based on business analysis.

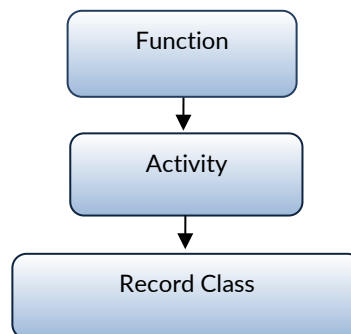
¹ S.145 Information Act 2002

² S.136A(3) Information Act 2002

Disposal schedules are developed using the functional structure based on the classification scheme of the *Keyword AAA: A Thesaurus of General Terms* produced by the State Records Authority of NSW and modified for use by NT public sector organisations.

Within the schedule, functions are documented as the highest-level terms and business activities under the functions, followed by record classes, as shown in diagram 1.

Diagram 1



Function

The function or keyword is the highest level in the classification scheme in this disposal schedule. The function is indicated at the start of each section and a description (scope note) provided.

Activity

Activities are the processes or operations that make up the business function. This is the second level in the classification scheme in this disposal schedule. The description (scope note) provides details of the transactions that take place in relation to the activity, for example, REPORTING or POLICY.

Record class

A record class is a group of records that relate to the same activity, function or subject and require the same disposal action. The descriptions can relate to one record (such as a register) or a group of records documenting a particular set of business transactions.

Status and disposal action

The appraisal status of a record class is assigned as either permanent or temporary.

Permanent records: Records appraised with permanent status have been identified as archives and must be transferred to the Archives Service for their preservation and eventual public access.

The retention period for permanent records is the maximum period before the records must be transferred to the Archives Service. Permanent records must be transferred no later than 30 years after creation in accordance with the Information Act 2002, unless exemption has been granted (see [Archives Management Standards Transfer of Archives](#), and [Exemption from Compulsory Transfer of Permanent Records to the NT Archives Service](#)). An [Application to Transfer Records form](#) must be submitted to the Archives Service before records will be accepted for transfer.

Temporary records: The retention period for temporary records is the minimum period before the records can legally be destroyed. The retention period is calculated after an event or a disposal trigger such as 'date of action completed', 'date of audit' or 'date of birth'. Destruction should be done following consultation with relevant operational business employees responsible for the records.

Retention periods for temporary records in a records disposal schedule are minimum periods only and agencies may keep records for a longer period if considered necessary for business requirements.

Reasons for longer retention could include:

- administrative need or agency directives
- legal requirements such as current or pending legal action
- relevance to an investigation or inquiry which is in progress
- is subject to an information access application
- subject to a records disposal freeze.

If a record is reactivated after a retention period has commenced the time is recalculated from the date of the subsequent last action.

Reactivation is considered to have occurred when a record has been altered, added to or amended in a way that affects the date range of the record.

The reactivation of a record may be triggered by such events as:

- record retrieved to meet a Freedom of Information (FOI) request
- record retrieved to meet a subpoena
- record retrieved to meet a Royal Commission Notice to Produce
- record identified as being of significant risk management status
- record identified as being required for possible legal proceedings.

Reactivation is **not** triggered by a record being accessed for:

- research/reference where no change is made to the record
- making a copy of the record or partial record for another purpose
- filing documents within the existing date range of the record.

There is no requirement to destroy temporary records if an agency has a need to retain them longer than the designated minimum retention period. However, in the interests of efficient and economic records management, an agency should take all steps to reduce the storage costs of time-expired records.

Where the agency is consistently requiring the longer retention of temporary value records beyond the minimum period assigned in the disposal class, the agency should consider the review of the class of records in the schedule and include this input into the design of a subsequent schedule.

Sentencing records

Agency employees or records management consultants engaged in sentencing records should be experienced records administrators who have a good understanding of business processes so that they are able to identify the functions and activities described in the schedule.

As sentencing involves matching records with the applicable disposal class/es there is obvious value in using corresponding terms for both classification and disposal. Where only one disposal class applies to a particular function and activity it should be possible to sentence records at creation. Where more than one disposal class applies to a particular function and activity, the similarity in classification and disposal terms narrows down the number of disposal classes, the sentencer must consult.

The following points should be kept in mind when sentencing records:

- read definitions of the function and activity as well as descriptions of the disposal classes
- consult other function/activity combinations in the schedule if there is any ambiguity
- always sentence records by their content, not just their titles - titles can be misleading and the status of records may change after a title is given to a record
- examples and notes are given in disposal classes as a guide to assist users, however disposal classes relate to all records which document the transaction described and are not limited to the examples given
- watch out for types of information that have been given permanent status by a disposal schedule, e.g. policy, precedent cases, exceptional decisions and events, Cabinet submissions, items of National or Territory significance, minutes of high-level committees, etc
- watch out for records that are excluded from the schedule, e.g. records created prior to 1 July 1978, records relating to legal discovery, records covered by a disposal freeze, records relating to agency-specific operational programs and projects, etc
- never try to make unique operational agency records “fit” into classes in one of the general disposal schedules - put the records to one side until an agency-specific functional records disposal schedule is developed, if one does not already exist
- retention periods for temporary records must be calculated from the disposal action trigger, e.g. “Destroy 2 years after action completed” or “Destroy 2 years after superseded”, remembering that in paper files the date of action completed may not be the date on the last item added to a file
- “action completed” means the point at which all business processes relating to the matter have been finalised, all decisions have been made, and no further action is required or reasonably anticipated. This includes the expiry of any applicable review, appeal or compliance periods
- where a record contains information that falls into two or more disposal classes, it must be sentenced in accordance with the disposal class with the longest retention period
- if the same record could be covered by both a general records disposal schedule and an agency’s functional records disposal schedule, the functional records disposal schedule takes precedence
- sentencing on automated document and records management systems must always be subject to review and manual override before any disposal takes place
- retention periods in this schedule are the minimum time that records must be retained, and agencies may delay disposal for administrative or legal purposes.

Sentencers annotating disposal authority detail on hard copy records should use pencil and make the markings in the area provided on the file/record/box that can be clearly seen and does not obstruct existing information.

About this records disposal schedule

Purpose

The purpose of this records disposal schedule is to enable regular, planned and authorised disposal of Cabinet Office records held in the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet.

Scope

Application of this records disposal schedule is mandatory for Cabinet records held in the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet's Cabinet Office and Secretariat Services.

This records disposal schedule applies to Cabinet records in all formats.

Date range of records covered

Records created prior to 1 July 1978 must not be disposed of without the authorisation of the Archives Service in accordance with [Archives Management Standard Disposal of Government Records Created Prior to 1978](#)., unless specified in an approved records disposal schedule.

Responsibility

The Chief Executive of the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet is responsible for the content and implementation of this records disposal schedule including the provision of advice and training, and for monitoring compliance.

Authority

This records disposal schedule is authorised in accordance with section 136B of the *Information Act 2002*.

Disposal Schedule No. 2026/003 was approved by the Acting Senior Director of Library & Archives NT (the Archives Service), the Executive Director Information Services and Fines Recovery Unit (the Records Service), and the Chief Executive of the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet on 20 August 2026 and is effective immediately.

Regulatory framework

The regulatory basis for this records disposal schedule is defined in:

- *Information Act 2002*
- NT public sector organisation records and information management standards
- NT Government Archives Management Standards
- Australian Standards AS ISO 15489:2002-Records Management.

Related documents

This records disposal schedule is to be read in conjunction with:

- NT public sector organisation records and information management standard –Disposal
- policies and procedures of the Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet
- relevant current disposal schedules for Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet
- relevant current general disposal schedules.

Normal administrative practice

Public sector organisations are permitted to dispose of some short term or ephemeral documents under the authority of the Disposal Schedule for Short Term Value Records. These include:

- duplicate (e.g. information or reference copy)
- obviously unimportant (e.g. telephone message slips)
- of short-term facilitative value (e.g. compliment slips)
- a combination of these.

The guiding principle is that organisations should be sure that destroying these records will not destroy evidence that might be needed.

Short-term value or unofficial information and records with little or no ongoing administrative, fiscal, legal, evidential or historical value can be destroyed without authorisation as part of normal administrative practice when they are no longer needed.

Records that have been captured into a compliant records management system should be destroyed using the Short-term value records disposal schedule unless the class of records has been identified in a specific functional disposal schedule.

Acknowledgement

The Archives Service and the Records Service acknowledge that material produced by National Archives of Australia, State Records Authority of New South Wales, State Records of South Australia, Public Records Office of Victoria, Territory Records Office and Standards Australia was used in the development of this schedule.

This work is copyright. Apart from any use as permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, no part may be reproduced by any process without prior written permission of the Archives Service. Requests and enquiries concerning reproduction and rights should be directed to the Senior Director, Library & Archives NT. The terms in the classification scheme are based on the Keyword AAA: A Thesaurus of General Terms (Government of New South Wales, 1998), which is made available by the State Records of NSW under Creative Commons Attribution + ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) License.

Compliance checklist

Implement a records disposal program to ensure regular appraisal, sentencing, destruction and transfer of all records.	☐	Stop applying sentences from previous schedules that have been revoked or amended.	☐
Assign responsibility for the management and application of regular records disposal action using authorised records disposal schedules, to an appropriately skilled records manager who consults with the Archives Service and Records Service.	☐	Retain all records in good order and condition to be available for retrieval during the retention period.	☐
Identify and sentence all records described in this schedule in all formats including electronic records and records in business systems, copies of records and parts of records.	☐	Identify and update control records so that you can demonstrate what happened to each record, whether paper or electronic.	☐
Ensure all copies of temporary records are destroyed in any format (including backups), unless otherwise stated in a disposal schedule.	☐	Dispose of all records sentenced according to this schedule in all formats including electronic records and records in business systems, copies of records and parts of records.	☐
Apply this records disposal schedule to records in the organisation's records management systems, including systems for the management of paper records, electronic records, or records in any other format.	☐	Transfer records of permanent value to the Archives Service for retention as archives not later than 30 years after creation.	☐
Apply this records disposal schedule to records in the organisation's business systems, either directly or by linking the business system to a records management system.	☐	Inactive records can be transferred to offsite service providers providing they have been sentenced.	☐
Implement quality assurance mechanisms to periodically check that the disposal class originally assigned at the creation of the records is still applicable at the time of sentencing of the record.	☐	Destroy time expired temporary records in a secure manner that ensures complete deletion/destruction beyond any possible reconstruction.	☐
Implement review or quality control procedures in compliant records management systems to ensure disposal actions are implemented correctly.	☐	Do not destroy records that are not described in an authorised records disposal schedule.	☐
Identify records that require re-sentencing where a previous disposal schedule has been superseded.	☐	Do not destroy any records created prior to 1 July 1978 without specific authorisation from the Archives Service.	☐

Disposal Schedule

1. Cabinet, Executive Council and Cabinet Sub-Committee Business Management

The function of managing the business of the Northern Territory Cabinet, Executive Council and Cabinet Sub-Committees. Includes meeting submissions and papers and the conduct of meetings.

Note: For Cabinet records maintained by other agencies including submissions, and routine administrative records of the Cabinet Office, see the *Administrative functions schedule* and *Common activities schedule*.

1.1 Meetings

The activities associated with the meeting of Cabinet and Budget Cabinet including out-of-session Cabinet, Sub-Committees of Cabinet and the Executive Council.

Class No.	Description of Records	Examples	Status and Disposal Action
1.1.1	Records relating to formal meetings of Cabinet and Budget Cabinet. Includes Cabinet documents such as Cabinet Submission, Cabinet Minute, Cabinet Memoranda, Board and Committee Memoranda, Cabinet decisions, business lists, attachments to Cabinet documents, attendance lists, declarations of conflict of interest, tabled papers, presentations and agency Ministerial briefs presented to Cabinet as under-the-line matters. Also includes Cabinet Sub-Committee and Executive Council records submitted to Cabinet.		PERMANENT Transfer to the Archives Service 30 years after action completed

1. Cabinet, Executive Council and Cabinet Sub-Committee Business Management

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Note: For Cabinet records maintained by other agencies including submissions, and routine administrative records of the Cabinet Office, see the *Administrative functions schedule* and *Common activities schedule*.

1.1 Meetings

The activities associated with the meeting of Cabinet and Budget Cabinet including out-of-session Cabinet, Sub-Committees of Cabinet and the Executive Council.

Class No.	Description of Records	Examples	Status and Disposal Action
1.1.2	Records relating to meetings of the Executive Council, including agendas, business papers, attachments and section 35 letters pursuant to the <i>Northern Territory (Self-Government) Act 1978</i> .		PERMANENT Transfer to the Archives Service 30 years after action completed

1. Cabinet, Executive Council and Cabinet Sub-Committee Business Management

The function of managing the business of the Northern Territory Cabinet, Executive Council and Cabinet Sub-Committees. Includes meeting submissions and papers and the conduct of meetings.

1.1 Meetings

The activities associated with the meeting of Cabinet and Budget Cabinet including out-of-session Cabinet, Sub-Committees of Cabinet and the Executive Council

Class No.	Description of Records	Examples	Status and Disposal Action
1.1.3	Records documenting Executive Council decisions, including letters, attachments and settled instruments.		TEMPORARY Destroy 10 years after action completed.
1.1.4	Records relating to Cabinet Sub-committee records including memoranda, Minutes, attachments to the Memoranda or Minute, presentations, tabled papers and terms of reference. Note: Cabinet Sub-committee records that are taken to Cabinet form part of the Cabinet record.		TEMPORARY Destroy 5 years after action completed.

1. Cabinet, Executive Council and Cabinet Sub-Committee Business Management

The function of managing the business of the Northern Territory Cabinet, Executive Council and Cabinet Sub-Committees. Includes meeting submissions and papers and the conduct of meetings.

1.2 Cabinet Handbook Management

The activities associated with the preparation and management of Cabinet Handbooks.

Class No.	Description of Records	Examples	Status and Disposal Action
1.2.1	Final approved Cabinet Handbooks		PERMANENT Transfer to the Archives Service 30 years after action completed
1.2.2	Preparation of the Cabinet Handbook including formal draft versions, consultation notes, copies of legal advice, background research, implementation plans and related correspondence.		TEMPORARY Destroy 10 years after action completed

1. Cabinet, Executive Council and Cabinet Sub-Committee Business Management

The function of managing the business of the Northern Territory Cabinet, Executive Council and Cabinet Sub-Committees. Includes meeting submissions and papers and the conduct of meetings.

1.3 Cabinet, Executive Council and Cabinet Sub-Committee Records Management

The activities associated with managing records of Cabinet, Budget Cabinet, out-of-session Cabinet, Cabinet Sub-Committees and the Executive Council including the secure handling, storage, access, tracking and disposal of the official records and documents.

1.3.1	Records documenting the management of Cabinet, Executive Council and Cabinet Sub-Committee documents to ensure they are kept confidential and secure. Includes requests for access to decisions, approvals of decisions to release, correspondence, advice relating to release of documents required under legislation, courts and investigatory bodies and cabinet security breaches.		TEMPORARY Destroy 10 years after action completed
1.3.2	Cabinet notebooks		TEMPORARY Destroy when reference ceases
1.3.3	Copies or extracts of Cabinet documents		TEMPORARY Destroy when reference ceases
	USE: For Cabinet records maintained by other agencies including submissions, and routine administrative records of the Cabinet Office, refer to the Administrative functions schedule and Common activities records disposal schedules.		