

Brief Guide to Cabinet Submissions and Decisions

Library & Archives NT is responsible for managing, preserving and providing access to government archives in accordance with the Information Act 2002. Public access to Cabinet records archives is provided at the NT Archives Centre in Millner.

Northern Territory Self-government

In 1978 the Commonwealth passed the Northern Territory (Self Government) Act 1978 establishing the Northern Territory as a distinct political entity under the Crown, with limited state-like powers, effective on 1 July 1978. The Act gave the Northern Territory self-government, extending local autonomy to the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, and providing power to the Administrator to grant or deny assent to proposed laws. Following this, the first Ministry of the new Northern Territory Government was appointed and the Legislative Assembly was given authority and responsibility for the finances of the government of the Northern Territory.

The Cabinet

The Cabinet consists of those elected members of the Legislative Assembly who have been appointed as Ministers by the Administrator. The Cabinet generally meets on a weekly basis to make decisions on matters such as major policy issues, proposals with significant expenditure or employment implications, matters which involve important initiatives or departures from previous arrangements, proposals with implications for Australian, state and local government relations, legislation, and high level government appointments.

The records of Cabinet meetings and decisions are held in the strictest confidence until they are released 30 years after their creation.

Access to Cabinet Records

On 1 January each year the records of the Northern Territory Government's Cabinet are released for public access, having reached 30 years since their creation.

The Cabinet Office in the Department of the Chief Minister provides secretariat services to Cabinet and the Executive Council, and is the agency responsible for the records of Cabinet. An access agreement negotiated between the Library & Archives NT and the Department of the Chief Minister, in accordance with the Information Act 2002, provides for an annual opening of Cabinet submissions and decisions and of the Executive Council meeting papers, on 1 January each year after the records become 30 years old (some items may be restricted for longer periods where sensitive information has been identified).

Understanding Cabinet Submissions and Decisions

Most business comes before Cabinet by way of formal Cabinet submissions, identified by a consecutive number. Cabinet submissions generally follow a set format. This includes a cover sheet which provides brief details of the submission (e.g. title, purpose, sponsoring Minister, relationship of the proposal to existing policy, timing considerations, staffing implications, costs) followed by the body of the submission which includes recommendations, background materials, options, budget implications, timing issues and

other key topics. There may also be attachments to the submission. Submissions are usually prepared by Government agencies at the direction of, or with the agreement of, the Minister responsible for that agency. Submissions may also include comments from other Northern Territory Government agencies which were consulted during the development of the submission.

Each decision made by Cabinet is formally recorded in a separate document known as a Cabinet decision. Like Cabinet submissions, each Cabinet decision is given a consecutive number. Most Cabinet decisions will have a corresponding Cabinet submission, but Cabinet may also issue a Cabinet decision without a submission. Note that the decision number is not the same as the corresponding submission number (apart from a small number of very early submissions and decisions in a new Government's term when the numbers may coincidentally align).

Ministers may from time to time present memoranda to Cabinet, or table a document at a Cabinet meeting. These documents will generally be incorporated in the formal records of the Cabinet meeting. Such documents will usually result in a Cabinet decision, but not in every case.

The Cabinet submissions and decisions are kept in bound volumes (NTRS 2575).

The table below lists the records of Cabinet and other significant related series. Some records are restricted for more than 30 years.

For a full list of records please visit www.navigator.nt.gov.au

| Main Series | | | |
|---------------|--|--|------------|
| Series Number | Title | Description | Date Range |
| NTRS 2575 | Cabinet submissions and decisions | Cabinet submissions, decisions, and associated papers including budget information Volumes 1978-1994 open with exceptions | 1971-2019 |
| NTRS 3353 | Index to Cabinet submissions and decisions | Annual indexes, created by the Cabinet Office to assist with accessing the volumes. The index provides details of the meeting number, meeting date, decision number, and title of submission | 1977-1994 |
| NTRS 3750 | Redacted copies of Cabinet decisions | This series consists of copies of restricted Cabinet decisions which have sensitive information redacted to allow public access. | 1984-1991 |

| Related series | | | |
|----------------|---|---|------------|
| Series Number | Title | Description | Date Range |
| NTRS 3351 | Executive Council meeting papers | Agenda and business papers with related attachments Volumes 1978-1994 open with exceptions | 1969-2021 |
| NTRS 3352 | Index to Executive Council meeting papers | An index created by the Cabinet Office to assist with accessing the meeting papers. The index lists business papers submitted to each meeting | 1977-1994 |
| NTRS 3813 | Office Cabinet portraits | Official framed photographic portraits of the members of the Northern Territory Cabinets. | 1974-2016 |
| NTRS 3886 | Redacted copies of Executive Council meeting papers | This series consists of copies of restricted Executive Council meeting papers which have sensitive information redacted to allow public access. | 1988-1993 |

Further information

These series can be accessed by appointment in the Reading Room of the Northern Territory Archives Centre, Darwin, open from 9.00am - 4.30pm, Tuesday - Friday.

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