



Records disposal schedule

Records Disposal Schedule Medical Pathology Services Department of Health

Disposal Schedule No. 2017/8

June 2017

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Preamble

Introduction

The *Information Act* 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.

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 there are two types of records disposal schedules:

- [General records disposal schedules](#) that apply to records common to most or all NT Government public sector organisations, and
- Functional records disposal schedules that apply to records specific to an NT Government 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

- (a) whether a class of record has temporary or permanent status;
- (b) the retention period for a temporary class of record;
- (c) 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.

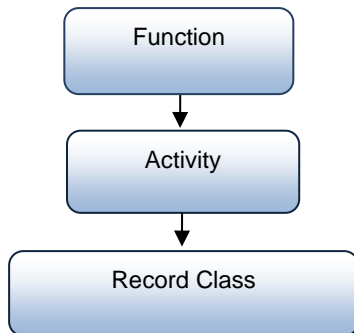
Disposal schedules are developed using the functional structure based on the business classification scheme of the *Keyword AAA: A Thesaurus of General Terms* produced by the State Records Authority of NSW and modified for use by NT Government public sector organisations.

¹ S.145 *Information Act*

² S.136A(3) *Information Act*

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 NT 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 NT Archives Service. Permanent records must be transferred no later than 30 years after creation in accordance with the Information Act, 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 NT 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, or
- subject to a disposal freeze.

Records created prior to 1 July 1978 must not be disposed of without the authorisation of the NT Archives Service in accordance with Archives Management Standard Records Created Prior to 1978, unless specified in a schedule.

Sentence records with this records disposal schedule using the following five steps:

1. Determine the appropriate function and activity of the records. This can be done by examining an existing record or when creating a new record.
2. Identify the disposal class.
3. From the disposal action in the class, identify the trigger event and a date when the record can be disposed of, alternately, identify that the record is to be retained permanently as archives.
4. If the trigger event has already occurred (such as action is completed), confirm and implement the disposal action.
5. If the trigger event has not occurred (e.g. the record is still in active use), set a review date for the future.

About this Records Disposal Schedule

Purpose

The purpose of this Records Disposal Schedule is to enable regular, planned and authorised disposal of records of Medical Pathology Services of the Department of Health.

Scope

Application of this Records Disposal Schedule is mandatory for Medical Pathology Services records of the Department of Health.

This Records Disposal Schedule applies to Medical Pathology Services records in all formats.

Responsibility

The Chief Executive of the Department of Health 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 S. 136B of the *Information Act*.

Disposal Schedule No. 2017/8 was approved by the Director of the NT Archives Service (The Archives Service), Senior Director of ICT Policy and Governance (The Records Service), and the Chief Executive of the Department of Health on 2 June 2017 and is effective immediately.

Regulatory Framework

The regulatory basis for this Records Disposal Schedule is defined in:

- *Coroner's Act*
- *Health Insurance Act*
- *Health Insurance (Accredited Pathology Laboratories – Approval) Principles*
- *Medical Services Act*
- *National Pathology Accreditation Advisory Council – Requirements for the Retention of Laboratory Records and Diagnostic Material*
- *Notifiable Diseases Act*
- *Information Act*
- NT Government Records Management Standards
- NT Government Archives Management Standards
- Australian Standards AS ISO 15489 Records Management

Related Documents

This Records Disposal Schedule is to be read in conjunction with:

- NT Government Records Management Standard – Records Disposal
- policies and procedures of the Department of Health
- current authorised disposal schedules for Department of Health.

- *National Pathology Accreditation Advisory Council – Requirements for the Retention of Laboratory Records and Diagnostic Material*

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.

Records that have been captured into a recordkeeping system should be destroyed using the Disposal Schedule for Short Term Value Records unless the class of records has been identified in a specific disposal schedule.

Notification of Destruction

Provide formal notification of destruction of all records to the NT Records Service.

Note: In the case of the Disposal Schedule for Records of Short Term Value (Disposal Schedule No. 2003/10), notification is only required for the destruction of records described in Disposal Class No. 1.10.1.

Acknowledgement

The NT Archives Service and the NT 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 NT Archives Service. Requests and enquiries concerning reproduction and rights should be directed to the Director, NT Archives Service. The terms in the business classification scheme are based on the Keyword AAA: A Thesaurus of General Terms (Government of New South Wales, 1998), and are produced under a licence agreement between the NT Archives Service and the State Records Authority of New South Wales.

Compliance Checklist	
<input type="checkbox"/> Implement a records disposal program to ensure regular appraisal, sentencing, destruction and transfer of all records	<input type="checkbox"/> Stop applying sentences from previous schedules that have been revoked or amended
<input type="checkbox"/> 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 NT Archives Service and NT Records Service	<input type="checkbox"/> Retain all records in good order and condition to be available for retrieval during the retention period.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Identify and update control records so that you can demonstrate what happened to each record, whether paper or electronic
<input type="checkbox"/> Familiarise all employees of the organisation with the authorised records disposal schedules relevant to the organisation's records	<input type="checkbox"/> Implement an appropriate and approved strategy for retention of records of continuing value, e.g. preservation in original form, migration to new systems, and conversion to long term medium
<input type="checkbox"/> 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	<input type="checkbox"/> 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
<input type="checkbox"/> Ensure all copies of temporary records are destroyed in any format (including backups), unless otherwise stated in a disposal schedule	<input type="checkbox"/> Transfer records of permanent value to the NT Archives Service for retention as archives not later than 30 years after creation
<input type="checkbox"/> 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	<input type="checkbox"/> Inactive records can be transferred to offsite service providers providing they have been sentenced
<input type="checkbox"/> 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	<input type="checkbox"/> Destroy time expired temporary records in a secure manner that ensures complete deletion/destruction beyond any possible reconstruction
<input type="checkbox"/> 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	<input type="checkbox"/> Notify the NT Records Service of destruction of all records
<input type="checkbox"/> Implement review or quality control procedures in recordkeeping systems to ensure disposal actions are implemented correctly	<input type="checkbox"/> Do not destroy records that are not described in an authorised records disposal schedule.
<input type="checkbox"/> Identify records that require re-sentencing where a previous disposal schedule has been superseded	<input type="checkbox"/> Do not destroy any records created prior to 1 July 1978 without specific authorisation from the NT Archives Service

Disposal Schedule

1. Medical Pathology Services

The function of providing medical pathology services, where pathology testing provides information for: diagnosis, monitoring, exclusion of disease processes, and their treatment; health screening; and epidemiological data. Includes implementation of national guidelines.

1.1 Advice

The activities associated with offering opinions by or to the organisation as to an action or judgement. Includes the process of advising.

Class No.	Description of Records	Examples	Status and Disposal Action
1.1.1	Records documenting the provision of advice to and from the Minister, other Government bodies and industry stakeholders in relation to medical pathology services where a detailed response has been provided, such as legislative and policy amendments to the National Pathology Accreditation Advisory Council.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major advice • Ministerial • Briefing notes 	Permanent Transfer to the NT Archives Service 10 years after action completed
1.1.2	Records documenting clinical advice provided to patients in relation to medical pathology services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Routine result advice to patients 	Temporary Destroy 25 years after action completed
1.1.3	Records documenting routine advice provided to members of the community in relation to medical pathology services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Routine general advice 	Temporary Destroy 3 years after action completed

1. Medical Pathology Services

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1.2 Audit

The activities associated with officially checking financial, quality assurance and operational records to ensure they have been kept and maintained in accordance with agreed or legislated standards and correctly record the events, processes and business of the organisation in a specified period. Includes compliance audits, financial audits, operational audits, recordkeeping audits, skills audits, system audits and quality assurance audits.

Class No.	Description of Records	Examples	Status and Disposal Action
1.2.1	Records documenting the mandatory accreditation for pathology practices, including the planning, findings and resultant actions of external audits in relation to medical pathology services. Includes assessments, evaluations, reports, recommendations, supporting documentation and other related correspondence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External Audits performed by external organisations e.g. NATA, RCPA and ACHS 	Temporary Destroy 7 years after action completed
1.2.2	Records documenting the planning, findings and resultant actions of internal audits in relation to medical pathology services, including quality assurance or improvement activities. Includes self-evaluation assessments and quality improvement recommendations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal Audits Quality assurance or improvement activities 	Temporary Destroy 7 years after action completed

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Class No.	Description of Records	Examples	Status and Disposal Action
1.2.3	Records documenting the planning, findings and resultant actions of internal quality control and external quality assurance programs in relation to medical pathology services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal quality control (QC) External proficiency testing programs (QAP), e.g. NATA, NRL, AIMS, Waikato 	Temporary Destroy 7 years after action completed

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1.3 Committees

The activities associated with the management of committees, sub committees, councils, forums working groups, boards and task forces (internal and external, private, community, local, state, national, international, etc.). Includes the committee's establishment, appointment of members, terms of reference, proceedings, minutes, reports, agendas etc.

Class No.	Description of Records	Examples	Status and Disposal Action
1.3.1	Records documenting high level committees where the Department is representing the NT, such as the Australian Association of Pathology Practices, National Coalition of Public Pathology, National Association of Testing Authorities, National Pathology Accreditation and Advisory Council and the Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia in relation to medical pathology services. Includes agendas, minutes, discussion papers and action items.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian Association of Pathology Practices (AAPP) • National Coalition of Public Pathology (NCOPP) • National Association of Testing Authorities, Australia (NATA) • National Pathology Accreditation and Advisory Council (NPAAC) • Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia (RCPA) 	Permanent Transfer to the NT Archives Service 10 years after action completed
1.3.2	Records documenting medical pathology services internal administrative committees, inter-departmental formal committees or consumer advisory meetings. Includes agendas, minutes, discussion papers and action items.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inter-departmental committees • Working groups 	Temporary Destroy 5 years after action completed

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1.4 Compliance

The activities associated with complying with, or monitoring compliance with, mandatory or optional accountability, fiscal, legal, regulatory or quality standards or requirements. Includes compliance with legislation and with national and international standards.

Class No.	Description of Records	Examples	Status and Disposal Action
1.4.1	<p>Records documenting major investigations where a serious injury or death has occurred in relation to medical pathology services as a result of but not limited to, misdiagnosis, mislabelling, wrong patient and grade errors.</p> <p>Includes notifications of incidents, ministerials, investigation reports, file notes, photos, root cause analysis, witness statements and other supporting documents.</p> <p>May include notifiable incidents addressed to Worksafe NT and other related correspondence.</p>	<p>Serious incidents include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth Defects • Catastrophic Outcomes (brain damage, paraplegia) • Loss or impairment of senses • Reduced lifespan of the patient • Significant disfigurement or loss of limb 	<p>Permanent</p> <p>Transfer to NT Archives Service 10 years after action completed</p>
1.4.2	<p>Records documenting minor investigations into medical pathology services as a result of but not limited to misdiagnosis or mislabelling.</p> <p>Includes notifications of incidents, investigation reports, file notes, photos, root cause analysis, witness statements and other supporting documents.</p>	<p>Minor incidents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Privacy breach • Incomplete patient request forms • Incorrect patient request forms 	<p>Temporary</p> <p>Destroy 25 years after action completed</p>

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1.5 Control

The activities associated with creating, maintaining and evaluating control mechanisms.

Class No.	Description of Records	Examples	Status and Disposal Action
1.5.1	<p>Register of returned processed specimens.</p> <p>Includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Type of specimen - Location of collected specimen - Date of collection / return dates - Collector name - Method of collection <p>May include taxonomic information.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Returned specimens 	<p>Temporary</p> <p>Destroy 25 years after date of last entry in register</p>
1.5.2	<p>Register of Autopsies.</p> <p>Includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unique autopsy number - Patient's details (name, sex, birthplace, age, occupation)) - Report dates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register of non-medicolegal autopsies • Register of medicolegal (Coroner) autopsies 	<p>Permanent</p> <p>Transfer to the NT Archives Service 10 years after action completed</p>

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Class No.	Description of Records	Examples	Status and Disposal Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cause of death - Demographics - Autopsy type - Practitioner's name (position and signature) - Full description of body (external marks/injuries etc) - Special remarks 		
1.5.3	<p>Register of blood donation issue and recipient records.</p> <p>Includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Date of receipt - Donation or batch number - Quantity - Date of transfusion - Date of issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register of blood donation issue and receipt records 	<p>Temporary</p> <p>Destroy 25 years after date of last entry in register</p>

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Class No.	Description of Records	Examples	Status and Disposal Action
	- Identification of recipient		
1.5.4	Register of specimens collected and received. Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Type of specimen - Location of collected specimen - Date of collection or receipt - Collectors' name - Method of collection May include taxonomic information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register of specimens e.g. TrakCare LAB 	Temporary Destroy 7 years after date of last entry in register
1.5.5	Equipment and Maintenance Register. Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Equipment Type - Manufacturer details - Disposal status - Dates (received, placed in service, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipment Register 	Temporary Destroy 7 years after disposal of asset

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Class No.	Description of Records	Examples	Status and Disposal Action
	decommissioned) - Government Asset Number - Condition on receipt (new, used or reconditioned) - Nickname - Warranties etc		
1.5.6	Equipment maintenance records. Includes: - Calibration records - Battery replacements - Electrical safety checks - Quality Control - Filter Changes Kit Insert Log: - Description - Batch number	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance records • Kit insert log • Calibration log 	Temporary Destroy 7 years after action completed

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Class No.	Description of Records	Examples	Status and Disposal Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dates (received, expiry) - Calibration required - Product Insert Calibration log: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Batch number - Date calibrated - Calibration curve - Quality control - Results (Accept/fail) 		

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Class No.	Description of Records	Examples	Status and Disposal Action
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1. Medical Pathology Services

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1.6 Diagnostics

The activities associated with procedures and tests performed by a pathology service on specimens taken from the body of a patient, including requests and instructions for carrying out diagnostic examinations.

NOTE: Refer to the NPAAC Requirements for the Retention of Laboratory Records and Diagnostic Material for minimum retention times for bodily specimens, samples or materials examined in a diagnostic pathology procedure, including slides, films, blocks, cultures and other related materials.

Class No.	Description of Records	Examples	Status and Disposal Action
1.6.1	Records documenting autopsy reports. Includes laboratory copies of reports, records of tissue and organ disposal. May include orders from the Territory Coroner, copies of police reports, copies of medical history, related diagrams, copies of any representative images, photos, contemporaneous notes, requests for further information, initial provisional report to the Coroner, final definitive report to the Coroner and related correspondence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-medicolegal Autopsy Reports Medicolegal (Coroner) Autopsy Reports 	Temporary Destroy 25 years after action completed
1.6.2	Records documenting blood donor testing performed for Australian Red Cross Blood Service (ARCBS).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Records of ARCBS Blood Donor Testing 	Temporary Destroy 25 years after action completed
1.6.3	Records relating to original test results, calculations used to derive the final result, relevant conversations,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Records of Analysis 	Temporary

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NOTE: Refer to the NPAAC Requirements for the Retention of Laboratory Records and Diagnostic Material for minimum retention times for bodily specimens, samples or materials examined in a diagnostic pathology procedure, including slides, films, blocks, cultures and other related materials.

Class No.	Description of Records	Examples	Status and Disposal Action
	<p>subjective observations and/or interpretations of tests performed which have been used to obtain the final result from analysis of individual patient samples submitted to the laboratory.</p> <p>Includes block keys, diagrams and copies of representative images for Anatomical Pathology.</p>		Destroy 7 years after action completed
1.6.4	Records documenting requests for pathology tests received by pathology laboratories by referring doctors, not including Coroner's orders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request forms <p>Non-medicolegal autopsy requests</p>	<p>Temporary</p> <p>Destroy 3 years after action completed</p>

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NOTE: Refer to the NPAAC Requirements for the Retention of Laboratory Records and Diagnostic Material for minimum retention times for bodily specimens, samples or materials examined in a diagnostic pathology procedure, including slides, films, blocks, cultures and other related materials.

Class No.	Description of Records	Examples	Status and Disposal Action
1.6.5	Facsimile cover sheets that detail individual patient laboratory results, which are transmitted by facsimile to health care providers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facsimile Cover Sheets 	Temporary Destroy 3 years after action completed
1.6.6	Records documenting pathology results provided over the telephone to health care providers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report: Telephone Result Log 	Temporary Destroy 3 years after action completed
1.6.7	Records documenting the final authorised result (and relevant comments) issued by the referral laboratory after analysis is completed on patient samples.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral Laboratory reports 	Temporary Destroy 1 year after action completed
1.6.8	Records documenting despatch information of specimens referred to referral laboratories.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despatch consignment lists 	Temporary Destroy 1 year after action completed

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NOTE: Refer to the NPAAC Requirements for the Retention of Laboratory Records and Diagnostic Material for minimum retention times for bodily specimens, samples or materials examined in a diagnostic pathology procedure, including slides, films, blocks, cultures and other related materials.

Class No.	Description of Records	Examples	Status and Disposal Action
1.6.9	Dictaphone recordings of original observations from macroscopic and microscopic descriptions, subjective observations and final interpretations, used to transcribe and obtain the final result from analysis of tissue submitted to the laboratory. Final transcribed result must be authorised by a Pathologist.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anatomical Pathology Dictaphone recordings (MUST be authorised by a Pathologist) 	Temporary Destroy 1 year after transcribed report authorised by Pathologist

1. Medical Pathology Services

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1.7 Policy

The activities associated with developing and establishing decisions, directions and precedents which act as a reference for future decision making, as the basis from which the organisation's operating procedures are determined.

Class No.	Description of Records	Examples	Status and Disposal Action
1.7.1	Master set of policies in relation to medical pathology services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final Policies 	Permanent Transfer to the NT Archives Service 10 years after action completed
1.7.2	Records documenting the development of medical pathology services policies. Includes draft versions, consultation notes and related correspondence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft Policies 	Temporary Destroy 7 years after policy superseded

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1.8 Procedures

Standard methods of operating laid down by an organisation according to formulated policy.

Class No.	Description of Records	Examples	Status and Disposal Action
1.8.1	Master set of procedures in relation to medical pathology services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standard operating procedures Laboratory Manuals 	Permanent Transfer to the NT Archives Service 10 years after action completed
1.8.2	Records documenting the development of procedures in relation to medical pathology services. Includes draft versions and consultation notes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft procedures 	Temporary Destroy 7 years after procedure superseded

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1.9 Reporting

The processes associated with initiating or providing a formal response to a situation or request (either internal, external or as a requirement of corporate policies), and to provide formal statements or findings of the results of an examination or investigation.

Includes agenda, briefing, business, discussion papers, proposals, reports, reviews and returns.

Class No.	Description of Records	Examples	Status and Disposal Action
1.9.1	Records documenting routine reports in relation to medical pathology services, such as reports of notifiable diseases or notifiable cancers to relevant government bodies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Routine reports 	Temporary Destroy 3 years after action completed