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State Records
of South Australia



South Australian Government Records Management Strategy

Managing Public Sector Records

Strategy

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Version 2

Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary	3
2. Background	6
2.1 Introduction	6
2.2 Authority	6
2.3 Overview	7
2.4 Governance	7
2.5 Responsibilities	8
2.6 Key Alignments	8
2.7 Previous Strategy – Establishing a Framework for Change	10
2.8 Current Environment – Challenges Ahead	11
3. Strategy	13
3.1 Vision	13
3.2 Scope	13
3.3 Principles	14
3.4 Goals and Actions	15
3.5 Outcomes	21
3.6 Key Performance Indicators	22

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1. Executive Summary

Information is a valuable and powerful resource and is at the heart of government.

Good government, sound policies and just decision-making demand that information is collated, stored, managed, used and disclosed wisely and appropriately¹.

Public sector records form a critical part of the information generated by government. Whether held in digital or paper form, public sector records support the expectations of citizens in a democratic society and the ability of those citizens to play a role in government decision-making. Sharing of records across government and the broader community increases their value through re-use and innovation.

The potential value of a record can only be realised if it is trusted and accessible. The effective creation, capture, control and disposal of the public sector's records are, therefore, critical.

The *State Records Act 1997* (SR Act) establishes the legal responsibility for agencies to ensure that official records in their custody are maintained in good order and condition.

The *South Australian Government Records Management Strategy* (the Strategy) provides the government's direction in the appropriate management of public sector records and the progressive improvement of agency practices. This facilitates increased openness, accountability and engagement with citizens.

The Government has identified the following priorities:

- improve efficiencies and reduce costs associated with temporary value records through management of records in electronic format;
- improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the long-term preservation of official records through the establishment of digital preservation capabilities; and
- enhance access to public sector information through the implementation of pro-active disclosure techniques.

The Strategy is based on the principles of trust, management and access to records, derived from international standard *ISO15489 – Records Management*.

¹ Prof John McMillan, Australian Information Commissioner, *Issues Paper 1: Towards an Australian Government Information Policy*, Foreword, November 2010.



The Strategy establishes the following (abridged) goals and actions:

Goal 1	<i>Public sector capability is developed</i>
	Action 1.1: Improve public sector education
	Action 1.2: Develop a broad approach to staff education
Goal 2	<i>Best practice records management is achieved</i>
	Action 2.1: Conduct surveys of records management practices
	Action 2.2: Provide policy and advice
Goal 3	<i>Governance of official records is formalised</i>
	Action 3.1: Ensure policies underpin recordkeeping practices
	Action 3.2: Establish Chief Executive responsibility
	Action 3.3: Investigate information governance and legislation
Goal 4	<i>Technology is implemented</i>
	Action 4.1: Improve management of temporary records in electronic form
	Action 4.2: Procure and implement appropriate technological solutions
Goal 5	<i>Preservation of records is assured</i>
	Action 5.1: Progress digital archive capability
	Action 5.2: Resolve capacity and accessibility issues
	Action 5.3: Establish business continuity plans
	Action 5.4: Enhance the archival collection through improved transfer mechanisms
Goal 6	<i>Engagement and participation of agencies and citizens is improved</i>
	Action 6.1: Investigate and implement proactive disclosure techniques



Citizens expect effective government and efficient public sector services. These expectations and the South Australian Government's determination to deliver a responsive public sector are reflected in South Australia's Strategic Plan and High Performance Framework.

The management of public sector records, including the ability to share those assets, is pivotal for government to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its services, facilitate a culture of innovation and improve its connection with citizens. Through sound management and a systematic approach, public sector records will become a core strategic asset that supports the economic, social and cultural interests of South Australia.



2. Background

2.1 Introduction

Governments around the world must deal with the rapidly increasing growth of records that are fundamental to every aspect of their business. These records, whether held digitally or in hard copy, form the essential source of evidence that documents government policy, iconic moments in history and the democratic rights and entitlements of citizens.

Citizens expect an effective and efficient public sector; one that can meet the needs of a progressive and innovative society, where the provision of information, advice and services is not bound by time or geography. This can only be achieved with the adequate management of the government's official records.

A citizen's right to access information held by elected government is a fundamental principle of a democratic society. Access to complete and accurate public sector records underpins the community's understanding of government, its policies and decision-making processes and in turn encourages participation of citizens in government.

The SR Act and the obligations it imparts on government agencies is a critical mechanism supporting these democratic principles. The objects of the SR Act are:

- to ensure that official records of enduring evidential or informational value are preserved for future reference;
- to promote the observance of best practices by agencies in their management of official records; and
- to ensure access to official records by government agencies and the public.

These objects facilitate access to the written and pictorial history of the State, the decisions made by government and interactions between citizens and government agencies. The availability of these records supports an open and accountable government.

The Strategy provides the government's direction in the appropriate management of public sector records.

2.2 Authority

The Strategy has been approved by the Minister for the Public Sector and is issued under section 14(1) of the SR Act.



2.3 Overview

The Strategy recognises that the principles of trust, access and management of records underpin best practice.

To assist government achieve these principles a series of goals and actions have been identified. These goals and actions, established in the Strategy, reflect legislative requirements, citizen expectations and results of the *2009/2010 Assessment Survey of Agency Records Management Practices* (see 2.7.1 for further information).

2.4 Governance

Management of the official records of the South Australian Government is grounded in legislation, in particular the SR Act and the *Freedom of Information Act 1997* as well as the Information Privacy Principles.

2.4.1 State Records Act 1997

The SR Act entrusts State Records of South Australia (State Records) with guiding state and local government agencies, in their records management programs and recordkeeping practices. The SR Act also makes agencies responsible for maintaining, in good order and condition, the official records in their custody.

Agencies are accountable to the public for their decisions, actions and dealings, and together with employees of the South Australian Government, have recordkeeping obligations, regardless of the medium the records take.

To assist agencies improve their recordkeeping practices and meet their legislative obligations State Records has developed the Adequate Records Management Framework (the ARM Framework), which is a systematic approach to records management and continual improvement. The ARM Framework consists of strategies, standards and guidelines that establish the practices, programs and benchmarks agencies to which agencies must commit.

2.4.2 Freedom of Information Act 1991

The objects of the *Freedom of Information Act 1991* (FOI Act) are to promote openness in government and accountability of Ministers and agencies, as well as to facilitate more effective participation by citizens in the processes involved in the making and administration of laws and policies.

To achieve this the FOI Act confers on citizens a legally enforceable right to access government information, subject only to restrictions as are consistent with the public interest and the preservation of personal privacy. Government records concerning a person's personal affairs may also be amended through the FOI Act.

As such the ability of agencies to appropriately create and manage records so that they are accessible is paramount to government meeting its obligations under the FOI Act.



2.4.3 Information Privacy Principles

The government's Information Privacy Principles (IPPs) prescribe requirements for the management of personal information in South Australian government agencies, including how that information must be collected, stored, accessed, used and disclosed. The implementation of best practice records management supports the appropriate management of personal information.

2.5 Responsibilities

Under the SR Act State Records and agencies have a joint responsibility to improve the management of public sector records. State Records provides governance, assistance and tools, whilst agencies are responsible for ensuring that their programs and practices meet legislative requirements.

2.6 Key Alignments

2.6.1 The Government's Primary Areas of Focus

Seven primary areas of focus have been identified for the government's forward agenda. They respond to South Australia's key challenges and community issues and are focussed on the long term future of the state. These priorities will guide policy and decision making by Cabinet and across government. They define the legislative agenda and budget processes, and they also define the work undertaken by the public sector.

These priorities will be tackled through three approaches to government: a culture of innovation and enterprise; sustainability; and a respect for individuals with a reciprocal responsibility to the community.

Good recordkeeping underpins the government's ability to develop policy, make evidence based decisions and provide services that enhance the community. The goals and actions established in the Strategy support the government's primary areas of focus and the approaches that will be employed to tackle them.

2.6.2 Public Sector Act 2009

The *Public Sector Act 2009* (PS Act) establishes the government's intent to build a responsive public sector committed to delivering services to the public.

The importance of managing and sharing public sector information to assist the delivery of effective and efficient services is highlighted by clause 5(4) the PS Act. Additionally, clause 4(f) stipulates that one of the objects of the legislation is to ensure accountability in the public sector.

The PS Act also establishes the:

- importance of agency collaboration (clause 5(3));
- the importance of managing resources effectively (clause 5(5)); and



- the need to deal with agency information in accordance with law and agency requirements (clause 5(6)).

2.6.3 South Australia’s High Performance Framework

The High Performance Framework (HPF) provides a systematic approach to organisational performance management and continual improvement. The HPF will assist the public sector embed a culture of high performance by introducing a set of performance expectations and tools that can be used to assess and improve performance across government.

The Strategy supports the following HPF characteristic:

Characteristic	Building Block
High performing organisations use information and knowledge effectively	BB5.1 Information and knowledge is valued throughout the organisation as a primary means to achieve performance improvement.

2.6.4 South Australian Government ICT Strategy – Ask Just Once

The Strategy complements the South Australian Government ICT Strategy – *Ask Just Once*.

Whereas *Ask Just Once* focuses predominantly on the technology and service mechanisms needed to deliver an efficient and effective public sector, the Strategy concentrates on the management of the records within those systems and can also be applied to the information needed to deliver the services.

The Strategy supports *Priority 2 – Strengthen the Front-line*, of *Ask Just Once*, and has specific links to the following two key ICT Principles:

Principle	Description
Information is an asset	The government manages information as an asset that it holds in trust on behalf of citizens.
Information is shared	Information is freely shared across Government.



2.6.5 Towards an Australian Government Information Policy – Issue Paper 1

In November 2010 the Australian Information Commissioner released *Issues Paper 1: Towards an Australian Government Information Policy*. The paper establishes ten draft principles focused on the publication of public sector information. The following principles have direct relevance to the Strategy:

Principle	Description
Effective information governance	Information is a core strategic asset that should be managed effectively.
Robust information asset management frameworks	Information should be effectively managed throughout its lifecycle.
Findable information	Potential users should be readily able to discover the information they require.

2.7 Previous Strategy – Establishing a Framework for Change

In 2003 State Records conducted an environmental scan of South Australian Government records management programs and practices via an agency self-assessment process. The assessment process highlighted a number of challenges, including the need for a strategic direction for records management, making best use of technology and establishing what resource and training requirements might need to be addressed to strengthen records management processes and systems.

The first Across-Government Records Management Strategy (A-G RM Strategy), released in 2004, outlined 6 strategic goals designed to support the responsibilities outlined in the SR Act and to respond to the challenges and opportunities facing government.

The ARM Framework was developed and implemented; the Electronic Document and Records Management System (EDRMS) Panel was established; agencies were able to self-assess their recordkeeping practices against a formal monitoring and benchmarking framework; and a government-wide training and awareness program was developed.

Of the 55 actions established in the A-G RM Strategy, 36 were either completed or partially completed between 2004 and 2010. The remaining actions have, where appropriate be incorporated in to the Strategy.



2.8 Current Environment – Challenges Ahead

Government agencies operate in an environment where the expectations of citizens, influenced by changing technology and experiences with the private sector, are placing increased demands on the public sector to deliver more services efficiently and effectively. Citizens expect seamless service delivery; they expect to be able to conduct business in an online environment and to have instant access to information and services no matter the time of day or location.

These expectations are set against a backdrop of heightened fiscal prudence.

The shifting external environment means that over time the records management requirements of agencies will change, even though the principles that underpin recordkeeping remain the same. Government must keep abreast of these changes.

2.8.1 Performance of Government

In 2009/2010 State Records conducted a government-wide environmental scan that benchmarked the recordkeeping practices of agencies against established best practice. The results of the *2009/2010 Assessment Survey of Agency Records Management Practices* (the Survey) demonstrated inadequacies across state and local government. In particular the Survey highlighted:

- the need to implement technology supporting the management of official records in electronic format;
- records management staff numbers and the skills of practitioners are insufficient;
- the management of official records is not adequately documented or supported through official policies;
- records vital to an agencies operating capability require identification and management;
- official records are not stored appropriately; and
- access to official records outside of the freedom of information process does not occur regularly.

The Strategy aims to progressively improve the public sector's management of official records by building on achievements and responding to those areas of improvement that were highlighted through the Survey.



2.8.2 Information Access Reform

Freedom of Information (FOI) and Privacy play a crucial role in facilitating a more open and accountable government and in supporting a democratic society.

There is a growing requirement by the community for greater and easier access to information and improved protection of personal information. At the same time there is a realisation that the value of government information is not necessarily in the information itself but in what the information can be re-used for. By making access easier and being proactive in its release government is enabling innovation and improved service delivery.

Government's ability to meet its FOI and Privacy obligations, to improve efficiency and effectiveness, and to meet its broader obligations to engage and transact with citizens, is fundamentally dependent on the adequate management of records at an agency level. The Strategy, therefore, looks to weave together reforms in records management with continued improvements in the FOI and Privacy environments.

2.8.3 Priority Areas

The Government has identified the following priorities:

- improve efficiencies and reduce costs associated with temporary value records through management of records in electronic format;
- improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the long-term preservation of official records through the establishment of digital preservation capabilities; and
- enhance access to public sector information through the implementation of pro-active disclosure techniques.



3. Strategy

The Strategy has been developed to ensure that the future needs and legislative requirements of government and citizens can be achieved. The Strategy takes into account:

- governments obligations to observe best practice management of its records;
- preservation and access to official records of enduring evidential or informational value in electronic and paper format;
- technological changes;
- reform initiatives in freedom of information and privacy;
- the desire to improve engagement with citizens; and
- the evolving needs of citizens.

The Strategy establishes a progressive and considered approach that enables agencies to implement improvements gradually.

3.1 Vision

The South Australian Government manages its records as a valued asset held on behalf of citizens, now and in the future.

3.2 Scope

The Strategy relates to those records created or received by an agency in the conduct of its business, that is, the State's official records. However, it can be applied to the management of public sector information assets generally.

The Strategy:

- establishes goals and actions to be undertaken by both State Records and agencies;
- does not mandate the use of specific technologies or systems;
- is mandated for State Government agencies. Local Government authorities should utilise this document to assist in progressing their records management programs in line with the requirements of the SR Act and the *Local Government Act 1999*.



3.3 Principles

The Strategy is based on the following records management principles:

Principle 1	
<i>Trusted</i>	<p><i>Government records can be trusted to be authentic, reliable and retain integrity.</i></p> <p>Citizens can be confident that the records held by government provide accurate evidence of transactions undertaken, are tamper-proof and free of restrictions imposed by digital rights and encryptions.</p>
Principle 2	
<i>Managed</i>	<p><i>Government records are managed for as long as they are required.</i></p> <p>The government proactively manages public sector records in a manner that supports improved service delivery and enables government responsibilities to be met, now and in the future.</p>
Principle 3	
<i>Accessible</i>	<p><i>Government records are accessed for as long as business or legislative requirements dictate.</i></p> <p>Agencies and citizens are able to access the records they require in an efficient manner, within a regime that ensures the consistent application of security and privacy restrictions. Information sharing across government and more broadly with communities is encouraged.</p>



3.4 Goals and Actions

The goals and actions provide government’s direction in the appropriate management of public sector records and the progressive improvement of agency practices.

Goal 1	Public Sector capability is developed	
To ensure that those who have a responsibility for the management of public sector records have the appropriate levels of training and experience.		
<i>Action 1.1</i>	<i>Improved Public Sector Education Program for Records and Archival Management</i>	<i>State Records</i>
A contemporary education program for public sector employees, which builds on existing courses and partnerships, will be maintained. <i>To be actioned by: June 2013</i>		
<i>Action 1.2</i>	<i>Develop a broad approach to records and archival management education amongst staff</i>	<i>Agencies</i>
Staff understanding of records management practices is improved. Includes induction programs, formalised training, mentoring and work based experience. Initiatives targeting senior management are also included. <i>To be actioned by: June 2014</i>		



Goal 2	Best practice records management is achieved	
To ensure that all public sector records management practices, tools and processes meet the requirements of the ARM Framework.		
<i>Action 2.1</i>	<i>Conduct surveys of records management practices</i>	<i>State Records & Agencies</i>
	The assessment of records management practices against established benchmarks forms the basis of improvement across government. <i>Surveys to be undertaken in: 2014, 2018, 2022</i>	
<i>Action 2.2</i>	<i>Provision of policy and advice</i>	<i>State Records</i>
	Provide contemporary standards, policies and advice that consider emerging issues and assist agencies in the management of their official records. <i>To be actioned by: December 2012</i>	



Goal 3	Governance of official records is formalised	
<p>The management of records across the public sector is characterised by good governance, leadership and accountability.</p>		
<i>Action 3.1</i>	<i>A policy framework underpins recordkeeping practices</i>	<i>Agencies</i>
<p>Agency records management practices are underpinned by a framework of policies and procedures.</p> <p><i>To be actioned by: December 2013</i></p>		
<i>Action 3.2</i>	<i>Chief Executive and agency responsibility is established</i>	<i>State Records</i>
<p>Chief Executive responsibility for records management is reinforced through Senior Management Council and assessed through progression against the ARM Framework. Consideration of delegated authority to individuals (stewards) who are assigned ownership and responsibility of record sets.</p> <p><i>To be actioned by: June 2013</i></p>		
<i>Action 3.3</i>	<i>Investigate information governance and legislation (Privacy, FOI and Archives)</i>	<i>State Records</i>
<p>Investigate legislative and governance reform to improve the effectiveness of information sharing and citizen engagement.</p> <p><i>To be actioned by: December 2015</i></p>		



Goal 4	Technology is implemented	
<p>Agencies to implement technology that is appropriate for the records and information management needs of government as well as the legislative and business requirements of agencies.</p>		
<i>Action 4.1</i>	<i>Investigate and progress the management of temporary value records in electronic form</i>	<i>State Records & Agencies</i>
	<p>Investigate and progress the management and storage of temporary value records (those records that are retained for a specific number of years) in electronic form to provide improved efficiencies and reduce costs to government.</p> <p><i>To be actioned by: June 2016</i></p>	
<i>Action 4.2</i>	<i>Procure and implement appropriate technological solutions</i>	<i>Agencies</i>
	<p>Government capability to gain efficiencies from the management of electronic records improved through agency procurement of systems that meet government’s long-term objectives around records management, access, preservation.</p> <p><i>To be actioned by: June 2016</i></p>	



Goal 5	Preservation of records is assured	
<p>To ensure the ongoing accessibility of public sector records, either in the short-term for business use or in the longer term for use by the community, through appropriate preservation strategies.</p>		
<i>Action 5.1</i>	<i>Investigate and progress the introduction of digital archive capability to South Australia</i>	<i>State Records</i>
<p>Investigate and progress digital archive capability for South Australia to deliver reduced storage costs and service efficiencies in the storage and access of public sector records of enduring value.</p> <p><i>To be actioned by: June 2016 (implementation by 2020)</i></p>		
<i>Action 5.2</i>	<i>Consider and resolve capacity and accessibility issues</i>	<i>State Records & Agencies</i>
<p>Resolve issues surrounding the volume of records, associated storage requirements and accessibility issues. Includes considering the relevance and size of the collection, context and control and access to official records.</p> <p><i>To be actioned by: December 2015 (completed by 2022)</i></p>		
<i>Action 5.3</i>	<i>Develop and implement plans and actions to ensure business continuity</i>	<i>Agencies</i>
<p>Agency business continuity plans include the identification and appropriate management of agency records.</p> <p><i>To be actioned by: September 2013</i></p>		
<i>Action 5.4</i>	<i>Enhance the governments archival collection through improved transfer mechanisms</i>	<i>State Records</i>
<p>Enhance the relevance and quality of the government’s archival collection through the identification and implementation of initiatives that improve the appraisal of official records and the transfer of archival material. Includes charging agencies based on evidence of sustained poor performance.</p> <p><i>To be actioned by: June 2017</i></p>		



Goal 6	Engagement and participation of agencies and citizens is improved	
Enhance the accessibility of public sector information enabling a more informed community that is better able to engage and participate with its government.		
<i>Action 6.1</i>	<i>Investigate reform initiatives that support improved access to public sector information</i>	<i>State Records & Agencies</i>
<p>Investigation, identification and implementation of proactive disclosure techniques that enhance the community’s ability to access public sector information.</p> <p><i>To be actioned by: June 2016 (implementation by 2018)</i></p>		



3.5 Outcomes

Records management is a fundamental element of good governance, particularly with respect to transparency and accountability. Good recordkeeping supports efficiency and accountability through the creation, management and retention of meaningful, accurate, reliable, accessible and durable records of government activities and decisions.

The Strategy aims to progressively improve the records management practices of government, so that public sector information can be trusted and is accessible as required. In realising this, the following outcomes will also be achieved:

3.5.1 Protecting the Rights of Citizens

The ongoing management of public sector information is essential in supporting the rights and entitlements of South Australian citizens. Public sector information, whether in digital or paper form, documents people's entitlements to land, births, deaths and marriages, decisions of court and other transactions that occur between the government and a citizen. Ensuring that government information can be trusted, preserving the public record and facilitating access to that information is, therefore, critical to government and its citizens.

3.5.2 Enhancing Engagement and Participation

Through the appropriate management of public sector information, including the sharing of information, government is able to enhance engagement with the community and increase participation of citizens with government agencies. For citizens to engage and participate they need to know how government operates, what its policies are and what the issues are. In many instances people literally do not know what they do not know. It is, therefore, important that government pushes information out to citizens as opposed to waiting for citizens to request it.

3.5.3 Reuse of Government Information Assets

In its information assets the South Australian Government holds an invaluable source of both contemporary and historical records and data. This information, if shared appropriately both within and outside government, can support current initiatives and help build on previous decisions. In particular, the large amounts of digital information can be reformed to advise new initiatives and support areas seemingly unconnected with the original purpose of the record.

3.5.4 Innovation

The sharing of government records with the private sector can also lead to innovation that would not have occurred had that information remained within government. The private sector, through their nature, is in a position to take advantage of information, especially in areas where government is not involved. This leads to benefits for the community as a whole and to individual citizens who are able to take advantage of these innovations.



3.6 Key Performance Indicators

The performance of government and agencies will be assessed against the following key performance indicators (KPI's):

3.6.1 Government

- Preservation of official records in electronic form is assured
- Costs associated with the storage of temporary value records decrease

3.6.2 Agencies

- Improvement in records management practices is demonstrated through future assessment surveys
- Number of agencies procuring technologies that support the management, access and preservation of electronic records
- Number of agencies with the capability to transfer records digitally
- All agency records management practices are underpinned by approved policies and procedures
- Number of agencies employing appropriately experienced and qualified records management staff
- Number of applications made through the freedom of information process decrease