



Electronic Records Management

What is an electronic record?

An electronic record, like its paper counterpart, is the documentation of a transaction that happens as a result of someone taking a particular action at a particular time - it is the evidence of what has happened, of who was involved and when.

Records provide the evidence of deliberations, decisions and transactions. Their continuing integrity is crucial for as long as they have value for government or the community. Electronic records can include e-mail, Internet content, documents, spreadsheets, drawings, databases, and digitally recorded images, and must be managed with the same vigour as paper records.

What is electronic records management?

The successful management of electronic records, particularly those that have ongoing value to the community and the government, requires a systematic approach through each phase of the life of a record including:

- creation and capture
- control (including classification, registration & indexing)
- maintenance and use
- storage
- disposal
- access

Management of electronic records requires special consideration because of their volatility. Without active management throughout their existence, electronic records are not likely to remain accessible or to be complete and reliable, even over short periods. For these reasons, Government needs to manage its electronic records through the development and implementation of electronic recordkeeping systems that capture, maintain and provide access to these records over time.

When does data and information become a record?

Data, information and documents become official records when they are created or received in the conduct of Government business. They therefore need to be managed in accordance with the *State Records Act 1997*.

Records are retained to provide evidence of a business activity. To be considered evidence, they have to demonstrate not only structure and content but also context - the who, what, where, when and why surrounding a business transaction. This is what separates records from other forms of information.

South Australian Government records can only be disposed of in accordance with an approved disposal determination approved by the State Records Council. Disposal Schedules set out the minimum period for which records need to be kept in accordance with their value to the agency, to the Government as a whole and to the wider community.

Current international best practice for managing electronic data and information as records is for each agency to establish identifiable corporate records management systems. Such systems need to be able to maintain the integrity of digital data as electronic records over time.

What is the legislative and standards context of electronic records management in South Australia?

There are various legal requirements applying to electronic records management. South Australian agencies are required to comply with relevant provisions of their enabling legislation and of the following Acts & Principles:

- *State Records Act 1997*
- *Freedom of Information Act 1991*
- *Information Privacy Principles* (issued as Cabinet Administrative Instruction No. 1 of 1989 & reissued 30 July 1992)
- *Electronic Transactions Act 2000*
- *Evidence Act 1929*
- *Public Sector Management Act 1995*
- *Local Government Act 1999*

In addition to legislation there are national and international standards that agencies should be aware of if they are to pursue best practice. These include:

- *AS ISO15489 Records Management*
- *ISO9000 Quality Assurance*
- *AS/NZ4360 Risk Management.*

State Records has issued two standards that directly relate to the management of electronic records:

- The *EDRMS Design Standard* (2009) provides five key principles and the related minimum compliance requirements for Electronic Document and Records Management systems; and provides metadata compliant profiles for records in an EDRMS.
Agencies will be expected to select systems based on evaluation against these and other business-specific requirements, or provide a business case for another framework of specifications.
- *Adequate Records Management Standard* (2002) contains the outcomes for a records management program and associated benchmarks which agencies are required to meet if their records management programs are to be considered adequate in accordance with section 16 of the State Records Act. The Standard applies to both paper-based and electronic records.

Glossary

State Records has produced an extensive Glossary of Records Management Terms. This can be accessed and downloaded from the publications section under Adequate Records Management on the State Records website <http://www.archives.sa.gov.au>.

Further information

This document forms part of a suite of documents issued by State Records relating to electronic records management. The principal documents in this suite include:

- *Document and Records Management Systems Standard* (2009)
- *EDRMS Design Standard* (2009)
- *South Australian Recordkeeping Metadata Standard (SARKMS)* (2009)
- *EDRMS Functional Specification Standard* (2009)
- *EDRMS Procurement and Pre-Implementation Guideline* (2009)
- *Management of E-mail as Official Records: Policy, Guidelines and Technical Considerations* (2002).

While specific papers will be released on electronic records issues, it is generally considered that electronic records, like their paper-based counterparts, will be managed in accordance with the Adequate Records Management Framework.

The Adequate Records Management Framework is described in:

- *Adequate Records Management Standard* (2002).