



Policies, Procedures and Guidelines

RECORDS MANAGEMENT POLICY

CSG017

1. BACKGROUND

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for the management of Lachlan Shire Council's (LSC) corporate records in accordance with relevant legislation, standards and codes approved by State Records.

State legislation requires that full and accurate records of all activities and decisions of LSC are created, managed and retained or disposed of appropriately. This policy sets out the principles and responsibilities to promote information accessibility and accountability while ensuring the protection of the rights and interests of council, staff, customers and the community.

LSC has implemented HP Total Records Information Management (TRIM) as the official compliant business management system Electronic Document Management System (EDMS).

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this policy are to define a framework for council to:

- manage records efficiently and effectively;
- meet accountability requirements and community expectations; and
- comply with legislative and policy requirements relating to record keeping practices

3. DEFINITIONS

The definitions used in this policy are derived from those in the State Records Act 1998.

Administrative Value:

The value of a record for the conduct and future administrative business.

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Archives:

Those records which are no longer required for current use, but have been selected for permanent retention because of their evidential or informational value.

Disaster Planning:

A document that sets out the measures to be taken to minimise the risks and effects of disasters.

Disposal Schedule:

A systematic listing of records created by an organisation that plans the life of these records from the time of their creation to their disposal.

Documents:

The smallest complete unit of recorded material which is accumulated to form a file.

Electronic/Digital Records:

Records communicated and maintained by means of electronic equipment.

Evidential Value:

The value for providing evidence of the origins, structure, function, policies and operations of the agency or person that created the records.

Information Value”

The value for reference or research deriving from the information the records contain. Records and archives often contain information that has reference or research uses not envisaged by their creators.

Legal Documents:

Original legal documents, ie. leases, contracts, licences, deeds, certificates of title, etc.

Record:

Something created and kept as evidence of agency or individual functions, activities and transactions. To be considered evidence, a record must possess content, structure and context and be part of a recordkeeping system. A record can be a document (including any

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written or printed material, email) or object (including sound recording, coded storage device, magnetic tape or disk, microfilm, photograph, film, map, plan or model, painting or other pictorial or graphic work) that is, or has been kept by reason of any information or matter that it contains or can be obtained from it by reason of its connection with any event, person, circumstance or thing.

State Records

Any records made and kept or received and kept, by any person in the course of the exercise of official functions in a public office, or for any purpose of a public office, or for the use of a public office.

Lachlan Shire Council has elected to use TRIM as its electronic records management system.

Vital Records

Those records that are essential for the ongoing business of an agency, and without which the agency could not continue to function effectively

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

General Manager

The General Manager has a duty to ensure that LSC complies with the requirements of the State Records Act 1998 and Regulation and the standards issued under that Act by.

Director Community Services and Governance

The Director Community Services and Governance functions as LSC's Corporate Records Manager (CRM) for the purposes of the Records Management Program. The CRM is accountable for the management of the program as well as ensuring LSC's compliance with the State Records Act 1998 standards. The CRM is responsible for making and administering arrangements for the monitoring of the program as required by the State Records Act 1998, s.12(3)

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Information Services Manager

The Information Services Manager reports directly to the Director Community Services and Governance and is responsible for the implementation and efficient operation of LSC's Records Management Program and the provision of services to users.

The Information Services Manager has the authority to develop standards for information management across LSC to define the rules and requirements associated with records and information management operations and record keeping systems; and in conjunction with the Records Officer to monitor corporate information and record keeping practices.

Records Officer

The Records Officer is responsible for the daily management of and the monitoring compliance of corporate information and record keeping practices. The Records Officer is also responsible for the efficient and accurate registration of business records and information into TRIM.

Directors

Each Director is responsible for ensuring that members of staff who have access to confidential information are instructed regarding their rights and obligations when dealing with such matters.

Managers

Each Manager is responsible for ensuring that staff respond to correspondence and action tasks in a timely manner and recording this information into TRIM in accordance with protocols determined by the Manager Information Services. Audits will be undertaken in accordance with relevant risk assessments.

Staff

All staff are accountable for compliance with this policy and related policies, standards and guidelines.

Staff members are responsible for capturing and creating business records and registering them into TRIM.

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These records will include:

- decisions
- oral decisions and commitments, including telephone discussions
- meetings
- other events
- business activities in which they take part.

All staff will:

- capture information by ensuring accurate registration into TRIM in accordance with protocols outlined by the Manager Information Services.
- handle records and information sensibly and with care and respect so as to avoid damage to the records and prolong their life (Hardcopy records in particular).
- not alienate, relinquish control over, damage, alter or destroy records of Council without authorisation from the Director Community Services and Governance.
- access only the official records that they are authorised to access identify vital records in consultation with the Records Officer.
- The Local Government Act 1993 specifically addresses the issue of mishandling of records by staff.

Contractors

Contractors must manage records that they create on behalf of LSC according to the terms of their contract. Access to records held by the contractor such as performance of services, information collected from members of the public or information provided to the contractor by LSC may be subject to access applications under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009.

5. MANAGING RECORDS AND INFORMATION

Records Management Program

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The State Records Act 1998 s12(2) requires that LSC maintains a Records Management Program. This program is an organisation wide program that covers the full range of LSC records and information including but not limited to the following records:

- hardcopy
- digital
- image
- audio
- e-mail
- portable media r
- internet and web-based
- social media.

The Records Management section within the Community Services and Governance Department is responsible for providing a corporate records and information management service.

The objectives of the Records Management Program are to:

- have full and accurate records and information of all Council operations to support ongoing business activities and accountability requirements under the State Records Act 1998 and the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (GIPA Act)
- ensure that records and information are managed in a compliant ECMS (ECM)
- have information management systems and practices that comply with the State Records Act 1998 and relevant standards. These standards would include the standard on digital recordkeeping, standard on counter disaster strategies for records and recordkeeping systems, standard on physical storage of state records and standard on the appraisal and disposal of state records.
- maintain a current Disaster Strategy Plan to ensure that records in all formats and recordkeeping systems and critical data required to reconstitute electronic records are protected. This plan will operate in conjunction with the Business Continuity Plan.
- develop a tactical plan for the overall approach to records and information management that reflects the Council's Community Strategic Plan.
- develop meaningful performance indicators and collect relevant statistics to support the performance indicators for the program.

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- monitor records management activities through regular audits to evaluate performance and compliance.

Records Management Systems

Council uses TRIM for the management of records and documents (including electronic documents).

Other information systems are used to capture and store records and information such as Authority, server network (S-Drive), GIS and AutoCAD systems.

When purchasing or implementing new systems, an assessment must be undertaken to identify the types of records that will be created or stored within that system and consultation must take place with the Records Officer to determine the appropriate management of those records.

Document Management Rules

All staff are to use TRIM to record all substantive official business. Staff are not to maintain individual or separate files or recordkeeping systems or unmanaged electronic repositories for Council records except as otherwise authorised by the Records Officer.

All incoming correspondence and information that require an action or represents Council business will be registered and tasked in TRIM in accordance with protocols determined by the Director Community Services & Governance.

The Records Officer is responsible for registration of LSC business records and information received:-

- by post
- to the LSC fax number: 02 6895 3478
- e-mails received at: council@lachlan.nsw.gov.au or councilconnect@lachlan.nsw.gov.au and businessconnect@lachlan.nsw.gov.au
- on-line requests received at: <http://www.lachlan.nsw.gov.au>

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All formal documents generated within LSC, including outwards correspondence, should be immediately registered by staff generating that correspondence in TRIM and linked to the appropriate classification with a notation on action taken in relation to the document. The Records Officer is not responsible for registering outgoing correspondence.

Staff who receive LSC business related e-mails to their own accounts are responsible for registering those e-mails into TRIM.

Vital Records

Vital records include records needed to:

- operate the LSC during a disaster
- re-establish the LSC functions after a disaster
- establish and protect the rights and interests of the LSC, its employees, customers and stakeholders.

Vital records are those records that are essential for the ongoing business of the Council, and without which the Council could not continue to function effectively. The identification and protection of such records is a primary object of records management, risk management and disaster management planning.

Managing vital records involves:

- identifying and documenting vital records
- finding measures to protect them
- ensuring they are priorities for salvage in a disaster

Such records may be considered vital only in the short term, or may retain this status indefinitely. These records include original signed copies of agreements, contracts, leases

Staff are responsible for identifying and managing vital records in consultation with Records Officer.

Scanned Records

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The Records Management section undertakes the scanning of all incoming correspondence. These images are captured within TRIM with appropriate metadata stored with each record. Many other business units also undertake the scanning of hardcopy records to meet their business requirements.

Council has an obligation to ensure that all digital records are accessible over time and are kept for as long as required in accordance with approved disposal authorities.

The original of scanned images can be destroyed under certain circumstances and must be done in accordance with approved disposal authorities. Where originals have been destroyed, the digital copy must be retained for the full retention period as required under the relevant disposal authority.

Council disposes of the original of incoming correspondence scanned daily and then stored in a 'day box' in accordance with the disposal policy.

Original records that cannot be destroyed even when digitised include:

- Records that are subject to a Government policy or directive not to be destroyed
- Records that are considered to have intrinsic value eg. original artworks
- Original proclamations, testimonials and intergovernmental agreements or treaties
- Records that are subject to pending or current legal proceedings or an application for access under legislation such as Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 should be considered for exclusion from destruction based on a risk assessment of the records that fall into this category.

Records Management staff will follow guidelines issued under the **Original or source records that have been copied (GA45)** in relation to quality control measures for scanned documents and in determining which original records will be destroyed.

Consultation will take place with the relevant section to determine individual needs of the section as they arise in determining which hardcopy records can be destroyed once they have been scanned.

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Hardcopy files

Various hard-copy records are maintained by Council. These include files created prior to the introduction of the TRIM on 1 January 2005, files related to development applications, personnel files and legal files. The tactical plan for the overall approach to records and information management under the Records Management Program will develop procedures for the ongoing management of hardcopy files including:

- completeness
- accuracy
- currency
- barcode tracking
- an archives project plan for the appraisal and sentencing of hardcopy documents and files

Contracts and Legal Documents

All original contracts or legal documents must, as soon as practicable after signing, be sent to the Records Officer where:

- the document is scanned
- the image is registered in TRIM
- the original document is placed on the relevant Legal File and stored in the legal file archive in the Fire Proof Safes and cross-referenced to the TRIM document

Location and Movement of Records

The current location of digital corporate records and information is controlled through TRIM. TRIM has sophisticated security and classification protocols to ensure that confidential and classified records and information cannot be accessed by unauthorised persons.

Records required by courts or solicitors, must be recorded and issued according to the approved protocol to ensure the information is not lost to Council.

Council Officers who are required to attend court on behalf of Council and need to produce records (photocopies preferred if acceptable) and information require the consent of the

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Director Community Services and Governance before removing records or information from Council.

Hard-copy records prior to the introduction of the TRIM and Legal Files are controlled through a computerised file tracking system and are held within either the records storage area, archives or State Records. The location of every file must be accurate and up to date in TRIM at all times. Council Officers moving or transferring files must inform the Records Officer so the tracking system can be kept up to date.

Storage and Security of Records

Under the State Records Act 1998 all physical records must be appropriately stored to ensure that:

- Records are protected, secure and accessible for as long as they are required to meet business accountability needs and community expectations
- Records of continuing value which will be transferred to State Records control and/or custody as State archives are stored in the best conditions possible
- Records are stored in the most cost-effective manner possible
- Legal Documents (eg. leases, contracts, deeds, certificates of title, licences, etc) are to be scanned and registered into ECM. The originals should be kept on the relevant Legal file that is stored in the strong room (safe)
- Unauthorised alteration, removal, distribution or destruction of Council records is prohibited
- All electronic records must be backed up systematically at appropriate intervals
- The management of storage facilities on-site and off-site is the responsibility of the Manager Information Services.

Archiving, Disposal and Destruction of Records

Archival appraisal and disposal of records has central place in the records management program for public offices. It is important to make sound decisions about how long to retain records and when to dispose of them. A structured appraisal and destruction project plan is the best bench mark.

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Local government business records are governed by a specific disposal authority that has been approved under the State Records Act 1998 (GA39).

No business records should be destroyed without the approval of the Director Community Services and Governance. A list of records destroyed is to be retained in TRIM.

Disposal of Digitised Records

When records have been digitised, the original record must be kept for an agreed time period for quality control purposes. This will depend on the type of record and will be agreed upon in conjunction with the section responsible for a particular record class.

Where routine scanning is undertaken by various sections, the original documents may be disposed of by those sections, however discussion must be held with the Records Officer prior to this occurring and all scanning and disposal must be undertaken in accordance with this policy and related guidelines.

Digital records that have been created by way of scanning must be kept for as long as the original paper copy would have been kept for, in accordance with the relevant approved disposal authorities.

Disposal of Physical Records

Disposal of hardcopy records or files is not to be undertaken without approval (with the exception of those records identified above) and is the responsibility of the Records Officer. All destruction undertaken by the Records Management Section will be done in accordance with approved disposal authorities. Records may be kept for longer if required for administrative, fiscal, legal or historical reasons.

All records due for destruction will be documented on the approved Records Disposal Authorisation Form and approval will be obtained by the relevant Manager prior to any destruction taking place.

Disposal of 'Day Boxes'

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Council scans and registers incoming correspondence in the TRIM EDMS daily then stores the original documents in a 'day box'. Day boxes are retained for a period of six months for quality control purposes consistent with GA45 (Original or Source Records that have been copied). Day boxes are securely disposed of after six month consistent with GA39.

Day boxes are retained and disposed in accordance with the protocol for retention and disposal of day boxes. Day boxes held in archive prior to the implementation of this policy are retrieved, sample audited for quality control and authorised for destruction in accordance with the protocol for retention and disposal of day boxes.

6. ACCESS TO COUNCIL RECORDS AND INFORMATION

The Director Community Services and Governance as Public Officer is deemed responsible for the keeping of full and accurate records, compliance with NSW recordkeeping standards and internal practices.

The public will not be permitted access to the Records Management Section, store rooms or staff work areas.

The Ombudsman Act provides for access to Council's records associated with an investigation by the Ombudsman in relation to a complaint against the Council.

These requests shall be referred to the Director Corporate Services for consideration on receipt and registration.

No record of Lachlan Shire Council is to be removed or temporarily removed by any Councillor or Staff member without having first obtained the consent of the General Manager or Director Community Services and Governance. The exceptions are those records required for on-site inspections or those required in the normal course of duty and the Records Management officer has been advised accordingly.

The Director Community Services and Governance is to be notified whenever any physical records or information need to be sent outside the organisation, i.e. to Council's solicitors.

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7. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- access to Information Policy
- e-Mail Policy and Protocol
- code of Conduct

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