



# NORTHERN MIDLANDS COUNCIL

## POLICY MANUAL

### INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

**Originated Date:** Adopted 21 September 2015 – Min. No. 271/15

**Amended Date/s:** Reviewed 20 August 2018 – Min. No. 230/18  
Reviewed July 2019  
Reviewed 9 December 2024 – Min. No. 24/0415

**Applicable Legislation:** *As described within the Policy*

**Objective** The objective of this policy is to provide guidance and direction on the creation and management of information and records and to clarify staff responsibilities. Northern Midlands Council is committed to establishing and maintaining information and records management practices that meet its business needs, accountability requirements and stakeholder expectations. The benefits of compliance with this policy will be trusted information and records that are well described, stored in known locations and accessible to staff and clients when needed. This policy is written within the context of Northern Midlands Council information and records management framework which is attached as Appendix A. This policy is supported by complementary policies and additional guidelines and procedures which include Appendix B.

**Administration:** Corporate Services

**Review Cycle/Date:** Next review 2027

#### POLICY STATEMENT

Northern Midlands Council's information and records are a corporate asset, vital both for ongoing operations and also in providing valuable evidence of business decisions, activities and transactions.

All agency records must be managed and maintained regardless of their format in an authorised information management system.

All Council staff are required to create and maintain authentic, reliable and useable information, documents and records, and protect their integrity for as long as they are required through:

- Ensuring that full and accurate records are created and maintained for each business process followed in the Council
- Preserving records, whether hard copy or electronic, safely and securely
- Ensuring that electronic records are saved and stored in the Council's recordkeeping system, or other approved system, with appropriate metadata captured and naming conventions used to enable their efficient retrieval and use
- Ensuring records are accessible over time to support the conduct of business, and that they are only retained for as long as required by the Council and relevant legislation
- Assigning responsibilities for recordkeeping in the Council.

The agency aspires to proactively implement systems and processes which will enable records and information to be stored in an electronic format wherever possible.

This Policy is to be read in conjunction with the Information Management Framework and Records Management Manual. All practices and procedures concerning records management within the Council must be in accordance with this Policy.



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### SCOPE

This policy applies to the management and maintenance of records through their life cycle from creation, receipt or capture, to preservation and disposal under the provision of the *Archives Act 1983*. It includes records in any format held in the Council's information systems. This policy covers the work practices of staff and consultants who:

- Create information
- Access information
- Have responsibility for information including storage, retrieval, dissemination and disposal
- Have management responsibilities for officers engaged in any of these activities
- Manage or have design input into information technology infrastructure.

The key distinction between Council records and other types of information is that records provide evidence of business activities.

Records exist in a variety of formats including, but not limited to paper documents, electronic messages, word processed letters, web-pages, information in databases, photographs, film, maps etc.

Regardless of format, records must be created, captured, maintained, secured and disposed of in accordance with the requirements of this Policy.

### GOALS

The goals of this Policy are

- to ensure effective Council records management, covering the creation and maintenance of authentic, reliable and useable records.
- to ensure the Council's records support the accountability and transparency of its business functions and activities for as long as those records are required.
- to provide evidence of the Council's commitment to best practice records management.
- to set out the responsibilities of staff, clarifying their accountability for records and information management.
- to ensure that records and information management is done in accordance with our business and legislative requirements.

### RATIONALE

The Council records are our corporate memory, providing evidence of actions and decisions and representing a vital asset to support our daily functions and operations. Records support policy formulation, decision-making and protect the interests of Council.

In addition to this records help us to make good use of precedents and organisational experience. They support consistency, continuity, efficiency and productivity in program delivery, management and administration.

State legislation and Australian Standards have been adopted as a requirement and code of best practice for the management of information and records within the agency.

They provide details of the conditions and standards by which information management and recordkeeping practices at the agency will be guided.

The following information provides an overview of key standards and legislation applicable to Council.

*Archives Act 1983:*

establishes the requirement for Tasmanian government agencies to create and keep State records.

*AS:ISO-15489.1 – Information and Documentation – Records Management:*

provides clear guidelines for the establishment and application of records management practices, procedures and systems that have been incorporated into the agency's information management program.



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### *Corporations Act 2001:*

defines the agency's responsibilities for keeping financial records which correctly record and explain its transactions and financial position and performance; and that enable true and fair financial statements to be prepared and audited.

### *Crimes Act 1924:*

covers criminal activity including fraud.

### *Electronic Transactions Act 2000:*

facilitates and promotes business and community confidence in the use of electronic transactions. It recognises the legal validity of transactions carried out electronically, and so permits the "recording and retention of information and documents in electronic form". Recordkeeping practices should be applied to all records regardless of the format of those records. Where records are created electronically they should be managed appropriately.

### *Evidence Act 2001:*

describes the ways in which documents may be admitted as evidence into court. The Act describes the more acceptable formats and the features that would give more value or "weight" to records. Recordkeeping practices must ensure that the more appropriate format of the record is preserved.

### *Financial Management Act 1990 and Audit Act 2008:*

cover accounting and auditing requirements. The 1990 Act has since been amended to strengthen the powers of the Auditor-General. *(these Acts are not relevant to Councils).*

### *Financial Transaction Reports Act 1988:*

provides for the reporting of certain transactions and monetary transfers to the Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre (AUSTRAC) and specifies minimum retention periods for account and signatory information.

### *Income Tax Assessment Act 1997:*

requires the agency to keep records of income tax returns and assessments, and any related accounting documentation such as calculations, income and expenditure records.

### *Limitations Act 1974:*

Sets out time periods in which legal action can be taken in various instances. The Act imposes a number of limitations on specific types of actions.

### *Local Government Act 1993:*

Imposes a duty on Councils to create a wide variety of records.

### *Personal Information Protection Act 2004:*

sets out rules about information handling, including how the agency may collect, use, store and disclose personal information.

### *Right to Information Act 2009:*

provides for greater access to information held by Tasmanian government bodies and encourages proactive disclosure of information held by the agency as well as giving the public access to information upon request.

### *State Service Act 2000:*

provides a legislative framework that has been designed to support a contemporary workforce and to provide the best possible services to the Government, the Parliament and the community *(not relevant to Councils).*

### *Tasmanian Government Information Security Policy:*

is based upon the following information security policy principles:

- Availability: information is accessible and usable to authorised entities.



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- Integrity: the accuracy and completeness of information is protected.
- Confidentiality: information is not made available or disclosed to unauthorised individuals, entities or processes.
- Proportionality: measures to protect information are relative to the risk of loss or failure of availability, integrity and confidentiality.

### DEFINITIONS

#### *Business Classification Scheme:*

A hierarchical model of the relationship between the Council's functions, activities and transactions. It provides the core foundation for the development of the Council's recordkeeping tools including a retention and disposal schedule.

#### *Destruction Authority:*

A once-off authorisation from the State Archivist that permits destruction for a defined set of records.

#### *Disposal:*

Involves either the destruction of records; their transfer to the Tasmanian Archive & Heritage Office for retention as part of the State archives; their transfer to another custodian; or some other process approved by the State Archivist which removes them from the custody of the agency.

#### *Metadata:*

Data that describes the context, content and structure of records and their management through time.

#### *Record:*

Information created, received and maintained as evidence and information by an organisation or person, in the pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business. (Source: *International Standard ISO 15489 – 2002, Records Management, Part 1: General, Clause 3.15*)

#### *Retention and Disposal Schedule:*

An ongoing authorisation from the State Archivist that specifies minimum retention periods and consequent disposal actions for a defined set of records.

#### *State archive:*

State record or any other record which is deposited and preserved permanently in the Tasmanian Archive & Heritage Office.

#### *State records:*

Records of State government agencies/departments, State authorities, or local authorities. These public bodies are defined in Section 3 of the *Archives Act 1983*.

### REQUIREMENTS

#### CREATION AND MAINTENANCE OF RECORDS

Business records must be created and captured by everyone subject to this policy. Business records should provide a reliable and accurate account of business decisions and actions. Therefore it is necessary to include all necessary information to support business needs including the names, dates and time, and other key information needed to capture the business context.

Records can be folders, documents or data created, received or maintained as evidence and information of work done for or on behalf of the Council. Records may be either hard copy or electronic.

Examples of the Council's records include (but are not limited to):

- Agendas, minutes and papers



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- Case files
- Complaint correspondence
- Contracts and agreements
- Correspondence received from members of the public, private and public sector organisations that require action
- Documents related to events organised with or for external organisations, students etc.
- Facilities hire forms and documentation
- Media releases and articles
- Personnel recruitment and appointment documentation
- Policies and guidelines
- Reports and submissions
- Risk management registers and documentation
- Training program documentation
- WorkCover documents and files

Ultimately, if the record contains a business transaction or evidence of any decision that has been made on behalf of the Council it must be kept for the required time as per an approved Retention and Disposal Schedule authorised by the State Archivist.

Where no Retention and Disposal Schedule exists for the records they must be retained until such a time as they can be either destroyed according to a Destruction Authority authorised by the State Archivist, or transferred to the Tasmanian Archive & Heritage Office as State archives.

### RECORDS THAT DO NOT HAVE TO BE KEPT

Some records do not belong in the Council's recordkeeping system, including:

- External advertising material
- Externally published newsletters that do not contain material created by or referencing the Council
- Internal e-mails received by "carbon copy" (cc) or "blind carbon copy" (bcc)
- Junk e-mail
- Personal items including e-mail
- Rough notes, working papers and calculations used solely to assist in the preparation of other records such as correspondence, non-auditable reports and statistical tabulations
- Copies of any documents, preserved solely for reference
- Published material preserved solely for reference
- Electronic revisions of documents in the Council's recordkeeping system which can be purged/deleted when finalising documents

Documents of this nature may be destroyed, as defined by the Tasmanian Archive & Heritage Office *Retention and Disposal Schedule for short-term value records (DA2158)*

### SYSTEMS USED TO MAINTAIN RECORDS

Records generated within the Council in the course of normal business practice or received from an external source are to be registered and captured in the agency's recordkeeping system.

The following business and administrative databases and software applications are endorsed for the capture and storage of specific information and records. These include:

- Information and records management system – Technology One
- Business system – Outlook, Various Registers & User Drive
- Finance system – Open Office
- Payroll - Payroll.net



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A full register of endorsed systems used to create or manage information and records can be found at Appendix C. These endorsed systems appropriately support information and records management processes such as creation and capture, storage, protection of integrity and authenticity, security, access and retention, destruction and transfer.

***Corporate records must not be maintained in email folders, shared folders, personal drives or external storage media such as USB drives as these lack the necessary functionality to protect business information and records over time.***

Records created when using social media applications or mobile devices may need to be captured into an endorsed system.

### ACCESS TO RECORDS: SHARING CORPORATE INFORMATION WITHIN COUNCIL

Information is a corporate resource to which all staff may have access, except where the nature of the information requires restriction. Access restrictions should not be imposed unnecessarily but should protect:

- individual staff, or client privacy
- sensitive material such as security classified or material with dissemination limiting markings, for example any records information security classified 'Cabinet in Confidence' or above.

When handling information, staff are reminded of their [obligations outlined in their statements of duties and under the Employee Code of Conduct](#).

### RELEASE OF PUBLICLY AVAILABLE INFORMATION

In accordance with our obligations under the Right to Information Act 2009 access to publicly available information will be provided on our website and social media. This is the responsibility of Records Officer.

The public have legislative rights to apply for access to information held by our organisation under the Right to Information Act 2009. This applies to all information held by the agency, whether in officially endorsed records management systems or in personal stores such as email folders or shared and personal drives. Responses to applications for access under Right to Information legislation are the responsibility of the General Manager.

### RETENTION OR DESTRUCTION OF RECORDS

Council records are destroyed when they reach the end of their required retention period set out in Records Retention and Disposal Schedules issued by the Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office (TAHO). Retention periods in disposal schedules take into account all business, legal and government requirements for the records.

Records cannot be disposed of other than in accordance with all relevant Retention and Disposal Schedules and Destruction Authorities authorised by the State Archivist. In addition to this, records cannot be disposed of without the approval of the Records Management Officer and the Corporate Services Manager of the business unit that is the owner or is responsible for the records.

Some records can be destroyed in the normal course of business. These are records of a short-term, facilitative or transitory value that are destroyed as short term value records. Examples of such records include rough working notes, drafts not needed for future use or copies of records held for reference. See the TAHO website for the Retention and Disposal Schedule for Short Term Value Records. To discuss Business Units needs contact Council's Records Manager Officer.

Central to the Council's accountability process is the requirement it maintains a Register of Records Destroyed. This is the agency's formal evidential record of destruction and must be retained permanently by Council. The Register must be clearly identified as the Register of Records Destroyed under Section 20(2)(b) of the Archives Act 1983.



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### TRANSFER OF RECORDS

At times certain records may be required to be transferred out of the custody of Council. This occurs when records of archival value are no longer being actively used and/or are 25 years or older. In this instance Council transfers them to TAHO. We are still able to access records if a subsequent need arises to consult records in TAHO's custody.

Another instance where records may be transferred is when records are affected by administrative change and are transferred to an inheriting Council or to a private body. In either case, permission must be sought from TAHO before the records are transferred.

Contact our Council's Records Manager Officer to discuss the procedures for transferring records.

### MONITORING THE RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The records management program will be monitored for breaches of this Policy by the Records Management Officer and Information Technology Officer who will facilitate training as required.

Day-to-day records management audit activities will be coordinated by the Records Management Officer.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES**

All Council staff, consultants, and contractors employed or engaged by the Council are responsible for the management of all records created in the course of their work. This includes complying with this Policy at all times.

Staff must always be mindful that all records created in the course of their employment are the property of Council.

Specific responsibilities and accountabilities for information and records management at the agency include:

#### GENERAL MANAGER

The General Manager is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the Council's records management program satisfies operational and legislative requirements and obligations
- Implementing and continually improving the Council's information management program
- Defining the Council's requirements for information, records and document management
- Ensuring that staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities relating to the management of information
- Maintaining and reviewing this Policy and relevant documentation as required

#### DEPARTMENT MANAGERS OF COUNCIL

Department Managers are responsible for:

- including records management training in induction programs
- arranging for refresher training sessions as required
- Ensuring their staff have an appropriate awareness of information management systems and requirements
- Ensuring that staff attend training in information management systems or procedures relevant to their work area where necessary

#### RECORDS MANAGEMENT OFFICER

The Records Management Officer is responsible for the efficient management of Council's recordkeeping system, ensuring that sound recordkeeping principles and records management best practice guidelines are followed and adhered to.

This involves initiating and maintaining control over daily records management activities and services in accordance with the document and records management procedures, including providing support to staff in the use of Council's recordkeeping system.



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The Records Management Officer is also responsible for:

- Arranging training sessions for staff in the use of the Council's recordkeeping system
- Ensuring records are captured uniformly across the Council and stored in approved corporate systems
- Maintaining the integrity and authenticity of records
- Managing the storage of hardcopy records located onsite and offsite
- Managing the disposal of records under approved disposal schedules and maintaining the register of destroyed records
- Making and documenting configuration changes to the system as deemed necessary and via change control processes
- Ongoing review and amendment of Retention and Disposal Schedules
- Ensuring the system is accessible and performing appropriately on a day to day basis
- Responding to user requests for assistance with the Council's recordkeeping system or other records management issues

### HUMAN RESOURCES / PAYROLL STAFF

Human Resources / Payroll Staff of Council are responsible for:

- Administration and management of employee records
- Administration and management of records within Payroll.net
- Requesting the creation of personnel files

### INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY STAFF

Information Technology staff are responsible for:

- Ensuring new users are added to the Council's recordkeeping system as part of the new user induction program
- Providing technical support for the ongoing operation and maintenance of Council's systems
- Providing technical support to all staff on the use of Council's systems/applications
- Publishing and updating information onto the intranet and internet in consultation with the content owners
- Undertaking system backups
- Developing, maintaining and testing the Council's disaster recovery plan

### DEPARTMENTAL EMPLOYEES

Staff members should take care to handle records sensibly, with care and respect to avoid damage to them and to prolong their lifespan. Staff must not damage, alter or destroy information and records of the Council, without authorisation.

Staff members are responsible for using, maintaining and managing records in accordance with this Policy and the document and records management procedures.

This includes complying with these policies at all times by:

- Creating records that document their activities and decisions and saving them into Council's recordkeeping system or other approved systems (see Appendix C)
- Undertaking electronic document management activities within Council's recordkeeping system to ensure revision and version controls are captured
- Ensuring e-mail records are saved in Council's recordkeeping system
- Ensuring paper records are scanned to electronic format and saved in Council's recordkeeping system
- Recording folder movement for hard copy records in the Council's recordkeeping system
- Storing hard copy folders securely
- Ensuring hard copy records are not hoarded in work areas and are captured in a corporate system in a



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timely fashion

- Learning how and where records are kept within Council
- Not destroying records without authorisation and adhering to Council's disposal requirements
- Not losing records. Keeping safe custody of portable electronic storage (e.g. USB drives) at all times.
- Being aware of and following records management procedures as outlined in this document.



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### APPENDIX A

Appendix A will be provided on receipt of request by the Records Management Officer.



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### APPENDIX B

#### REGISTER OF ENDORSED SYSTEMS

For the purposes of Northern Midlands Council's Information Management Policy, the only systems that are endorsed for the storage of council records and information are:

- TechnologyOne ECM<sup>1</sup>
- Outlook<sup>2</sup>
- User Drive (F Drive)<sup>2</sup>
- SharePoint (for councillor data specifically – data also must be in ECM)
- Doc Assembler (automated agenda and meeting management)
- Docs on Tap (management and document distribution)
- OpenOffice software (for example, Payroll.NET for payroll data, Finesse for financial data, Procure.Gov for creditors data, Collect for debtors data, Property.Gov for property and rating data)
- IntraMaps (GIS data)
- OpenOffice web modules (planning/building/health/customer service)
- Registers (e.g. Contractors Register, Asbestos Register, Risk Register, etc)
- OpenOffice ApproveTAS (planning/building/plumbing Applications)
- ProMaster Key Manager (electronic key management system)
- LivePro (single source information system)
- OneDrive (data storage system)

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<sup>1</sup> ECM is the primary storage of electronic records for council. All council data should be stored here wherever possible, regardless of whether the data is also stored elsewhere.

<sup>2</sup> Storage in these systems is only permitted for the purposes of ease of access/communication, and only if the data is also registered in ECM.