



Department of Culture and the Arts  
Government of Western Australia

State Records Office of Western Australia

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# **Directions for keeping hardcopy State archives awaiting transfer to the State Records Office**

**State Records Office of Western Australia**

**2009**

**CONTENTS**

**DEFINITIONS** ..... 2

**PURPOSE** ..... 5

**RATIONALE**..... 5

**DIRECTIONS FOR KEEPING HARDCOPY STATE ARCHIVES:** ..... 6

    1. Environmental control..... 6

    2. Security ..... 6

    3. Storage..... 7

    4. Handling ..... 7

    5. Disaster planning. .... 8

**FURTHER ADVICE** ..... 8

**BIBLIOGRAPHY** ..... 8

### **DEFINITIONS**

**Government organization** means an organization listed under Schedule 1 of the *State Records Act, 2000*.

**Government organization employee** means

- a) a person who, whether or not an employee, alone or with others governs, controls or manages a government organization;
- b) a person who, under the *Public Sector Management Act 1994*, is a public service officer of a government organization; or
- c) a person who is engaged by a government organization, whether under a contract for services or otherwise.

**Government record** means a record created or received by a government organization or a government organization employee in the course of the employee's work for the organization.

**Photographic activity test (PAT)** means a test to determine the stability of photographic storage materials under ISO 18902:2007.

**Record** means any record of information however recorded and includes —

- (a) any thing on which there is writing or Braille;
- (b) a map, plan, diagram or graph;
- (c) a drawing, pictorial or graphic work, or photograph;
- (d) any thing on which there are figures, marks, perforations, or symbols, having a meaning for persons qualified to interpret them;
- (e) anything from which images, sounds or writings can be reproduced with or without the aid of anything else; and
- (f) any thing on which information has been stored or recorded, either mechanically, magnetically, or electronically;

**Recordkeeping Plan** means a plan required under Part 3 of the *State Records Act 2000*. State Records Commission (SRC) Standard 2 provides details about the Plan.

**Records Disposal Authority** means an authority for the retention and disposal of State records as approved by the SRC.

A records disposal authority may be:

- a General Disposal Authority published by the State Records Office - (<http://www.sro.wa.gov.au/government/publications.asp#gda>);
- a retention and disposal schedule; or
- an ad hoc disposal schedule.

**Relative humidity (RH)** means the percentage of water vapour present in an environment.

**Restricted access archive** means a State archive that is a government record and to which access is restricted until it is of a certain age. The status of the archive and the period of restriction must be approved by the State Records Commission.

## **Directions for keeping hardcopy State archives awaiting transfer**

**State archive** means a State record that is to be retained permanently.

**State organization** means a parliamentary department or a government organization.

**State record** means a parliamentary record or a government record.

## **Directions for keeping hardcopy State archives awaiting transfer**

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### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this directive is to assist State organizations that are unable to transfer hardcopy archives to the State Records Office (SRO) in accordance with an approved Records Disposal Authority, in ensuring that State archives are managed appropriately until such time as transfer can take place.

It provides for minimal compliance requirements only. However, organizations are encouraged to pursue best practice options in line with Australian and International standards.<sup>1</sup>

This directive does not apply to State organizations which have applied for and received permission from the State Records Commission (SRC) to retain hardcopy State archives in accordance with an approved Recordkeeping Plan. Archives retained under these circumstances are to be kept in accordance with *SRC Standard 7: Storage of State archives*. All State organizations must keep electronic archives in accordance with *SRC Standard 8: Digital Recordkeeping*.

### **RATIONALE**

Under s.32 of the *State Records Act 2000*, agencies are required to inform the Director of State Records in writing of their intention to transfer archives to the custody of the State Records Office (SRO). The Act provides that State archives should be transferred to the SRO when they are 25 years old. Organizations may also transfer State archives that are less than 25 years old, as identified in their Recordkeeping Plan. Identification of archives for transfer should occur as part of a regular Retention and Disposal exercise.

However, under s.32(4), where the Director of State Records is unable to accept transfers of State archives from a State organization, the Director must provide directions as to keeping the archives until transfer can take place. The following directions are provided to assist State organizations to make the best arrangements possible, within their resources, for safe storage of State archives.

State organizations storing records under the *Common Use Arrangements for storage, retrieval and destruction services for paper and electronic records* (CUA 34504 and 123499) should note that these arrangements have been approved for storage of temporary records only. Conditions in general storage areas have not been approved for long-term storage of archival or other records. Organizations may also consider options such as office storage or self storage companies with controlled climate storage. Organizations with museum storage areas that meet the Western Australian Museum's guidelines for storage should consider co-location of archives to the museum store.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Standards Australia (1995) – AS 4390:1995 *Records Management. Part 6 – Storage*; Standards Australia (2002) – AS ISO 15489.2:2002 *Records Management.*; National Archives of Australia (2002)– *Standard for the physical storage of Commonwealth records*.

<http://www.naa.gov.au/records-management/secure-and-store/physical-storage/storage-standard.aspx>; International Standards Organization (2003) – ISO 11799:2003 *Information and documentation – Document storage requirements for archive and library materials*.

<sup>2</sup> Western Australian Museum Museum Assistance Program – *Storage – General guidelines*. <http://www.museum.wa.gov.au/services/map/documents/Storage-Generalguidelines.doc>

### Directions for keeping hardcopy State archives:

#### **1. Environmental control**

Records storage areas should meet the following minimum requirements:

- a. Storage areas should be away from areas of environmental risk, such as heavy industry or manufacturing zones, airfields, and floodplains. Storage must be away from materials such as food, garbage, paint or fuel, and away from water storage or pipes;
- b. Storage areas should be fully lined and sealed so as to prevent water, dust, dirt, insects and mould from entering. Where possible, buildings should be insulated. Unlined sheds, such as metal storage sheds, garage sheds and un-modified sea containers are unsuitable for record storage;<sup>3</sup>
- c. Storage areas should be well ventilated.<sup>4</sup> Temperature and humidity should be monitored, to provide early warning of potential damage such as mould. Humidity should not exceed 60% RH due to the risk of mould growth. Where possible archive storage should be air-conditioned, or have passive temperature and climate controls to ensure that temperature and humidity remain relatively constant;<sup>5</sup>
- d. Lighting levels should be kept at the minimum required for safe passage through the archives. Fluorescent lights emit ultraviolet light which is damaging to archival material, and should have filters fitted. Windows should have curtains or other window treatments fitted; and,
- e. Storage areas should be cleaned regularly, and checked at least twice a year for insect or mould infestations. Fumigation of archive storage areas should be discussed with the SRO to ensure that archives are not damaged by chemical residue.

#### **2. Security**

- a. Storage areas should be secure, with limited and controlled staff access; and,
- b. Storage areas should be connected to a fire alarm, and have fire extinguishers to hand. Sprinkler systems should be fitted where possible.

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<sup>3</sup> Modified sea containers are generally suited for short-term, temporary record storage only.

<sup>4</sup> While safes provide protection for vital records, they may also produce conditions of high humidity within the safe, which can promote the growth of mould. If records are to be kept in a safe of any kind the safe should be opened and aired on a regular basis to inhibit the growth of mould and mildew.

<sup>5</sup> Airconditioning units, which should be maintained 24 hours a day, usually provide ways of setting temperature and humidity. A simple room thermometer can also be used to check temperature and hydrographic test strips can be purchased from conservation suppliers. Alternatively, there are now many simple digital temperature and humidity checkers available on the open market at electrical goods and general goods suppliers.

## **Directions for keeping hardcopy State archives awaiting transfer**

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### **3. Storage.**

- a. Shelving should be of metal or sealed wood.<sup>6</sup> MDF or particle board should not be used due to the potential carcinogenic risk; and,
- b. Where possible, State archives should be housed in archival quality folders and boxes, as this will minimise handling and cost when archives are transferred:
  - A4, legal and foolscap files should be kept in approved archive boxes;<sup>7</sup>
  - Outsize volumes should be stored flat, stacked no more than three high;
  - Maps and plans should be stored flat;
  - Audio-visual material should be stored so that the head is uppermost; and,
  - Photographic material should be stored in albums, sleeves and boxes that have passed the Photographic Activity Test (see definitions).

### **4. Handling.**

- a. State archives must be identified in accordance with an approved Retention and Disposal Authority. State archives should be listed and their location identified in a recordkeeping system;
- b. State organizations should have policies and procedures in place to manage requests for access to archives in their custody. Access to archives less than 25 years old, or which have been approved as restricted access archives by the State Records Commission, may be requested under the *Freedom of Information* (FOI) Act. FOI procedures and applications do not apply to open access archives older than 25 years old, whether or not they have been transferred;
- c. Due to the age and increasing fragility of archival records, handling and copying procedures should be revised or developed to ensure that any damage is kept to a minimum (see, for example, the SRO's preservation policy – <http://www.sro.wa.gov.au/government/preservation-policy.asp>). Bound volumes such as minute books and ratebooks should be copied using overhead cameras or scanners, to prevent damage to the binding and spine;
- d. Once records have been closed, they must not be altered. No new materials may be added or removed;
- e. Adhesives, including sticky tape, 'post-it notes' and 'sign here' flags must not be used on archival material;<sup>8</sup> and,

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<sup>6</sup> Powder coated metal shelving is preferred. All shelving, walls and floors that have been sealed or painted should be allowed to stand for several weeks before use to allow residual chemicals to dissipate.

<sup>7</sup> SRO uses 'standard archive' or 'type 1' boxes for the storage of foolscap to A4 files, volumes and documents. This box is approximately 385L X 250H X 168mmW (internal dimensions), and is made in one piece with a flap lid inclusive. The size takes both A4 and foolscap documents, and is easy to lift and handle. The inclusive lid ensures that the documents are not exposed to dust and other environmental factors. Boxes may be stored upright, with the lid at the top, or on their side so that the lid may be opened downwards.

## **Directions for keeping hardcopy State archives awaiting transfer**

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- f. Repairs to damaged archives including minor repairs must not be attempted without first consulting the SRO.

### **5. Disaster planning.**

All record storage areas are to be included in disaster recovery plans.

## **Further Advice**

Additional advice and information on storage and preservation are available in the first instance through the SRO, contact number 9427 3360.

See also:

<http://www.sro.wa.gov.au/government/preservation.asp>

## **Bibliography**

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[http://www.sro.wa.gov.au/src/documents/SRC\\_Standard\\_7.pdf](http://www.sro.wa.gov.au/src/documents/SRC_Standard_7.pdf)

State Records Commission (2008). *Standard 8: Digital recordkeeping.*

<http://www.sro.wa.gov.au/src/documents/src-standard8.pdf>

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<sup>8</sup> While this applies specifically to archival material awaiting transfer, that is, archives that are closed and inactive, records managers should consider the following – ‘post-it notes’ and other adhesive markers leave a residue, even if the marker is removed immediately, which hardens and causes damage to the paper which has been so marked. In addition, the use of ‘post-it notes’ for recording comments or actions, rather than recording those comments directly on a document, may lead to loss of information if the note falls off or is removed.