



Advice on State Recordkeeping and COVID-19

Attn: Chief Information Officers, Information and Records Managers and Officers

The State Records Office of Western Australia (SRO) recognises that State and Local government organisations' usual Recordkeeping and Information Management operations may be disrupted by COVID-19 responses.

To assist with planning and implementation of measures to enable critical work to continue, the SRO offers the following advice regarding the management of records of information:

Working from home

Organisations may need to enable changes to working arrangements, including an increased number of staff working from home. The SRO recommends:

- Organisations consider the risks associated with conducting recordkeeping activities off premises, for example: unauthorised disclosure of sensitive information, loss or unlawful destruction of records, or records being accessed externally with inadequate security controls.
- Using secure remote access VPN capabilities, where available, so that the organisation's systems of record can be accessed and used as much as possible, to minimise the need for a different record keeping regime whilst working from home.
- Review the organisation's *Working from Home* policy to ensure that record keeping expectations are clear and that expected home-based work activities can be performed in line with the Record Keeping Plan.
- Confidential and sensitive records are not taken off the organisation's premises unless essential.
- Considering using copies of hard copy records / files for home use.
- If hard copy files are taken home by staff, ensure that file locations are tracked within the organisation's official recordkeeping system.
- Considering the security of all records that may be located in a staff member's home, including:
 - Those containing confidential and sensitive information;
 - Those contained on USB / Flash drives / other portable media; and
 - Those that may be stored on personal laptops / tablets / etc.
- Ensuring the privacy of all personal or sensitive information is protected.
- Ensuring the appropriate organisational approvals and authorisations are in place if allowing hard copy files to be taken off premises.
- Records and Information Management teams should play a key role in supporting organisations by providing practical guidance to staff regarding best practice recordkeeping whilst working at home.

In addition to the above, advice to staff should include, but may not be limited to:

- That all business records must be captured to the official recordkeeping system;
- Make sure devices and records are stored in a safe location when not in use;
- Use work email accounts not personal accounts for all work-related emails; and
- Staff must return all records, including copies, to their organisation for appropriate retention and disposal in accordance with approved Disposal Authorities. Government records (including devices on which records of information are stored) **must** not be disposed of via household recycling or rubbish collections.



Temporary changes to recordkeeping policy and procedures

Certain daily Recordkeeping and Information Management operations may be affected by COVID-19 responses; and appropriate interim measures should be put into place to support business.

These may include, but not be limited to:

- Australia Post mail redirection, pickup and delivery
- Mail processing, including processing of personal and confidential mail
- Storage of hardcopy incoming mail, including cheques, in a staff members home or in a third party's premises
- Updates to policies and procedures etc.

The SRO recommends:

- Records and information managers work closely with business areas to understand the practical needs of staff during the COVID-19 response;
- Evaluating the risk of redirecting Australia Post mail e.g. mis-delivery, security and storage issues; and ensuring that all temporary changes to records and information management policies and procedures are documented and captured into the organisation's official recordkeeping system; and
- These changes should be communicated to staff in coordination with other regular updates for staff of COVID-19 response measures.

Management of Recordkeeping Plans (RKPs) and RKP Review Reports

The SRO understands that many government organisations may experience difficulties or delays in submitting their RKP Review Reports and RKPs to the SRO by the designated deadline. Please contact the SRO if you have concerns about completing these documents on time so alternative arrangements can be made.

Learning as a community of practice

It is important to share the experience gained by organisations regarding information management in response to COVID-19. The SRO recommends that records and information managers share this experience, including lessons learned, as widely as possible through existing networks.

The SRO also invites organisations to share their experience with challenges and innovative approaches to the management of records of information during the response with the SRO via sro@sro.wa.gov.au. This information will be invaluable in developing more flexible standards and guidance for all government organisations.

Please make all relevant staff aware of this circular.

Further Information

For further information or assistance please contact the SRO by email:
sro@sro.wa.gov.au.

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