

This information sheet presents general record keeping principles that will assist organisations who maintain personal information. Recordkeeping aims to provide the foundation for the efficient, effective, and responsible management of all records (including personal information).

#### **Records**

The following statements may define records.

1. A record is evidence of business activities, decisions and inactions by an organisation.
2. An accurate record can be trusted as a representation of activities or facts, and can be depended on in the course of subsequent transactions or activities.
3. An authentic record has been proven to be what it purports to be and has been referenced, created or transmitted by the person who purports to have created or transmitted it.
4. Records should be securely maintained to prevent unauthorised access, alteration, removal, or destruction.
5. Records should have evidential integrity (i.e. the record should remain complete and unaltered).

Organisations are responsible for maintaining records according to these principles, and should note that falsifying information in a record is illegal.

#### **Recordkeeping and employees**

In order to implement good record keeping practices, an organisation should ensure that:

1. employees understand their obligations to make and keep records in the course of their duties
2. employees receive the appropriate training and guidance in the use of record-keeping systems
3. only appropriately trained staff manage record keeping
4. only authorised personnel have access to records.

#### **Managing records**

When managing records:

1. employees should not maintain official records personally or privately. That is, small, local and personal record systems that render records inaccessible to others who need access to them (e.g. an employee's filing cabinet, a PC's hard drive should not be used to store business records)
2. physical files should be indexed in accordance with the organisation's recordkeeping system
3. The author's initials should be included when naming a document or record to assist with searching for or locating records the date (and time if necessary)
4. Organisations should ensure that clear guidelines are implemented for staff that relate to retention periods and mechanisms for the secure disposal of records. Organisations should also ensure that all staff consistently adhere to such guidelines.

### Recordkeeping and personal information

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Records and record keeping systems should be:

1. created, maintained and managed systematically
2. retained for as long as they are needed to meet business needs, the requirements of organisational accountability and community expectations
3. secured and only altered or deleted with the appropriate authority. Any authorised annotation or addition to a record made after it is complete should be explicitly indicated as an annotation or addition. Any such changes to a record should be identifiable in a way that preserves the evidential integrity and the legibility of the original record
4. kept in a format that allows their continued use. To be useable, records must be maintained so that they can be quickly and easily identified and retrieved as required
5. periodically monitored, revised, and evaluated to ensure that they support business processes and comply with privacy requirements (if applicable)
6. kept reliably to ensure that records are trusted, credible, and authoritative
7. kept secure from unauthorised access, damage and misuse
8. captured into and maintained within an identifiable record keeping system, regardless of their format
9. designed to ensure that a record correctly reflects what has occurred.

#### Additional Information

More information is available from:

1. Qld State Archives website [www.archives.qld.gov.au](http://www.archives.qld.gov.au)
2. the Office of the Federal Privacy Commissioner [www.privacy.gov.au](http://www.privacy.gov.au)
3. the Privacy Hotline 1300 363 992 (local call charge)
4. the department's Privacy Contact Officer (07 3224 5850)

#### Disclaimer

This information sheet is intended as a reference to privacy legislation. It offers general discussion and explanation on a range of privacy issues. However, it does not cover all circumstances faced by the diverse range of organisations in the non-government sector. This information sheet is advisory only and does *not* represent legal advice. If advice of a legal nature is required, independent legal advice must be sought and the content of this information sheet cannot be relied upon.