national
museum
australia

Accountable disposal policy

POL-G-073

Version 1.0 11 October 2021

Contents

ID	POL-G-073
Version	1.0
Version date	11 October 2021
Type	General operational
Approval dates	5 November 2020 (Executive Management Group)
File	21/520
Availability	Public and all staff
Keywords	Information management, information asset, disposal, destructions, transfers, archives, retention, records authority, records
Responsible officer	Chief Information Governance Officer
History	N/A
Review date	November 2023
Related documents	Information management policy (POL-G-045)
Contact	National Museum of Australia GPO Box 1901 CANBERRA ACT 2601 Tel: (02) 6208 5000 Email: information@nma.gov.au Website: www.nma.gov.au

1. Title
Accountable disposal policy

2. Introduction
The National Museum of Australia (the Museum) is a major cultural institution charged with researching, collecting, preserving and exhibiting historical material of the Australian nation. The Museum focuses on the three interrelated areas of First Nations history and culture, Australia's history and society since European settlement in 1788 and the interaction of people with the environment.

Established in 1980, the Museum is a publicly funded institution governed as a statutory authority in the Commonwealth Arts portfolio. The Museum's building on Acton Peninsula, Canberra opened in March 2001.

3. Scope
The agency's information assets, primarily the corporate information assets of the administrative and core business functions of the Museum, whether held in physical or digital formats are a valuable resource that enables the operation of the Museum and provides evidence of the Museum's stewardship of the history of the Australian nation.

The policy covers all Museum corporate governance and management decisions, processes and transactions.

This policy addresses the creation, storage and disposal of information assets in all formats, whether physical or digital, where information is created, captured or received in the development and delivery of Museum programs. These activities form part of the Museum's information management function.

This policy also applies to business systems used by the Museum to create, manage and store information assets that are required to be maintained as evidence of the Museum's compliance with relevant legislation that governs information management activities in Commonwealth agencies.

4. Description
This policy outlines the Museum's position on the disposal of information assets held in the custody of the Museum. Accountable disposal is the set of procedures and conditions by which Commonwealth agencies dispose of information assets that have reached the end of their retention requirements. In the information lifecycle (Fig. 1), 'disposal' follows the 'inactive' phase and covers the destruction or transfer of business information assets, such as to the National Archives of Australia's repository or to a new custodian.

Figure 1. The information lifecycle

5.   Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out the principles for managing the disposal of information assets in the custody of the Museum. Disposal refers to any action that renders the information asset to be no longer readily accessible for further use or update by the Museum.

The outcomes of the implementation of this policy include improved accountability for Museum information management operations under the *Archives Act 1983*, additional scope for Museum staff to assess the value of information assets in their custody, and reduced reliance on physical storage space through the digitisation and disposal of source records.

5.1   Rationale

The Museum values, and is committed to, managing its information assets efficiently using approved disposal tools to determine the value of information assets and manage them accordingly.

All staff are individually responsible for ensuring business information is created and retained for the appropriate period in line with the approved tools and legislative requirements.

6.   Principles or guidelines

6.1   Disposal of official records of Museum business

Official records are those which provide the Museum with the best evidence of its actions, decisions or conversations. Any information that shows what the Museum did, or did not do, in the course of delivering its programs and services should not be disposed without reference to this policy.

The disposal of official records can take a number of forms and is not simply restricted to the process of destruction through shredding or securely overwriting a piece of storage media.

Under the *Archives Act 1983* agencies need the permission of the National Archives of Australia (the National Archives) before:

- destroying valuable business information
- transferring custody or ownership of business information outside of the Australian Government
- transferring care of archival value Australian Government business information to the National Archives.

Permission to destroy official records of Museum business is granted by the National Archives via records authorities. Records authorities provide guidance to users of business information on the value of the types of information in their custody and the manner in which the information may be disposed of when its routine reference requirements have lapsed.

Records of non-archival value would typically be disposed of through physical or logical destruction, while records of archival value would typically be transferred to the custody of the National Archives. Information assets that relate to the ownership of a piece of real estate or to a vehicle in the Museum fleet would typically be transferred to the new owner at the time that the asset is handed over.

Official records of Museum business will be disposed of in line with the requirements of the National Archives at the time that the disposal is actioned.

Disposal actions may take one of the following forms:
- physical destruction of the information asset through a means appropriate to the media on which the information is stored.
- transfer of information assets to the custody of the National Archives
- transfer of information assets to their new owner or custodian

Physical information assets that are identified as having archival value will be identified and they will be transferred to the custody of the National Archives when they have been closed and are no longer required to be held on site for regular reference purposes.

6.2 Disposal of source records following digitisation
The Museum supports modernisation of its business practices and works toward this objective by conducting business with as little reliance on paper-based processes as is practicable. To support this, the Museum aims to digitise physical source records and dispose of source records under General Records Authority 31 (GRA31).

GRA31 provides an enduring authority for Commonwealth agencies to destroy the physical source records of information assets that have been digitised to the standard specified by the National Archives. For the purposes of the Archives Act, the digitised renditions of the source records become the official record of Museum business, and any existing physical copies are taken to be duplicates. This disposal is only authorised in the event that an appropriate quality assurance process has been implemented and conducted upon the digitised information assets.

The Museum will observe the following principles when determining if records are appropriate to be disposed of under GRA31:
- Destruction of the source record will not cause the loss of corporate knowledge through the omission of content in the source record from the digitised version.
- Source records are digitised to the standard required by the National Archives such that they are functionally indistinguishable from the original source record.
- Source records are regarded as the official records until any required quality assurance processes have been carried out and will be disposed of in line with the requirements for the disposal of official non-archival records.

6.3 Disposal of non-official or trivial records of Museum business
Principle 5.3 of the Information Management Standard requires that agencies provide advice to staff on the types of business information without ongoing value which can be routinely destroyed without formal permission from the National Archives.

The process of disposing of this low-value information is referred to as destruction under Normal Administrative Practice (NAP).

Information assets that are identified as not being official records of Museum business, or are identified as being of sufficiently low value that their disposal will not jeopardise the Museum's capacity to be accountable for its actions, may be destroyed under the NAP provision in the Archives Act.

Information assets identified for disposal under the NAP provision are not required to be registered into a recordkeeping system prior to their disposal.

NAP may be applied to empty file covers and containers in a recordkeeping system that do not contain any enclosed containers or documents.

Information assets identified for disposal under the NAP provision must pass the test for NAP as set forth by the National Archives and any other test for business value as set forth by the Museum.

6.4   Disposal of duplicated information
The Museum supports the responsible management of physical and electronic storage repositories. In line with this, documents or other information assets that are identified as being exact replicas of existing documents or files are not required to be retained as evidence of Museum business and may be destroyed when their immediate reference values ceases.

7.   Definition of terms
A glossary of key terms used in the policy.

Information lifecycle
The series of stages through which all business information assets go from their initial point of creation to their destruction or permanent retention as archives.

Information asset
A collective term for the types of documents, publications and datasets that are both records and not records. A document that is destroyed under Normal Administrative Practice is, by definition, not a record however it is still an information asset.

Record
An information asset, or collection of information assets, that document a business action, decision or discussion.

Disposal
The process of giving up custody of the information contained in a record either by rendering it irretrievable through destruction or transferring it to another custodian.

Sentencing
The process of appraising a record to determine its function and significance, and assign metadata necessary to schedule it for its next disposal action.

Retention
The period that the Museum is required to hold a record before it is due for review of its ongoing disposal requirements.

General Records Authority
A tool published by the National Archives of Australia that all agencies are able to use to authorise disposal of records that fit into the scope of the authority.

Closure
Closure is the action that marks the end of the active phase of the information lifecycle. When a series of business actions have reached their conclusion, and the record of those actions is complete, the record is closed to prevent material to being added that would extend retention.

8.   Definition of responsibilities

All Museum staff, contractors and outsourced providers:
- create and manage complete and accurate records of their business activities
- do not dispose of official records of Museum business without reference to the applicable legislative requirements for the management of commonwealth information assets.

Chief Information Governance Officer:
- ensures that the Museum's Accountable disposal policy and associated procedures are suited to the needs of the Museum and are consistent with the Information management policy
- provides sufficient support and resources for ensuring the successful implementation of the policy
- promotes compliance with the policy
- monitors compliance with the policy through the Museum's information management function
- ensures that adequate guidance is delivered to support staff, contractors and outsourced providers in understanding and implementing the policy
- reviews and revises the policy as required to ensure it remains appropriate.

All managers and supervisors of staff and contractors:
- promote understanding and use of the policy to staff and contractors under their supervision
- incorporate policy directives into their business unit work procedures, where appropriate
- liaise with the information management unit in relation to understanding and using the policy or any barriers to its use
- advise the information management unit of any changes in the business environment which would impact on information management requirements, such as new areas of the Museum's business that need to be covered by a records authority
- monitor staff and contractors under their supervision to ensure that they understand and comply with the policy and guidance.

9.   References
National Archives of Australia Information Management Standard
Archives Act 1983 (Cth)

10.   Coverage
This policy applies to all Museum staff and contractors and outsourced providers.

It applies to business information in all formats, including documents, email, voice messages, audio-visual materials and data in business systems (for example, websites, social media applications and databases) under the control of, or in the custody of, the Museum.

All staff are responsible for ensuring government information is accountably disposed through the application of an appropriate records authority (RA) or a Normal Administrative Practice (NAP) as defined in this policy.

Individual staff, contractors and outsourced providers are responsible for deciding what low-risk business information can be destroyed as a NAP and when it can be destroyed (when the information is no longer needed for business purposes).

11. Other related policies

POL-G-045 Information management policy

12. Exclusions

This policy does not cover collection or archival objects in the National Historical Collection or other Museum collections that exist in documentary form. This policy also does not cover published materials created as part of the Museum's commercial or academic activities except for ensuring compliance with legal deposit obligations.

13. Superseded policies

This is a new policy and does not supersede any existing policies.

14. Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed every three years, or earlier if required.

Museum information management staff (with the support of workplace supervisors) will monitor compliance with this policy, in particular the NAP provisions. Levels of compliance will be reported at least annually to the Museum's corporate and Executive management groups as part of their oversight of information governance activities.

Supervisors and managers will monitor their respective staff and contractors to ensure NAP processes are implemented correctly. Contract managers will monitor compliance of contractors and outsourced service providers.