

TERRITORY RECORDS ADVISORY COUNCIL MINUTES

MEETING No.4 of 2015-16

19 May 2016

TAYLOR ROOM

LEVEL 4, NARA HOUSE, 1 CONSTITUTION AVENUE

Present

TRAC: Anne Buttsworth, Dani Wickman, Michael Piggott, Nick Swain, Chris Aulich, Geoffrey Rutledge, David Brumby, Amanda Harris

Visitors: Frances Byers (scribe), Laura Callow

Meeting opened: 12.09

Agenda item 1 - Welcome and apologies

The chair welcomed members of the Territory Records Advisory Council (TRAC) to the meeting. She also welcomed Laura Callow who has recently been appointed as the project officer for the digital record keeping pilot project. There were no changes to the agenda. Apologies were received from Roslyn Brown.

Agenda item 2 - Minutes of previous meetings and business arising

Minutes were accepted. There were two issues arising.

Issues associated with research and evaluation will be discussed under item 9.

Issues associated with the Chief Minister's Governance lecture will be dealt with under item 3.

Agenda item 3 – Director's update (no papers)

The Director of the Territory Records Office (TRO) advised Dr Tim Williams is the Chief Minister's preferred speaker for the Chief Minister's Governance Lecture. Dr Williams is with the Committee for Sydney, a think-tank on modern city making. He will lecture on 17 August 2016 and a venue is being settled. The lecture will explore policy making for 21st century cities. The TRO is reviewing files released in 1995 to identify material to illustrate the lecture and will give Dr Williams digital copies of some material.

The TRO is implementing its volunteer strategy. Ms Helen Mitchard, a former scientist, will start next week as the TRO's first corporate volunteer. She will index media releases from before self-government, so they are searchable at item level.

The TRO is finalising the Standard for Records, Information and Data (the Standard). As a final consultation stage, the TRO is sending the penultimate draft of the Standards to Principal Officers. Once they indicate their formal agreement, the TRO will confirm the Standard.

To assist agencies to implement the Standards, the TRO has developed a self-assessment checklist. The checklist will help agencies check where they sit against the Standards and where they can improve. TRO has commissioned an independent consultant to test the usability and effectiveness of the checklist. Community Services Directorate (CSD) has agreed to pilot the checklist, without prejudice, with the consultant.

In a separate project, TRO has commissioned a consultant to identify training and awareness

strategies for records management, mapped to the needs of different stakeholders.

The Director of TRO has been invited to join the Digital Services Governing Committee. TRAC member, Geoffrey Rutledge is also a member. The committee is still forming, but will have a whole of government oversight of digital direction, in order to facilitate coordination across directorates, and to identify opportunities for harmonisation and common capabilities. Geoffrey noted the new committee may seek to realise efficiencies from expenditure on information and communications technology, and issues associated with records management will be relevant.

TRO is considering the merits of AtoM, a searchable, open source database already used by ANU Archives and State Records of Western Australia. It is cloud hosted and good value for money. TRO is liaising with the Heritage Library which is open to exploring improved approaches. Unfortunately, candidate data-sources are of poor quality, characterised by different fields, and inconsistent metadata. However, the ability to search file titles on a data base would be an advance on current levels of digital access to most of these data sources.

Review of Whole of Government functions thesaurus (additional agenda paper, distributed at the meeting)

TRAC agreed to the Director's request that that the usual two-pass process of review is not necessary to deal with the changes that will arise from reclassifications associated with the implementation of the thesaurus. TRAC members agreed with the caveat this is a one-off request that does not set a precedent.

TRAC agreed to the Director's proposal that the Council consider the eight revised common function disposal schedules at the next meeting.

Agenda Item 4 – Section 28 declarations (no papers)

There have been no Section 28 declarations.

Agenda Item 5 - Child and Youth Protection Services Records.

The Director advised a new records disposal schedule has been developed after the amalgamation of child and youth protection services following machinery of government changes. Nick noted the "functions" approach had been intended to replace the need for new schedules following machinery of government changes. He also noted the Schedule had not incorporated the new, simplified approach to the thesaurus, and the Schedule would be improved if this occurred.

The Director advised this Schedule was at an advanced draft prior to the introduction of the simplified thesaurus, and CSD indicated they preferred to proceed to finalise the current draft. However, all new Schedules will adopt the thesaurus in the future.

The Director noted the main changes relate to preservation of case management records, which are now retained 99 years rather than for perpetuity.

Council members voiced concerns about the implications of outsourcing for record keeping in child protection, noting existing concerns and the unique importance of such records. The Director noted these issues are also being flagged in the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, and may be the subject of recommendations by the Royal Commission. She noted it is up to CSD to ensure the contractor meets record keeping responsibilities. TRAC urged TRO to further discuss the issue with CSD to strengthen awareness of the implications of record keeping for children's matters, and the importance of systems to ensure the integrity of record keeping over 99 years, noting complexities associated with outsourcing, following a child through a service system over time, and digital records.

Action: The TRO agreed to ask the CSD to write a paper on risks to record keeping arising

from outsourcing, considering unique issues relating to child protection.

TRAC members questioned apparent inconsistencies in the Schedule about time periods, seeking a clearer understanding of the principles behind retention periods noting the “litter” of different timeframes. TRAC reiterated the value of moving more promptly to greater standardisation of disposal periods. Specific queries included:

Page 24, (22.21) 8 years as opposed to 7 or 10.

Page 29, (022.202.003) members queried whether 1 year was long enough.

Pages 33, 35 Members found the references to surveys in classes 0.22.088.003 and 022.091.001 confusing, and this made the different retention periods of 2 years and 7 years difficult to assess. Members suggested that the wording of the two classes be clarified.

Action: TRO agreed to raise these queries with CSD.

Agenda Item 6 - Legislative drafting services records

TRAC members asked why there were two separate records (items 6 and 7). The Director advised this is because the relevant Office is of the belief they are two separate and distinct functions, and there are good reasons for one function per disposal schedule. The changes roll up a lot of classes, simplifying an old schedule which dates from 2006.

Page 17, members noted the repetition of the word ‘after’ in class 128.277.001.

Agenda Item 7 - Legislative services publishing records

Page 18 (192.291) TRAC members sought clarification of the term back-capture. The TRO confirmed it identifies matters gradually being incorporated going back to 1989.

TRAC members noted typos, for example publishing does not go before planning.

Agenda Item 8. – Student management records

The Director notes this Schedule is being re-submitted to the Council, because there were some omissions relating to the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT). The back of the document lists a schedule of significant changes to the earlier draft. Michael expressed concern, asking why these omissions were not discovered earlier.

The Director advised that this Schedule arose from amalgamation of three previous schedules. The Director advised TRO are learning from this, and are tightening up internal processes, such as using a checklist.

TRAC members expressed concern about ambiguities arising from the use of a student’s age in a disposal action. For example, see page 49 (24.105).

The Director advised they will replace the current approach with “...after date of birth, or 7 years after last action”. The Director will also clarify dates on page 60.

TRAC members noted typos.

Agenda Item 9 – Public Health Protection

Members noted there is evaluation, but not research, in this Schedule. The Director advised that there will be neither in future schedules. Inconsistencies have emerged because it hasn’t been possible to completely pick up all new activity consolidations in this draft. After consideration, the TRO and agency decided they are comfortable with living with minor inconsistencies.

The Director advises in the future evaluation and research will come under the function and activity area they relate to. The disposal schedule for evaluation, and working paper records, will

take their significance from the underlying event (eg an evaluation of an event would stay with the event).

Michael notes this is the first time a schedule has defined “last action”. While this is a good development, it is important this definition be robust. Michael sought clarification about exemptions to “instances that change the circumstances of a record”.

The Director advised the definition seeks to ensure that changes in repository management in a digital environment do not unintentionally lead to records being kept for longer than necessary. TRAC members considered the language was still ambiguous.

The Director confirmed the language could benefit from being further tightened up and agreed that “...its circumstances” was imprecise, while some grey areas would remain inevitable.

TRO will look at the definition again and include some clarifying examples. The definition will return to the Council.

Agenda Item 10 – Digital recordkeeping pilot project

The Council welcomed these developments. Laura Callow advised there was a lot of interest in the project. Pilot sites will be implemented by end August.

Agenda Item 11 – Curriculum

The Council welcomed the use of Scootle and noted it was a clever way to enable repeated use. The Director advised that the TRO is considering paying \$500 to lodge the material so as to avoid delays from waiting in the queue.

Agenda Item 13 – Report on Agency Records Management

No comments

Next meetings

The Director confirmed the next meeting scheduled was 18 August 2016. The Council noted that some members had competing appointments for the December meeting. The Council agreed to finalise a date at the August meeting when members’ other arrangements for December are clearer.

Meeting closed: 1.46

Minutes confirmed on: