

## Digitisation and disposal of Source Records

The process of migrating or converting a digital record, or converting a physical record into digital format, results in two versions of the same record—the migrated or converted version, and the source record.

This advice is intended to accompany the [Converted or Digitised Source Records RDS \(NI2020-435\)](#) and discusses the circumstances in which you can destroy an original source record when you migrate, convert or digitise the record.

### Exclusions

Not all digitisation processes result in the destruction of records. Digitisation can be used to enhance access and retrieval, and to reduce handling of permanent records. The Converted or Digitised Source Records RDS identifies the following classes of source records which **MUST NOT** be destroyed:

- All source or original records created in 1931 and before
- Source or original records that are not covered by a Records Disposal Schedule or that have not been sentenced.
- Source records supporting ongoing Royal Commissions, investigations, and legal proceedings, along with records covered by disposal freezes
- Records which have an intrinsic value inherent in their original format

### Intrinsic value

There are circumstances where physical records have cultural or heritage value that warrants preservation, or they may have legal or other utilitarian uses that require records being kept in their original physical format. These records will have a value beyond the information they contain that warrants preservation. Examples given in the Converted or Digitised Source Records RDS includes records that:

- are rare or in an archaic format
- are rare or an original object that may have monetary value
- have unique physical features (for example, a wax seal or crenelated or imprinted markings)
- have artistic value or cultural significance
- are of value for use in exhibits
- are of significance or value to individuals as an artefact or evidence of their ancestry or heritage (for example, records which contain original photographs, etc.).

Intrinsic value is often a subjective judgement and will vary on a case by case basis. Queries should be discussed with the agency records manager, who may in turn consult the TRO.

### Authorising destruction of source records

Records created after 1931 and before 2000 require approval from the TRO to destroy the source records. Proposed destruction requests should be submitted in a similar manner to standard destruction requests, along with along with evidence that the requirements of the Converted or Digitised Source Records RDS have been met.

For records created after 2000, destruction of source records can be approved by standard internal agency processes.

### **Digitisation and QA processes**

Digitisation of records is an attractive option, as it may potentially reduce the physical space and expense of long-term storage of records and can greatly enhance access to records that are stored offsite. Embarking on a digitisation project requires careful consideration. A record's digitisation process must include robust quality assurance (QA) and control, to ensure that *full and accurate* capture of the record contents has been made. Part of the planning process should include a risk assessment. Digitisation and QA processes are often carried out by external vendors, and risk assessments should cover their processes and handling of records. When planning a digitisation and QA process, these are some of the things you should consider:

- A thorough analysis of the costs of digitisation and QA balanced against the ongoing storage and access costs for physical records
- Specification of file formats and minimum capture resolution to ensure ability to access records over the retention period
- The identification and suitability of the location for the digitised or converted records
- Special handling requirements of sensitive records and ensuring that processes meet privacy requirements
- Security and suitability of transportation and temporary storage of records during the digitisation process
- Particular records may require authorisation for transport and storage in other states and territories depending on vendors chosen
- Reliable and open format of digitised records (long-term preservation formats)
- Resourcing to ensure that QA processes are carried out to required levels.

### **Digitisation plans**

Digitised records with permanent retention require a formally documented plan to ensure long term access and retention of converted records. While not a strict requirement, these plans should be extended to temporary records with long-term retention.

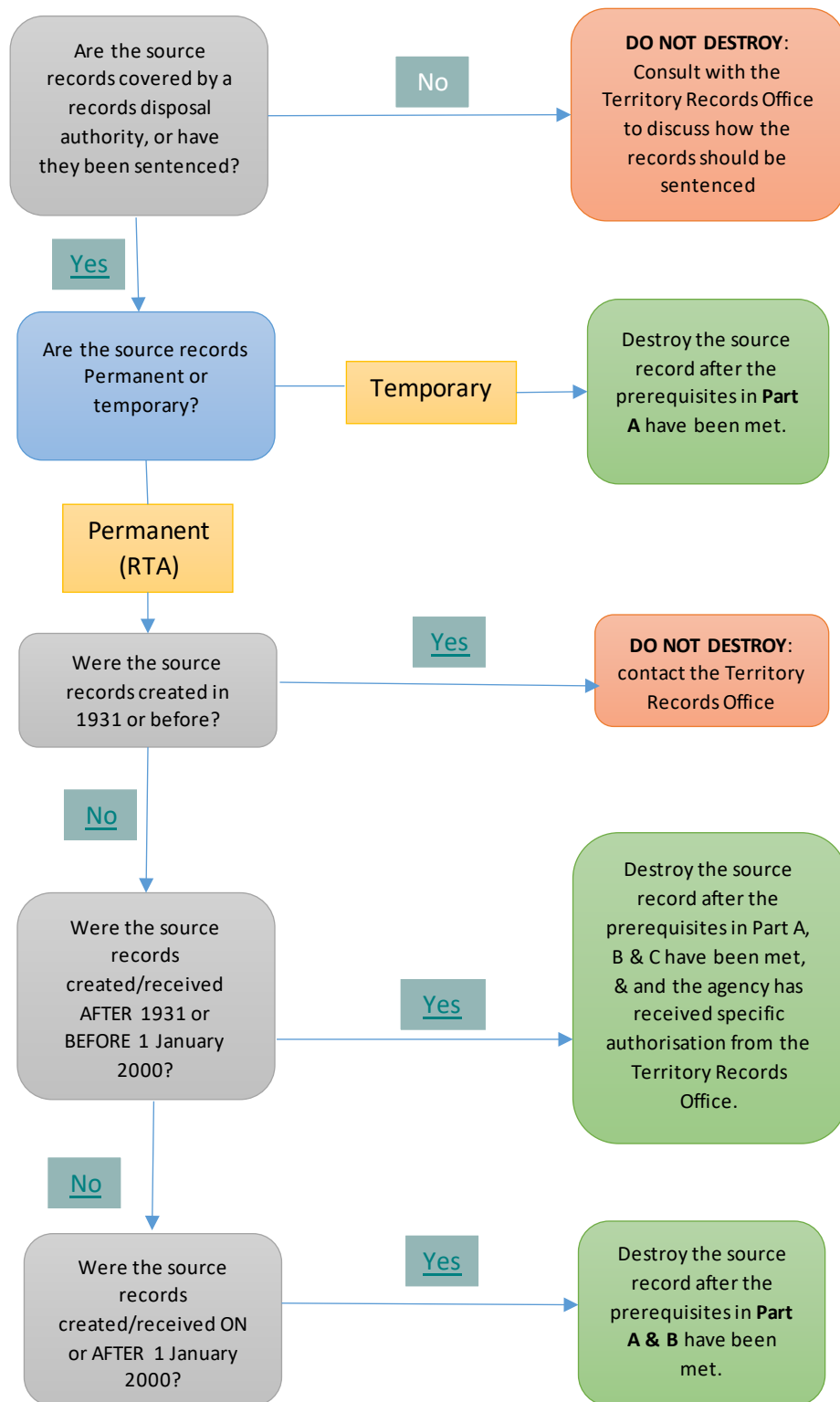
Records such as personnel records and client case files may have long retention periods of 75 years or more. Over the lifecycle of the records, a digitisation plan will be a key document to help understand the decisions that were made about the digitisation process. This plan may also be used in the development of digital preservation strategies to address future technological obsolescence.

A digitisation plan will contain much of the information required before starting a digitisation project. In addition to the specifications of the digitised files, a plan should contain:

- Documentation of any additional metadata contained in the records e.g. GPS coordinates and subject keywords in image files
- An assessment of the file formats and long-term risks of technological obsolescence of any file formats. Format information should list software used to access records and data in order to better flag the need to migrate formats in the future
- An assessment of the data storage volume of digitised records and projected ongoing costs of robust and reliable storage and backup

- A summary of the key decisions made during the digitisation and QA project (such as storage location, and QA timeframes and expected processes), along with any business cases developed in support of the project
- Authorisations from stakeholders required to proceed with the project.

## Converted or Digitised Source records RDS decision flowchart



## References

Territory Records (Records Disposal Schedule – Converted or Digitised Source Records) Approval 2020 (No 1): <https://www.legislation.act.gov.au/ni/2020-435/>

Territory Records (Records Disposal Schedule – Records Created Prior to 1931) Approval 2017 (No 1): <https://www.legislation.act.gov.au/ni/2017-395/>

Advice - Retain - Digitisation Technical Specifications:

[https://www.territoryrecords.act.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0009/1315827/Retain-Digitisation-Technical-Specifications.pdf](https://www.territoryrecords.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/1315827/Retain-Digitisation-Technical-Specifications.pdf)

Advice - Retain - Authorising destruction of ACT Government records:

[https://www.territoryrecords.act.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/1218397/Retain-Authorising-destruction-of-ACT-Government-records.pdf](https://www.territoryrecords.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/1218397/Retain-Authorising-destruction-of-ACT-Government-records.pdf)