Records Advice

No 07

Preparation for the implementation of an Electronic Records Management System

This Records Advice sets out the steps which should be undertaken by agencies prior to any consideration to implement an Electronic Records Management System in the Agency.

The steps described are required to be undertaken by agencies as part of the development of a compliant Records Management Program. The process is independent of any particular system for either paper or electronic records. The process mandated for the ACT Government is based on Australian and International Standards and is similar to the processes used in all other jurisdictions in Australia.

Once the process has been completed an agency would be well placed to migrate documents from shared drive structures into an electronic environment. It is not advised that an agency should attempt to implement an Electronic Records Management System until this process is complete and been approved by the Principal Officer of the agency.

The following steps are set out in pages 8 - 11 of the *Territory Records Standard for Records Management Number 2: Appraisal*.

Step 1 Preliminary investigation

The Preliminary investigation seeks to give the agency an understanding of its organisational context and the major influences on its need to make and keep records. An agency will need to demonstrate that it has identified elements such as the legislation affecting business in the agency, the standards and codes of best practice that the agency works under, the business rules within the agency and the agency's stakeholders and their needs.

Step 2 Analysis of business activity

An analysis of business activity will identify and help to define the functions and activities for which an agency is responsible. The sources identified in the analysis can be used to categorise the business activities which the agency must be documenting in its recordkeeping system. Agencies must use a functional thesaurus, which is a controlled language system, to classify and title their records. The thesaurus should be based on the functions and activities that the agency carries out. The functions identified in the *Territory Version of Keyword AAA* must be used for terms relating to the administrative functions common to all agencies.

Step 3 Identification of recordkeeping requirements

Sources identified in the previous two steps are used to identify mandatory and voluntary recordkeeping requirements. Legislation and mandatory standards and codes will often provide mandatory recordkeeping standards. These may be requirements to make or keep records, or to manage them in a certain way, which must be done in order for the agency to comply with the standard or legislation. Business rules and manuals may indicate that there are other optional recordkeeping requirements which help the agency to carry out its business, but are not required to comply with a law or other mandatory code.

The Director of Territory Records also requires that agencies consider community expectations in their analysis of recordkeeping requirements and make recommendations regarding records that should be classed as Retain as Territory Archives, a records disposal action for permanent records. See *Records Advice No.43 Selection of records as Territory Archives* for further advice.

Step 4 Prepare draft Records Disposal Schedules and supporting documentation

Records Disposal Schedules need to bring together the recordkeeping requirements identified through the analysis process and describe them in a way that can be applied to individual records or classes of records. Individual records or classes of records can be described in the scheme at the third level of a thesaurus of classification terms. Records Disposal Schedules may identify a number of types of records that are produced in the conduct of government functions and activities and these records need to be described carefully.

Draft Records Disposal Schedules must contain the following elements:

- function name and scope note;
- activity name and scope note; and
- disposal class number;
- disposal class description; and
- disposal action.

In support of draft Records Disposal Schedules an agency must be able to provide:

- evidence of the sources consulted in Steps 1 and 2;
- evidence that mandatory standards have been adhered to in drafting the Records Disposal Schedules;
- evidence that voluntary standards and internal business requirements have been adequately addressed by the draft.

Step 5 Submit to the Director of Territory Records for approval

The *Territory Records Act 2002* requires that the Director of Territory Records approve Records Disposal Schedules. Records Disposal Schedules are also submitted for scrutiny to the Territory Records Advisory Council. Once approved by the Director, Records Disposal Schedules are made Notifiable Instruments under the Act.