

Significant Records

As part of the [Assess Principle](#) ACT government organisations must assess and identify records, information and data that have long term or enduring value to the Territory. Information assets that have high significance are likely to be required for a long period of time or may require permanent retention (Retain as Territory Archive - RTA).

Significant records require additional consideration when assessing storage, security, ongoing preservation strategies, and format shifting processes (including digitisation). To support accessibility far into the future, more stringent metadata and storage requirements must be applied to ensure current business context is able to be readily understood over time.

Identifying significant and permanent records

Significance is based on an evaluation of the record's context; the government activity being undertaken and the level of impact on the government or the community if the record were not available. These concepts can often be framed as a risk management decision: what is the risk to the organisation, the Government or the community if an information asset is not available in one, ten, 50 or 100 years' time? Significant records may document an activity, event or decision that:

- sets a precedent
- provides evidence of enduring rights and entitlements
- had considerable economic, environmental or social impact
- led to a change in government policy
- implemented an innovative or important project or program
- aroused wide scale controversy, public interest or external scrutiny; or
- represents a unique moment in the Territory's history.

Many records, such as those detailing high level decision making, development and implementation of legislation, or registers of births, deaths and marriages can be readily identified as having 'significance'. These records are usually described in the activity/class definitions of [Records Disposal Schedules \(RDS\)](#). Examples given in class definitions are tailored to the specific function and will help you determine if records fall into a 'significant' class or not.

The Territory Records Office's [Guideline to Principle 3: Assess Principle](#), provides a breakdown of the criteria for identifying of the significance of records, information and data, and their subsequent retention requirements.

Not all significant records require permanent retention. Records such as those supporting services provided to individuals in the community may have extended but temporary retentions, to balance the need for accountability and integrity, against the cost of retaining records unnecessarily. These records will have similar access, security, and ongoing preservation requirements as RTA records.

At times a decision to designate some records as temporary on creation may need to be changed (e.g. after major inquiries or legal proceedings, natural disasters, or a substantial change in community

expectations). Determining whether the value or significance of the records has increased since they were created or first [sentenced](#) is an ongoing process.

Factors that may contribute to reviews of significance and the sentence of records:

- economic impact
- environmental impact
- extent of the population affected
- government expenditure or commitment
- international reaction
- political or legal ramifications
- public reaction or sensitivity
- public safety implications
- social or cultural impact
- extent of profound changes to lives of individuals, families or communities.

Appraisal criteria for the identification of significant records

In ascertaining significant records, organisations must include consideration of the following:

1. Records, information and data that provide concise evidence of the deliberations of the Territory and Territory institutions, relating to key functions and program, and significant issues faced in governing the Territory. Examples of information assets meeting this criterion are those that document:
 - development, implementation and review of Territory legislation;
 - development, implementation and review of major government structures, policies and programs; and
 - government responses to the most significant issues of the day.
2. Records, information and data that contain information which is considered essential for the protection and future wellbeing of Australians and their environment, including the protection of their significant rights and entitlements. Examples of information assets meeting this criterion are those that:
 - register births, deaths and marriages;
 - detail long-term environmental hazards or significant environmental change;
 - detail elements of Territory heritage such as heritage places registers; and
 - document rights to land.
3. Records, information and data that have a special capacity to illustrate the impact of government activities on individuals, groups and the environment; the interaction of people with the government; and especially the influence of the Territory community on government decision-making. Examples of information assets meeting this criterion are those that:
 - detail cases of significant government intervention in the lives of individuals or classes of people such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were separated from their families;
 - detail the high-level planning and execution of major public works such as main roads and residential developments;
 - document land-use and zoning plans; and
 - document significant community opposition to government actions or policies.
4. Records, information and data that have substantial capacity to enhance knowledge and understanding of the Territory's history, society, economy, culture and people, especially as

these are influenced by government activity. Examples of information assets meeting this criterion are those that:

- detail concise Treasury and economic data;
 - document statistical data on the Territory's population and its circumstances; • detail the planning and production of major cultural events and historical celebrations; and
 - detail major social, economic, cultural or scientific discoveries or developments of significance to, or having a special relationship with, the Territory.
5. Records, information and data that provide evidence of the source of authority, foundation and machinery of government and Territory institutions sufficient to document the administrative and legal context of other Territory Archives. Examples of information assets meeting this criterion are those that:
- document formal instruments or authorities, including legislation, Administrative Arrangements Orders and delegations under legislation, which establish, maintain, alter or review the functions, powers, responsibilities and jurisdictions of Territory Government Organisations;
 - detail judgements that have bearing on the jurisdiction or powers of the ACT Government; and
 - document agreements with other governments.

References

<https://www.territoryrecords.act.gov.au/standards/Assess-Guideline>

<https://www.forgov.qld.gov.au/information-and-communication-technology/recordkeeping-and-information-management/recordkeeping/retention-disposal-and-destruction-of-records/identify-records-with-permanent-archival-enduring-or-intrinsic-value>

https://www.forgov.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0028/182917/gsa-appraisal-statement.pdf

https://tfhc.nt.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0004/268015/Statement-of-Appraisal-Characteristics.pdf

<https://www.records.nsw.gov.au/recordkeeping/advice/identifying-high-value-and-high-risk-information>