



Procedure No. 4

# Procedures for Disposal Authorisation

Revised June 2003 / Revised May 2005

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## Summary

These procedures cover:

- requirements for preparing or revising a functional retention and disposal authority
- the process of submitting a functional retention and disposal authority for approval by State Records
- State Records' policy on using a disposal authority issued to a predecessor organisation.

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## Introduction

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### The legal basis for disposal authorisation

Part 3 of the *State Records Act 1998* prohibits the disposal of State records except where it is authorised. Under the Act, State Records can give permission for disposal.

The usual means by which authorisation is given by State Records is through the approval and issue of:

- [general retention and disposal authorities](#), and
- [functional retention and disposal authorities](#).

All retention and disposal authorities must also be approved by State Records' Board.

### Purpose of these procedures

The purpose of these procedures is to assist staff of public offices and consultants to obtain appropriate disposal authorisation for records not covered by general retention and disposal authorities.

### Who should read these procedures?

These procedures are aimed at records managers, consultants and other staff within NSW government departments and agencies.

Local councils, universities and public health organisations will not generally need to read these procedures as there are general retention and disposal authorities in place for the disposal of records of these organisations.

### Relationship to the DIRKS methodology

The DIRKS methodology described in [Strategies for Documenting Government Business: The DIRKS manual](#) provides the basis for researching, analysing and documenting retention and disposal requirements for the purpose of preparing or revising a functional retention and disposal authority.

A useful guide to the relevant parts of the DIRKS methodology is provided in the section of the DIRKS manual [Doing DIRKS to develop and implement retention and disposal authorities](#).

### Definitions

**Disposal** refers to a range of processes associated with implementing records retention, destruction or transfer decisions which are documented in disposal

authorities. (Source: Australian Standard *Records Management* AS ISO 15489.1-2002, Part 1, Clause 3.9)

**Disposal classes** are classes of records performing or recording similar activities and therefore having the same retention period and disposal action.

**Functional retention and disposal authorities** authorise the retention and disposal of records unique to a specific organisation.

**General retention and disposal authorities** authorise the retention and disposal of records common to more than one organisation. Such records may include:

- general administrative records
- common records that relate to unique functions, and
- records relating to the unique functions of like organisations such as local councils, universities, and public health services.

For other recordkeeping terms see State Records' [Glossary of Recordkeeping Terms](#).

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## Obtaining disposal authorisation in NSW

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### Introduction

All disposal activity, including destruction and transfer of records in all formats, must be authorised through either a general retention and disposal authority or a functional retention and disposal authority.

### Coverage of general retention and disposal authorities

Disposal authorisation already exists in [approved general retention and disposal authorities](#) for many records created by NSW public sector organisations, including:

- records generated by common administrative functions such as financial management, personnel management, marketing
- records generated by common activities undertaken in relation to unique functions such as management of committees, tendering, policy development.

### Checking whether disposal authorisation already exists

Authority to dispose of your organisation's unique records (those not covered by a general retention and disposal authority) may already exist.

If you are not sure whether your organisation has disposal authorisation, [contact State Records](#) for information about, or copies of, disposal authorities issued to your organisation or to a predecessor organisation.

State Records maintains a register of disposal authorities it has approved (including disposal recommendations approved by the former Archives Authority of NSW prior to 1 January 1999). A [list of retention and disposal authorities issued by State Records since February 2002](#) is available online.

## Determining required disposal authorisation

Use the table below to determine the action you need to take to ensure you have the necessary disposal authorisation.

If your organisation has...	Then...
no disposal authorisation for its unique records	prepare a retention and disposal authority for approval
disposal authorisation approved 5 or more years ago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>review the disposal authority for currency and completeness</li><li>revise if necessary</li></ul>
disposal authorisation approved 10 or more years ago	prepare a new retention and disposal authority for approval <b>Note:</b> your existing disposal authority should no longer be used
records relating to functions and activities no longer carried out	contact State Records to discuss appropriate disposal authorisation for these records

## Longer retention does not need to be authorised

General and functional retention and disposal authorities permit the destruction of classes of records after minimum retention periods have been met. There is no need to seek authorisation to retain records longer than the minimum retention period.

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## Preparing a functional retention and disposal authority

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## Before you begin

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## Introduction

Retention and disposal authorities are standard tools in records management. State Records has specific requirements for their preparation.

## Be aware of requirements

Before you begin preparing a functional retention and disposal authority for approval make sure you are aware of and understand State Records':

- [best practice requirements](#)
- [documentation requirements](#)
- [content, layout and wording conventions](#).

## Plan the project

Preparing or reviewing a functional retention and disposal authority is a major project and should be undertaken using the usual project planning methods. Two aspects of the project that must be managed carefully are the timing and the documentation.

**The project timetable** should allow for key stages in the disposal authorisation process, such as:

- drafting and internal review processes
- the initial review of the draft authority by State Records and negotiation of changes to it
- sign off by the chief executive and/or senior management of your organisation before formal submission
- meeting deadlines for submission of the draft authority to make meetings of the State Records' Board (held every 2 months).

**Efficiently collect and maintain documentation** during the project by being aware of:

- what documentation is required to be submitted to State Records
- what documentation is required for ongoing management of disposal within your organisation
- what sources exist, if any, for this documentation
- how the information can be collected and maintained so it can be reused where necessary
- how the information collected can be linked to, or incorporated into, recordkeeping systems throughout the organisation.

## Tips on using consultants

Consultants may be engaged to develop or review a disposal authority. It is nevertheless important that the project is managed by the public office.

If you are intending to use consultants to prepare the disposal authority, make sure that they:

- are competent to undertake the work required (ie. they have the necessary knowledge, skills and experience)
- understand State Records' requirements and conventions
- complete all of the required documentation to the standards specified in these procedures
- provide you with all documentation necessary for you to maintain the disposal authority when their contract has ended.

These points may need to be addressed in your tender process for selecting a consultant and in the contract you establish to engage their services.

### **Consider implementation issues and ongoing maintenance**

Functional retention and disposal authorities must be prepared and submitted in a particular [format](#).

You may need a different format for implementation purposes. It is therefore worth thinking up front about how retention and disposal requirements will be conveyed to staff within your organisation and how the requirements will be maintained and updated. It may be better during implementation to incorporate the authorised retention decisions into a records management software application and to convey disposal requirements through internal procedures and guidelines which are more user friendly. Before you begin, plan for how you intend to implement and maintain the disposal authority.

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## **Best practice in preparing a functional retention and disposal authority**

[Introduction](#)

[Best practice requirements](#)

[Rationale for disposal authority structure](#)

[Linking disposal and classification](#)

[Disposal of case records](#)

### **Introduction**

This section outlines NSW best practice in preparing a functional retention and disposal authority for approval.

### **Best practice requirements**

A functional retention and disposal authority must:

- be structured around functions and activities
- only include unique functions and activities of an organisation
- only include classes of records which are not adequately authorised for disposal in a general retention and disposal authority
- be comprehensive and cover records in all formats

- only include functions and activities which are carried out by the organisation
- identify classes of records in relation to the functions and activities that generate them rather than the way the records are filed or stored.

**Exceptions** to best practice can be discussed with State Records where:

- additional records are held relating to a common function, and there is not adequate coverage of these records in a general retention and disposal authority
- older records are held relating to functions or activities which are no longer carried out
- records have been inherited from another organisation which are not actively used
- you have a small quantity of records requiring disposal authorisation
- you are a small organisation undertaking a limited number of activities

### **Rationale for disposal authority structure**

Each organisation carries out a limited range of functions and activities. Whilst organisations may be restructured quite frequently, the functions and activities carried out tend to remain quite stable. A retention and disposal authority structured around functions and activities is more likely to continue to be applicable despite reorganisation, resizing or broader administrative change. The way records are physically managed in files (hardcopy and electronic) or databases is subject to change over time. It is therefore important that appropriate classes of records are identified and that the descriptions of the records do not necessarily follow existing record formats or file types. This will ensure there is greater flexibility in the implementation of the disposal authority when the systems used to manage records are upgraded or superseded.

### **Linking disposal and classification**

If a disposal authority is being prepared in conjunction with a records management thesaurus, the disposal authority should be based on the business classification scheme and not the thesaurus. A disposal authority should only relate to actual functions and activities carried out, and not provide classification options or tips.

Refer to [\*Strategies for Documenting Government Business: The DIRKS Manual - Step B Analysis of business activity\*](#) for guidance on undertaking analysis to identify functions and activities and developing a business classification scheme.

### **Disposal of case records**

Where particular instance or case files are to be covered by a functional retention and disposal authority (including project or program records) it is important to assess whether the case file should be treated as a single class (where the records document a single activity) or whether the case file comprises records resulting from multiple activities and should therefore be described as separate classes in the authority.

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## **Methodology for identifying retention requirements**

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[Investigating and documenting organisational context](#)

[Surveying current and past recordkeeping practice](#)

[Analysing unique functions and activities](#)

[Identifying and documenting retention requirements](#)

[Identifying records required as State archives](#)

## **Introduction**

Disposal authorities must be based on rigorous research and analysis of the organisational context and the requirements for keeping the records to meet business and accountability needs. This research and analysis must be adequately documented.

The research and analysis, which can be done concurrently, should cover four areas:

1. organisational context
2. existing and past recordkeeping practice
3. unique functions and activities
4. retention and disposal requirements.

## **Investigating and documenting organisational context**

A preliminary step in preparing a retention and disposal authority is to investigate:

- the mission, roles and responsibilities of the organisation, and
- the regulatory environment in which the organisation operates, including relationships to other organisations.

Document the research into organisational context so that others within your organisation, and external parties, can understand what research was conducted and what sources of information were located. This should help ensure accountability for any decisions made as a result of this research and also that knowledge can be passed on to others in the organisation.

[Supporting documentation](#) required to be submitted with a functional retention and disposal authority includes some information gathered during investigation into the organisational context.

[Strategies for Documenting Government Business: The DIRKS manual](#) provides useful guidance on investigating organisational context (see [Step A Preliminary investigation](#)).

## **Surveying current and past recordkeeping practice**

Survey current recordkeeping practice to understand the range of records captured into official systems (or held outside of formal systems) and which require disposal authorisation. Survey past recordkeeping practice to identify inactive records which require disposal authorisation.

Compile inventories of current recordkeeping systems and of inactive records to which the functional retention and disposal authority will be applied. Note the quantities of particular instance or case records and the approximate dates inactive records were created.



[Supporting documentation](#) required to be submitted with a functional retention and disposal authority includes some information gathered about current and past recordkeeping practice.

[Strategies for Documenting Government Business: The DIRKS manual](#) provides useful guidance on surveying recordkeeping practice (see [Step D Assessment of existing systems](#)).

## **Analysing unique functions and activities**

Analyse the unique functions and activities of your organisation in order to provide a framework for identifying classes of records and determining retention periods for these records. Functions should be mutually exclusive. Activities should also be mutually exclusive within the context of a function.

Functions and activities need to be appropriately named and clearly described in the functional retention and disposal authority itself using the [template](#) provided. An overview of the current functions, and the relationships between them, is required in the [supporting documentation](#).

[Strategies for Documenting Government Business: The DIRKS manual](#) provides guidance on the analysis of business functions and activities (see [Step B Analysis of business activity](#)).

## **Identifying and documenting retention requirements**

Requirements to retain or destroy records are set out in legislation, regulations, business processes and procedures. Identify requirements to retain or destroy records through an analysis of your organisation's legal and business environment. Use a risk assessment approach to determine appropriate retention periods and disposal actions for records that are to be destroyed.

Adequate justifications for the retention periods and disposal decisions being put forward is required to be included in the [supporting documentation](#) when submitting a functional retention and disposal authority for approval. An [Evaluation workbook \(Excel format\)](#) has been provided for this purpose.

Documenting disposal classes and keeping track of the basis for each of the retention periods and disposal actions can be a labour intensive task, however, it is critical information necessary to account for the disposal of records of your organisation and it will assist with maintenance of the retention and disposal authority over time.

[Strategies for Documenting Government Business: The DIRKS manual](#) provides guidance on the identification of retention requirements (see [Step C Identification of recordkeeping requirements](#)).

## **Identifying records required as State archives**

A functional retention and disposal authority identifies records required as State archives. State Records' appraisal policy [Building the Archives](#) sets out broad objectives as to the type of records that are required as State archives. Use this policy to guide recommendations as to which of your organisation's records should be required as State archives.

Justifications for retaining records as State archives should be provided in the [supporting documentation](#) submitted with a draft functional retention and disposal authority.

Be aware that State Records may have a different view to your organisation as to which records should be required as State archives. This can often arise because State Records assesses the value of the records in the context of the whole of the

NSW public sector. For example, a record may not be required from one organisation where it is known that a more concise or significant record of the same activity is to be retained as a State archive by a related organisation.

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## Documentation requirements

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[Why prepare standard documentation?](#)

[The disposal authority \(DA\) template](#)

[Conventions for content, layout and wording](#)

[Supporting documentation: information required](#)

[Examples of retention and disposal justifications](#)

[The Evaluation workbook](#)

[The standard covering letter](#)

### Introduction

Functional retention and disposal authorities must be submitted for approval in a standard format along with adequate supporting documentation to show the basis for the decisions within them. The draft authority should be formally submitted for approval under a standard covering letter.

### Why prepare standard documentation?

The use of a standard template for disposal authorities aims to improve the quality of information within them and ensure consistency in their structure and presentation across NSW public offices.

The supporting documentation, comprising copies of documentation State Records expects should be completed during the process of preparing a functional retention and disposal authority, is required to show how the retention and disposal decisions have been reached and to provide an understanding of the structure and scope of the disposal authority.

The cover letter formalises the submission of the draft disposal authority once the content of the authority has been negotiated with State Records.

### The disposal authority (DA) template

A disposal authority template is available in [MS Word format](#) or as an [Excel worksheet](#).

The template comprises two parts:

1. a header, and
2. a table.

The header includes the name of the public office submitting the disposal authority and the date range of the records to which it is applicable.

The table is comprised of 5 columns as follows:

Column	Information components
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No.	<p><b>Function, activity and disposal class identifiers</b></p> <p>Each function, activity and disposal class has a unique number used to identify it. Each number has 3 parts which reflects the hierarchical arrangement of the authority. The first part of each number represents the function, the second part the activity within that function, and the last part the disposal class within that function/activity combination.</p>
Function/ Activity names	<p><b>Function and activity names</b></p> <p>Each function and activity has a name that is also used to identify it.</p>
Description	<p><b>Descriptions</b></p> <p>Each function, activity and disposal class has a description which gives its scope. The descriptions should be concise, clear and written in plain English, avoiding jargon. They should be able to be understood by people within the organisation over time and by people external and unfamiliar with the organisation.</p> <p><b>Cross references</b></p> <p>Related functions, activities and disposal classes either within the same disposal authority or in general retention and disposal authorities are identified by cross references.</p> <p><b>Notes</b></p> <p>Additional information is sometimes included in a note.</p>
Disposal action	<p>Disposal actions are made up of several parts:</p> <p><b>Minimum retention periods</b></p> <p>These identify how long the records must be kept as a minimum.</p> <p><b>Disposal triggers</b></p> <p>These identify the event from which the retention period is calculated, for example, an audit. Where there isn't a specific known event, the trigger may be described as 'last action'. This can be interpreted widely so that it may refer to the last action in the chain of activity which generated the records or it may refer to provision of access to the record under a Freedom of Information request.</p> <p><b>Disposal action</b></p> <p>This identifies what ultimately should happen to the records.</p> <p><b>Note 1:</b> Where records are required as State archives don't include a minimum retention period or disposal trigger. Information about how long the records should be kept in the</p>

	<p>organisation before they are transferred to secondary storage or archival control/custody should be included in the 'Custody' column (see below).</p> <p><b>Note 2:</b> A <b>maximum retention period</b> may be used. This specifies that the records must not be kept longer than the period given. Maximum retention periods are rarely used and generally only where there is a legal requirement.</p>
Custody	<p>Guidance on how long records should be kept in the public office before transfer to secondary storage or to archival control/custody. Custody information can be included to assist the organisation in planning its storage needs and to plan the transfer of archival records. This information is not authorised by State Records.</p>

**Footnotes** can also be used to refer to legislation, directives, guidelines and other instruments that contain specific requirements that affect the retention or disposal of records belonging to a particular function, activity or disposal class.

#### **Conventions for content, layout and wording**

State Records has established certain [conventions](#) for the content of a disposal authority, its layout and the wording used within it.

#### **Supporting documentation**

Supporting documentation gathered during the process of preparing a functional retention and disposal authority must be submitted with a draft disposal authority. There is no set format in which this documentation must be supplied, although an [Evaluation workbook \(Excel format\)](#) is available for documenting the basis of each retention period and disposal action.

The following table lists the information State Records expects to be supplied in the supporting documentation for a draft functional retention and disposal authority.

<b>About the organisation</b>
A brief description of the current functions of the organisation and how they are related
A list of legislation administered by the organisation
<b>About relationships with other organisations</b>
A brief description of any formal reporting/compliance relationships between this organisation and other organisations relating to core functions
A brief description of any role the organisation has in overseeing the performance/operations of other organisations
A brief description of any significant joint ventures or agreements the organisation has with other organisations
A brief description of any overlap of core functions with other organisations
A brief description of any significant relationships with other organisations not already described
<b>About the records held by the organisation</b>

A brief description of all recordkeeping systems that exist in the organisation including paper-based filing systems, electronic document management systems, database applications, collections of photographs, maps and plans and audio visual material

A brief description of the oldest records held by the organisation

A statement of when the majority (80%) of the records date from

A summary list of records held dating prior to 1940

An estimate of the quantity of particular instance or case records held, including case files, registers, database records

### **About the retention periods and disposal actions**

A brief statement of the justification for each retention period and disposal action

### **Examples of retention and disposal justifications**

Examples of justifications for retention periods and disposal actions might be:

- policy decision confirmed in interview with Manager D
- based on Standard Y, section Z
- based on Statute V, section W
- business rule from Procedure Manual X
- based on decision in disposal authority A
- consistent with approach in other state jurisdiction see G.

**Tip:** To assist State Records to review retention decisions, provide as much detail as possible about the source or basis of the decision, including references to sections of legislation and other documentary sources.

### **The Evaluation workbook**

An [Evaluation workbook \(Excel format\)](#) has been designed to assist with the preparation of disposal authorities. The workbook comprises two linked worksheets:

1. the Evaluation worksheet for entering the details of each function, activity and disposal class, proposed retention periods and disposal actions, and justifications for each retention period and disposal action
2. the Template worksheet which automatically takes the information entered into the Evaluation worksheet and presents it in the template required for submission of a disposal authority.

Use of the Evaluation workbook is not mandatory.

State Records acknowledges that the workbook is substantially based on a concept of linked Excel worksheets prepared by Barbara Reed of Recordkeeping Innovations. The use of a spreadsheet for providing supporting documentation was initiated by Siller Systems Administration.

### **The standard covering letter**

A disposal authority should be formally submitted for approval under a covering letter from the chief executive of your organisation to the Director of State Records.

The cover letter may be sent in hardcopy or as an email with the draft disposal authority as an attachment. A sample covering letter for the submission of a draft functional retention and disposal authority is provided in the attached [template](#).

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## **Content, layout and wording conventions**

[Introduction](#)

[Why have conventions?](#)

[Content conventions](#)

[Layout conventions](#)

[Wording conventions](#)

### **Introduction**

Follow conventions for content, layout and wording when preparing a functional retention and disposal authority for approval.

### **Why have conventions?**

The conventions aim to improve readability of disposal authorities across organisations and to assist State Records' Board members in authorising disposal actions. Increased standardisation will also facilitate the future management of disposal authorities in an online database system.

### **Content conventions**

Functions:

- must have a meaningful name
- must have an adequate description of their scope in the context of the organisation.

Activities:

- must have a meaningful name
- must have an adequate description of their scope in the context of the function

Disposal classes:

- must have an adequate description of their scope
- can include examples of records for illustration.

### **Layout conventions**

All functions, activities and disposal classes to be in separate rows in the table.  
SEE references:

- to other functions are placed at the end of the function description

- to other activities are placed at the end of the activity description.

## Wording conventions

Disposal class descriptions should generally start with the phrase 'Records relating to...'

The following table outlines the standard conventions for expressing disposal actions.

Disposal action	Wording convention
Records to be retained as State archives	Required as State archives
Records which can be destroyed after a specific period of time	Retain minimum of X months/years after Y, then destroy  <i>Note: X = number of months/years, Y = the event from which the number of years is counted eg audit, last action</i>
Records which can be destroyed when they have been superseded	Retain until superseded, then destroy
Records which can be destroyed and there is not a specific period of time	Retain until administrative use ceases, then destroy

## Submitting a functional retention and disposal authority for approval

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### [The disposal authorisation process](#)

### [Submitting the initial draft](#)

### [Submitting the final draft](#)

### [Factors impacting on timing](#)

### [Appraisal by State Records](#)

### [Register of approved disposal authorities](#)

## Introduction

There are two main stages in the process of obtaining approval for a functional retention and disposal authority. These stages are:

1. submission of an initial draft for review and comment by State Records
2. formal submission of a final agreed draft for approval by State Records and its Board.

## The disposal authorisation process

The following table describes the process of obtaining disposal authorisation once a draft functional retention and disposal authority has been prepared.

**Note** that the same procedure applies whether the draft authority has been prepared inhouse or by a consultant.

Stage	Description
1	<p>The public office records manager...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• checks that the draft functional retention and disposal authority meets all organisational and statutory requirements</li> <li>• checks that the draft authority has been prepared in accordance with State Records' procedures</li> <li>• submits the draft authority and supporting documentation to State Records</li> </ul>
2	<p>State Records' staff...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• acknowledge receipt of the draft authority</li> <li>• review the draft authority and supporting documentation</li> <li>• request, if necessary, further information to clarify the scope of the authority or the decisions in it</li> <li>• consult with external stakeholders where required</li> <li>• provide comments to the public office on the draft authority</li> </ul>
3	<p>The public office records manager...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• responds to the comments by either revising the draft authority or clarifying and justifying the decisions in it</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> Stages 2 and 3 may repeat depending on the stage of development of the draft authority and the quality of the information.</p>
4	<p>The chief executive of the public office...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• formally submits the final draft of the authority to the Director of State Records for approval using the standard covering letter</li> </ul>
5	<p>State Records' staff...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• prepare the authority for submission to State Record's Board and Director</li> <li>• submit the draft authority to the Board and Director for approval</li> </ul>
6	<p>State Records' Board...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reviews, and</li> <li>• approves the authority, or</li> <li>• requests further clarification or changes to the authority</li> </ul>
7	<p>The Director of State Records...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• approves and issues the functional retention and disposal authority</li> <li>• notifies the public office and forwards a copy of the approved disposal authority.</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> Once a disposal authority has been approved and issued it may be implemented without further reference to State Records. See the</p>



	guidelines on <a href="#">implementing a disposal authority</a> and <a href="#">destruction of records</a> for further guidance on implementation.
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### Submitting the initial draft

Submit an initial draft of the functional retention and disposal authority, and supporting documentation, by email to [disposal@records.nsw.gov.au](mailto:disposal@records.nsw.gov.au). The draft authority should be submitted in the required [template](#) and should follow:

- the best practice requirements, and
- conventions for content, layout and wording.

### Submitting the final draft

Formally submit the final agreed draft of the functional retention and disposal authority in either hardcopy or electronic form. This draft should be submitted under a [standard covering letter](#) to the Director of State Records.

**Note:** If submitting the final draft in hardcopy form, also send an electronic copy to [disposal@records.nsw.gov.au](mailto:disposal@records.nsw.gov.au).

### Factors impacting on timing

Usually the disposal authority development and authorisation process will take a few months. Timing will depend on

- the stage of development of the draft authority when it is first submitted for review
- the quality of the documentation submitted
- how many changes are required to finalise the draft authority
- how many draft authorities from other public offices have been submitted for review (authorities are usually reviewed in order of receipt)
- when a final draft authority is submitted (State Records' Board meets every two months - the deadline for submission of the final document is 4 weeks prior to the meeting date).

### Appraisal by State Records

A major focus of the review of the draft disposal authority by State Records is to appraise which records of the public office are required as State archives. This appraisal will take into consideration recommendations by the public office, previous appraisal decisions, and our stated [appraisal policy objectives](#).

Remember that State Records is appraising the value of the functions, activities and records of the public office in the context of the whole of the NSW public sector.

State Records may consult with stakeholders with expertise in the areas covered by the disposal authority as part of their appraisal.

### Register of disposal authorities

The final approved disposal authority is maintained by State Records in a register of disposal authorities. A [list of retention and disposal authorities issued by State Records in 2002](#) is available online.

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## Revising an approved disposal authority

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### [Determining the need to review](#)

### [Consolidating existing disposal authorisation](#)

### [The methodology for reviewing a disposal authority](#)

### [The process for submitting a revised disposal authority](#)

## Introduction

It is important that functional retention and disposal authorities are kept under review. This is to ensure they remain relevant as functions and activities, the operating environment, and the requirements for records, change.

## Determining the need to review

A review is necessary when:

- the disposal authorisation specific to your organisation was approved 10 or more years ago (these disposal authorities should no longer be used)
- your organisation has undergone substantial changes to its functions and activities, including when functions have moved or evolved as a result of administrative change, or
- you want to reduce the minimum retention periods or change the disposal actions (extending the retention periods does not require approval).

A review is recommended when:

- the disposal authorisation specific to your organisation was approved 5 or more years ago.

## Consolidating existing disposal authorisation

If your organisation has a number of existing disposal authorities, or has disposal authorisation only for a portion of your organisation's unique records, the review process provides a good opportunity to consolidate existing disposal authorisation and prepare a functional retention and disposal authority that will cover all of your organisation's unique functions.

## The methodology for reviewing a disposal authority

Use the [methodology for identifying retention requirements](#) to review a disposal authority. This methodology is based on the DIRKS methodology described in [Strategies for Documenting Government Business: The DIRKS manual](#).

## The process for submitting a revised disposal authority

The process for submitting a revised disposal authority is the same as the [process for submitting a new disposal authority](#).

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# Policy on disposal authorisation and administrative change

[Introduction](#)

[Policy](#)

[Notify State Records](#)

## Introduction

Functional retention and disposal authorities are issued to specific public offices to authorise the disposal of records generated in a particular context. When administrative change occurs, such as the merger of two organisations or the transfer of functions between organisations, disposal authorities may continue to be used in limited circumstances.

## Policy

A disposal authority should only be used to dispose of records which were intended to be covered by it at the time it was approved.

**A successor organisation** may use a disposal authority issued to a predecessor organisation if:

- only the name of the organisation has changed
- the entire predecessor organisation continues as a discrete division or business unit of the successor organisation.

**A successor organisation** may use a disposal authority issued to a predecessor organisation to dispose of records:

- directly inherited from a predecessor organisation as a result of administrative change
- generated by discrete functions inherited from the predecessor organisation, where the functions remain substantially unchanged.

## Notify State Records

Write to State Records to request to use a disposal authority issued to a predecessor organisation. State Records will write to give you permission or will discuss the matter with you.

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## Appendix 1: Overview of documentation requirements

[Introduction](#)

[Summary of documentation required by State Records](#)

[Content and presentation of supporting documentation](#)

## Introduction

Documentation is an integral part of disposal authorisation. Preparation of a functional retention and disposal authority involves research and analysis which should be documented whether the work is undertaken in house or by a

consultant. State Records requires the submission of specific documentation in order to authorise disposal.

## Summary of documentation required by State Records

State Records' [documentation requirements](#) when submitting a retention and disposal authority for approval include:

- the draft retention and disposal authority (using the [template](#) provided)
- supporting documentation, and
- a cover letter using the [template](#) provided (when formally submitting the draft for approval).

## Content and presentation of supporting documentation

The [supporting documentation](#) at a minimum must include information about:

- legislation administered by the organisation
- the organisation's relationships with other public sector and private bodies
- existing recordkeeping systems and records held
- the reasons for the retention periods and disposal actions.

There is no requirement relating to the form in which the supporting documentation must be presented, however, an [Evaluation workbook \(Excel format\)](#) is available for documenting the justification for each retention period and disposal decision.

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## Appendix 2: Checklist for submitting a disposal authority for approval

[Overview](#)

[Checklist](#)

### Overview

Before submitting a draft functional retention and disposal authority for approval by State Records check to make sure that you have followed the requirements described in these procedures.

**Note:** The draft disposal authority will be reviewed by staff at State Records against the requirements before it is submitted to our Board for approval. It is likely that we will have some comments on the draft. The review process can take some months, depending on the quality of the documentation submitted and the complexity of the organisation.

### Checklist

The following table can be used as a checklist that the disposal authority and supporting documentation has been prepared in accordance with State Records' requirements.

DISPOSAL AUTHORITY
Content and structure

Does the disposal authority only include functions, activities and classes of records not covered by general retention and disposal authorities?	
Does the disposal authority cover all records not adequately covered by general retention and disposal authorities?	
Is the disposal authority structured around functions and activities?	
Are all functions and activities appropriate and adequately described?	
Are all disposal classes appropriate and adequately described?	
<b>Format and layout</b>	
Has the disposal authority template been used?	
Have the layout conventions been followed?	
<b>Expression and wording</b>	
Will the descriptions of functions, activities and classes of records make sense to someone outside of the organisation?	
Have the wording conventions for disposal classes and disposal actions been followed?	
<b>SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION</b>	
Does the supporting documentation include the information required about the context of the records and the reasons for each retention period and disposal decision?	

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## Templates and workbook

The location of the templates and Evaluation workbook referred to in these procedures are as follows:

The disposal authority template (Word format) is available from <http://www.records.nsw.gov.au/publicsector/disposal/procedures/DATemplate.doc>

The Evaluation workbook (Excel format) is available from [http://www.records.nsw.gov.au/publicsector/disposal/procedures/DA\\_Documentation.xls](http://www.records.nsw.gov.au/publicsector/disposal/procedures/DA_Documentation.xls)

The covering letter template (Word format) is available from <http://www.records.nsw.gov.au/publicsector/disposal/procedures/Coveringlettertemplate.doc>

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