

Archives

New Zealand

Te Whare Tohu Tuhituhinga
O Aotearoa

APPRAISAL REPORT: Works District Office schedule

JOB NO:	2003/5660 (OP2001/078)		
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Opus International Consultants is a private company which holds a large number of records from the former Ministry of Works, in a variety of formats. It is willing to facilitate the appraisal and transfer to Archives New Zealand of those records no longer required for current use.

In July 2001, an archivist from Archives New Zealand was sent to Wanganui to assess a range of former Works' records held by Opus. Due to the impending loss of storage, it was decided that the most practical approach was to move the records to Archives New Zealand Wellington for the purposes of appraisal.

An attempt was initially made to sentence the records using the existing District Office Schedule.¹ However, this proved unsuccessful as the majority of records being appraised related to road widening, road realignment, bridge widening or alteration, which fell outside the existing schedule's ambit. It was decided, therefore, that all the types of record not covered by the existing schedule be appraised and that a separate schedule be developed to complement the existing authority.

The criteria considered for appraisal were: accountability, particularly with regard to structural features; land transactions and related matters; and the historic or national significance of the structure.

Quantity recommended for <u>transfer as public archives</u> :	Circa 50 ² lm (25%)
Quantity recommended for <u>destruction</u> :	Circa 150 lm (75%)

¹ Job file number AT2000/070 Ministry of Works and Development District Offices and Residencies Disposal Authority number 47.

² The quantity identified only relates to those records received from the greater Wanganui district and obviously does not account for the unknown quantities of Works' records still held by Opus around the country, which is not possible to measure.

2. APPRAISAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Opus International Consultants is a private company which holds a large number of records of the former Ministry of Works, in a variety of formats. It is willing to facilitate the appraisal and transfer to Archives New Zealand of those records no longer required for current use.

This project represents a significant part of a larger three-year programme to appraise public records held by Opus International Consultants that the Chief Archivist authorised for appraisal in 2001.³

In July 2001, an archivist from Archives New Zealand was sent to Wanganui to assess a range of records that Opus was keen to dispose of, as they were vacating some of their premises. It was decided, given the urgency of the particular circumstances at the time, that the most practical approach was to move the records to Archives New Zealand Wellington for the purposes of appraisal.

The records assessed in this project are from the Wanganui district of the Ministry of Works and mainly cover the period from the mid-1970s to the late-1990s. There were approximately 170 lm of MNS, contract, financial and dossier files and 5 ten-drawer plan cabinets to be appraised.

The national disaster set of Aperture Card Plan drawings, also transferred from Wanganui at the same time, was appraised separately.⁴

3. AGENCY INFORMATION

The Public Works Department was established with 12 district offices that reported to a District Engineer. Sub-offices were later established in the district offices of Auckland, Gisborne, Wellington and Dunedin. In 1945, when the Department was restructured and the Ministry of Works established, the district offices were amalgamated initially into six major district offices: Auckland, Hamilton, Napier, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin. Wanganui District Office was added soon after. Resident and sub-offices remained in the main provincial towns. By the 1970s Wanganui District had four Residency Offices at New Plymouth, Taumarunui, Palmerston North and Wanganui. In the 1980s, the Taumarunui Residency (Office and Highway Depots) had become part of the Hamilton District. Within the Residencies there were sub-offices and highway depots at locations such as Bulls, Taihape, Waiouru, Hawera, Lakes Hill, National Park, and Turangi.

Following the 1945 restructuring, the district offices were given more administrative responsibility. Their structure consisted of a number of divisions. For example, the Wanganui District Office in the early 1970s had four divisions titled: Architectural,

³ See Appendix One, or see OP2001/078 for the full report on this project.

⁴ File reference 2003/5113.

Electrical, Mechanical and Structural.⁵ The district offices reported to a district commissioner who in turn was responsible to the commissioner of works.

Residency offices were each headed by a resident engineer and primarily engaged in construction, maintenance, and field investigation. The resident engineers were accountable to their respective district commissioners of works. The project offices were under the control of project engineers and established for major construction works, independent of district offices but drawing certain services from them.

The district offices each maintained their own self-sufficient multiple-number subject file system in which series related primarily to each other rather than similarly titled series at Head Office. They also kept staff files, field and level books and a series of contract files. Residency offices, such as New Plymouth also had their own files series that did not necessarily match the district office series. However, they generally covered all of the same topics for matters relating to the local issues, staff and projects.

In relation to plans and drawings, the district offices initially used alpha prefixed drawing numbers before replacing these with the DIPS drawing numbering system in the mid-1970s (see Appendix A).

In 1988 the Commercial Division of the Ministry of Works and Development became The Works and Development Services Corporation (New Zealand) Ltd, a state-owned enterprise. Its three divisions, Works Consultancy Services, Property Services and Civil Construction, carried out the functions of consultancy, civil construction, property maintenance and facilities management. In 1989 it had 12 branches in New Zealand and three international branches.

In 1991 the divisions became wholly owned subsidiaries of Works and Development Services Corporation: Works Civil Construction Ltd, Works Consultancy Services Ltd, Road Signs and Traffic Control Equipment Ltd (RTL), and Works Computing Services Ltd. In New Zealand a regional structure was adopted by the two principal subsidiary companies: Works Civil Construction Ltd (6 regions) and Works Consultancy Services Ltd (3 regions).

Works Consultancy Services Ltd functions were to provide advice and design and management of building construction. Its national network of offices employed engineers, architects, planners and other technical staff. In 1996 it was sold to [name removed], becoming Opus International Consultants Ltd.

4. METHODOLOGY

An attempt was initially made to sentence the MNS files using the existing Works District Office Schedule. However, this proved unsuccessful as the majority of files transferred from Wanganui related to road widening, road realignment, bridge

⁵ Each division of the Wanganui District Office had its own numbering system, alpha prefixed as follows: WG Wanganui District Office; AWG Wanganui District – Architectural; EWG Wanganui District – Electrical; MGW Wanganui District – Mechanical; SWG Wanganui District – Structural.

widening and alteration, which fell outside of the current schedule's ambit. Also, it was found that most contracts, dossiers and plan records had to be appraised separately as the existing schedule did not provide coverage of any of these categories.

It was decided that a class-based schedule be developed for the records not covered by the existing authority. Following approval of this schedule, Appraisal staff, as a separate project, will undertake sentencing of the Wanganui records.

The process of developing this schedule involved:

- Creating some general potential disposal classes based on file lists, and assessing the applicability of the existing district office schedule to the Wanganui records.
- Researching relationships between different types of files such as contracts, dossiers and specifications, in order to identify how functions were reflected within the records and to identify the best source of the information.
- Testing classes by sample file examination.
- Inspecting sample files falling outside of established classes and providing any new classes required.
- Drafting the appraisal report and schedule.

As indicated above, a key issue for this appraisal was the applicability of the existing District Office Schedule for the records being appraised. When this was attempted, it was quickly found that the type of records transferred from Wanganui substantially differed from the records appraised in the development of the schedule in Auckland. This is obviously reflective of the varying work practices and activities carried out by individual offices in different areas and reflects the inevitably (and in this case unavoidable) difficulties associated with developing nationally applicable schedules from one location. As a result, a separate authority was developed but every effort was made to ensure it complemented the existing authority as much as possible.

Those records whose last action post-dates 31 March 1997 are to be returned to Opus as they are not covered by the Archives Act.

5. PRECEDENT

A review of appraisal jobs for Adhoc work undertaken for the Ministry of Works and Development Residual Management Unit – Head Office (Agency code AATE), Ministry of Works and Development Residual Management Unit - Wanganui District Office (Agency code AATC), Works and Development Services Corporation (New Zealand) Ltd Head Office (Agency code: AAQB), and Works Consultancy Services Ltd Head Office (Agency code: ABKK) was carried out. In particular, appraisal decisions in relation to MNS files and contract files relating to roads and bridges were reviewed. No previous appraisals of Ministry of Works dossiers could be located.

The Nelson Residency Office MNS files, included in the Ministry of Works and Development RMU – Head Office appraisal,⁶ were appraised and sentenced as follows:

- 1/- National Roads Board (Main Highways). Retain: material on bridges. Destroy: traffic tallies, standard specifications.
- 2/- Roads & Bridges, Courthouses. Retain: all.
- 5/- Departmental Buildings. Retain: all files on buildings - all W20 “Other Departments”.
Destroy: files on building services only, rents and rates.
- 23/- Rural Highways. Retain: all – Works 20 , Roads, Bridges etc.
- 72/- State Highways. Retain: general topics, possible policy, major works, legalisation. Destroy: maintenance, reseals, routing forms.

Sealed tender documents (7/5) that related to large-scale works (highway sections, bridges) whole buildings are to be retained. Contracts relating to maintenance, minor jobs, alterations and repairs, and services were destroyed. In addition, all minor contracts and Unit Rate (UR) contracts were destroyed.

The New Plymouth Residency Office contract files,⁷ included in the Ministry of Works and Development RMU - Wanganui District Office appraisal, were split into two disposal categories. Contract for roads, bridges, energy projects, e.g. Kapuni pipeline, whole buildings or building complexes and industrial complexes, were retained. Contracts relating to minor services and maintenance of buildings; minor alterations and maintenance of roads, e.g. reseals and services for industrial projects, were destroyed.

The New Plymouth Residency Office MNS files,⁸ included also in the Ministry of Works and Development RMU - Wanganui District Office appraisal, were sentenced as follows:

- 7/- Highways. Retain: legal material, construction, bridges, land taking and compensation, test results
Destroy: maintenance records, shape correction & reconstruction, street lightning, road marking etc, traffic tallies, plant hire, permits, routine approvals.
- 20/- Roading. Retain: all.
- 29/- Old Highways. Retain: construction files, general topics Destroy: maintenance.

Retention was recommended because these files demonstrate the working and functions of this particular residency, with “Think Big” projects particularly important. They were also seen to be of use to historians looking at special topics within Works and other fields.

Works and Development Services Corporation (New Zealand) Ltd Head Office⁹ MNS files and contract files were sentenced on the basis that some information on contract files, relating to the construction and upgrading of facilities, was not duplicated in administration files. Therefore, contract files for major works projects were retained where the project’s entire value exceeded \$500,000 with two categories of exceptions: those contract files of particular architectural, cultural or historical merit and those for major projects where the main or general file was not located.

⁶ Job file number 88/268.

⁷ Job file number 89/14.

⁸ Job file number 89/15.

⁹ Job file number 92/39.

Works Consultancy Services Ltd Head Office¹⁰ appraisal of MNS files and contract files identified three values for the retention of contract files:

1. Legal – implications of precise construction in case of failure;
2. Engineering significance - recording the techniques of the period;
3. Historical - detail for restoration or precise historical study.

A combination of monetary value of a contract and risk of structural failure was used to establish the legal value. The contract value was believed to reasonably reflect the consequence of structural failure and likely engineering significance, set on a rising scale to accommodate inflation. Contracts relating to bridges, gas, and power contracts would be ½ threshold value on basis of greater consequences of failure. To establish risk of structural failure it was decided that the file reference numbers in the registers would be used. Those identified as having greater risk were: 23/- Defence, 24/- Public Buildings, 28/- Gas Treatment, 71/- Motorways, 72/- Bridges, 92/- Power Projects.

On examining the above precedents for sentencing records it was decided that criteria such as monetary value and “significant”, “major” and “minor” projects, were not adequate for sentencing Works files. Instead, it was decided to develop the criteria in greater detail. The criteria developed for retention of records included: high-accountability structures, architectural significance, historical importance, land transactions and other legal matters, significant new constructions, and evidential high-level documents. The criteria developed for destruction of records included: routine construction, low-accountability structures, routine business functions, low-level activities, and the existence of a better or more complete set of records of permanent value elsewhere.

In relation to maps and plans, an assessment of Archives New Zealand documentation revealed that a number of attempts had been made previously to develop specific appraisal criteria for Works plans. These were documented in a report produced in late 1992¹¹ in which a number of qualitative criteria were listed for head office Works’ plans. These included intrinsic value, the status of the architect, research value and several other classes. However, this work was never completed as the interpretation of many of these classes relied on the expertise of a specialist cartographer, a position only filled for a short period during the mid 1980s. Given the continuing lack of such a specialist position now, the approach taken in this appraisal has attempted, where possible, to avoid such interpretative and expert-dependent classes in the development of this authority.

6. DESCRIPTION, EVALUATION & DISPOSAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The records being appraised were divided into the following groupings:

¹⁰ Job file number 94/42.

¹¹ See job file 1992/96, which contains a report by [name removed] documenting previous approaches to appraising Ministry of Works plans. The report was not developed into an appraisal report owing to the lack of cartographic expertise within National Archives (now Archives New Zealand) to implement it and greater priority being afforded to other work.

- Subject files
- Contracts
- Dossiers
- Plan Drawings

6.1 Record Classes

<i>Class title</i>	Subject Files
<i>Date Range:</i>	Circa 1960-1998
<i>Function:</i>	To document actions, mainly through correspondence, on a particular subject, activity or project.

These records typically contain correspondence, some contracts, reports, technical discussions, plans and diagrams. However, in the context of the records being appraised they do not contain the best source of information about a particular project. Dossiers usually contain a wider range of reports, technical information and supporting data than the equivalent subject file. In general, subject files are more likely to have information regarding the taking of land and other legal matters. In order to be consistent and to gain as wide coverage as possible, retention is recommended of subject files and dossiers relating to the same types of construction.

Recommended for transfer as public archives

- Records documenting road realignment, bridge widening, repairs or alterations of a structural nature (see 1.1 on the schedule).
- Records documenting road/bridge widening where the taking of land is involved (see 1.2 of the schedule).

Recommended for destruction

- Records that document routine road widening not involving the taking of land (see 1.3 of the schedule).

<i>Class title</i>	Contracts
<i>Date Range:</i>	Circa 1968-1998
<i>Function:</i>	To document the tendering process, to record the obligations of the parties involved, to detail the parameters of the work required, and to establish financial criteria for fees, costs and liabilities.

These records obviously contain contracts, many signed originals, often with design specifications, tenders, correspondence, claims, notices to the contractor (usually about improvements required), certificates of completion and contain plans or

diagrams. Some of these contracts are very similar to Design Dossiers whilst others more closely resemble subject files.

The value of these records, once the contract has been certified as complete, and the maintenance requirements fulfilled, is limited. Much of the information of possible value is available elsewhere, for example dossiers and plan drawings.

There is an argument for retaining contract dossiers relating to structures with a high accountability factor, for example, the construction of and alterations to major bridges and repairs and extensions to major bridges. This is because of the extra information provided by the dossier format and the need to provide as complete coverage as possible of high accountability structures. Records relating to the construction of significant buildings were also added to allow the flexibility of retaining information on buildings of potentially high architectural significance.

Contracts that do not meet the accountability criteria could be destroyed on the following grounds:

- Low accountability value.
- Legal requirements met.
- Routine business function.
- Many contracts document low-level activities, e.g. maintenance.
- Other records are better and/or more complete sources of information of permanent value.

There is a risk, owing to the fragmented and disordered nature of the recordkeeping at district office level, that better copies of the record may not be extant. However, as a majority of the construction is routine and has a low accountability value, the risk is acceptable.

Recommended for transfer as public archives

- Contracts documenting the construction, repair or alterations to the core components of high accountability projects such as bridges, dams, defence works, mines, marine works and similar structures (see 2.1 on the schedule).
- Contracts documenting the construction of significant new structures such as police stations, major school buildings, courthouses, hospitals, roads and highways and similar projects (see 2.2 on the schedule).

Recommended for destruction

- All other contracts (see 2.3).

<i>Class title</i>	Dossiers
<i>Date Range:</i>	Circa 1960-1989
<i>Function:</i>	To document in detail a wide range of technical information in relation to a specific project.

The information contained in a dossier and, therefore, its value depends on the type of dossier it is. These can be identified as the following:

Civil Engineering Specifications Dossiers contain most or all of the following features: pre-scheme assessment, introduction, standards, deficiencies, remedies, options, economic appraisal, land purchase, geometry, hydrology, topography, environmental impact, design factors, geotechnics, accident reports, conclusions and recommendations. Their appendices contain a range of surveys, economic analysis sheets, estimates, photographs, drawings, maps, plans, and diagrams. This information may be contained in one or several volumes depending on the size and complexity of the project.

Contract Dossiers have been dealt with as contacts, as this is their main purpose. They do have similarities with Design Dossiers described below.

Design Dossiers as the title suggests, contain information on what the construction is going to look like and the technical information needed to get it to that state. A Design Dossier will contain all or most of the following features: technical data, specifications, plans, diagrams, working notes and photographs. It does not contain the reports or background information of Civil Specifications as its purpose is to detail what is going to be built.

Structural Dossiers contain technical data, diagrams, plans and some written notes on standards. They relate specifically to technical side of the construction or an aspect thereof.

Some dossiers certainly have significant evidential value and are the most complete source of information, particularly Civil Specifications and Design Dossiers. Subject files and contracts provide evidence of what took place, with dossiers providing the reasons why and the technical information.

Like subject files and contracts, the value of the dossier relates directly to the structure or project they concern. Those that have a high accountability value or national importance, or relate to significant new constructions, are recommended for retention.

It is important to recognise that “as built” plans contain the most significant information about the structure and this information is available from other sources, e.g. plan drawing sets.

Whilst some dossiers recommended for destruction may contain information relating to land, this is not in fact the main purpose of these records. Land acquisition information is more appropriately dealt with in subject files. Subject files involving land acquisition have been recommended for retention.

Recommended for transfer as public archives

- Dossiers documenting the construction or structural alterations, repairs or extensions to high accountability structures such as bridges, new roads main or highways, including realignment, aerodromes, defence works, dams, marine works and mines (see 3.1 on schedule).
- Dossiers documenting the construction of significant new buildings such as prisons, core school buildings, police stations, etc (see 3.2 on schedule).
- Dossiers containing substantial evidence of locally initiated policy, precedent or technical information generated at a district office level (see 3.3 on schedule).

Dossiers including documentation on land purchase, land management and conservation issues (see 3.4 on schedule).

- Dossiers documenting structures of national importance including historic buildings, monuments, war graves cemeteries and tourist resorts (see 3.5 on the schedule).

Recommended for destruction

- Records that document routine construction matters including road, bridge and building maintenance, road and building repairs or alterations, road widening, minor construction or minor features of accountability structures (see 3.6 on the schedule).

Class title: **Plan Drawings**

Date Range: Circa 1930- 1990

Physical Format: Tracing, blueprint, paper plan

Function: To provide a diagrammatic representation of a structure for construction, alteration, repair or maintenance purposes.

The plans and diagrams range from those covering the construction in its entirety to specific features or facets. There are initial plans through to the final “as built” plans. Clearly an “as built” has more value from the accountability and subsequent work/maintenance point of view.

Many of the plan drawings appraised are stamped indicating that they have been microfilmed. There are also possibly copies on subject files, dossiers and the Opus database. Aperture cards, subject files and dossiers have all been authorised for transfer to Archives New Zealand under a separate authority. It has been pointed out to Archives New Zealand that Works kept only those plans, after they were microfilmed, because they were of “national significance”.

It is therefore recommended that pre-1900 plans be retained consistent with the grandfather date used in the existing District Office Schedule. In relation to post-1900 plans, it is recommended those of architectural, engineering, social, and historical significance be retained and any others destroyed. For example, architectural significance includes structures designed by well-known architects like [name removed], engineering significance includes structures that herald changes in construction, for example, the Mangaweka viaduct, historical significance includes structures that represent a particular era such as Art Deco, and social significance includes structures like prisons, post offices and asylums.

Recommended for transfer as public archives

- All plan drawing records pre-1900 (see 4.1 on the schedule).
- All post-1900 plan drawings documenting buildings and structures of national architectural, social and historical significance (see 4.2 on the schedule).

Recommended for destruction

- All other plan drawings, post-1900 (see 4.3 on the schedule).

7. ACCESS RECOMMENDATIONS

[have been removed]

8. TRANSFER CONDITIONS

[have been removed]

9. RETENTION AND DISPOSAL PERIODS

The recommendations for destruction in this appraisal are permissive rather than mandatory meaning that, once approved, these records maybe destroyed without further approval from the Chief Archivist.

Signed:

Date:

[name removed] and [name removed]
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Appendix A