



APPRAISAL REPORT:

General Disposal Authority covering Administration Records of Public Offices

JOB NO: 2003/5563 (A128655)
AGENCY: All Public Offices as defined under the Public Records Act 2005

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This appraisal report covers the development of the General Disposal Authority covering the Administration records of **public offices** under the Public Records Act 2005.

A General Disposal Authority (GDA) covers functions common to most agencies and is typically used by government archival authorities to deal with broad areas such as administration, personnel, finance, stores, etc. A GDA is a continuing authority for applying disposal decisions to records detailed in the schedule.

The appraisal method was to define the administration services common to public offices, and then to identify the records of those functions and activities. We then determined the records are to be retained as archives, the records to be retained and then re-assessed, and the records to be destroyed.

2. APPRAISAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Archives New Zealand and the wider government sector have recognised the need for GDAs for some years.¹ This is set out in the *Archives New Zealand Statement of Intent 2002-2003*, which stated:

“Archives New Zealand seeks to develop processes that will not only continue to identify records of long-term value but also ensure a greater proportion of government records are covered by disposal authorities.”

As part of Archives New Zealand’s ongoing work, the development of a GDA for General Administration records was approved with work to be completed by February 2005.

The passage of the Public Records Act, as well as input from external consultants led to substantial alterations in the original GDA. The consultants in particular expressed concerns that the GDA as it stood made no clear delineation between ‘general’ administrative records and records ‘strategic’ administrative records covering corporate or governance activities. The different records have different retention requirements, and there was potential for confusing the different ‘types’ of administration and accidentally destroying material that should be retained. After consideration we decided to split the schedule into two separate authorities, the ‘major’ administrative and another for the ‘minor’ administrative records. This report covers the general administrative or ‘minor’ records. Another, later report, will cover the corporate or ‘major’ records.

As part of the re-write the retention periods on some classes were also reviewed, and in several cases reduced from “Retain for 7 years” to “Destroy when no longer of use”. This allows for greater flexibility in setting agency specific retention periods.

3. AGENCY INFORMATION

Under the Public Records Act 2005 a public office:

- a) *means the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the Government of New Zealand; and*
- b) *means the agencies or instruments of those branches of government; and*
- c) *includes (without limiting the agencies or instruments) –*
 - (i) *departments as defined in section 2 of the State Sector Act 1988; and*
 - (ii) *Offices of Parliament as defined in section 2 (1) of the Public Finance Act 1989; and*

¹ Agencies have said as such in: submissions to the Appraisal Report Review 1999 (see page 27), survey results from Government Recordkeeping Forums and a wealth of anecdotal evidence over many years. Archives New Zealand did considerable work in developing a GDA for district offices in 1990. The idea was that this would act as an internal template to be used as relevant appraisal projects arose.

- (iii) *State enterprises as defined in section 2 of the State-Owned Enterprises Act 1986; and*
- (iv) *Crown entities as defined in section 7(1) of the Crown Entities Act 2004; and*
- (v) *the Parliamentary Counsel Office; and*
- (vi) *the Parliamentary Service; and*
- (vii) *the Office of the Clerk of the House of Representatives; and*
- (viii) *the New Zealand Police; and*
- (ix) *the New Zealand Defence Force; and*
- (x) *the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service; and*
- (xi) *any person or class of persons declared by an Order in Council made under section 5(1)(a)(i) to be a public office for purposes of this Act*

4. SCOPE

Records covered under the Administrative GDA are those record classes often seen as 'common' or 'organisational-wide'. Almost all agencies create such records; they document enabling and support activities rather than recording the substantive, specific functions of an agency.

This appraisal covers;

- Those records managed by a specific Administrative or Corporate Support unit within an agency

AND

- Those records not created in such a unit, but which support the general administration and operation of an organisation

This appraisal does **NOT** cover;

- Those records related to governance, strategic planning and policy affecting the discharge of core obligations to government.
- Those records relating to the core functions of any agency;
 - e.g. Library policy can be disposed of, **except** where core business is creating or operating a library, such as the National Library.
 - e.g. 5.7 allows destruction of statistical instruments **except** where a core function is collecting and administering statistics, such as the Department of Statistics.
 - e.g. 5.14 allows destruction of records of VIP visits **except** where a core function is administering such visits, such as the Department of Internal Affairs

OR

- Those records covered by specific legislation requiring retention. The GDA cannot list and control all individual agency retention requirements; it is a general guide for disposal only. An agency should always ensure that their own legislation is consistent with these recommendations. Where it is not, they will need an agency specific variation before disposing of any records.

5. PRECEDENT

As part of its GDA programme Archives New Zealand has developed:

- GDA: Human Resources & Personnel Records
- GDA: Financial & Accounting Records
- GDA: General Housekeeping Records

These were used for the content, structure and formatting of the later work.

We undertook considerable research within Archives New Zealand and overseas jurisdictions. This provided general guidelines on disposal periods and record categories covered by this report. These sources include;

- Archives New Zealand disposal authorities covering administrative records with information on functional and activity structures.
- 'National Archives General Disposal Agreement for District Offices 1990', an internal document for appraising district level records, with disposal recommendations for common housekeeping and administrative records. The Agreement is dated, but still used on an ad hoc basis by the Regional Offices. It identifies several records types that were incorporated in the GDAs.
- 'National Archives of New Zealand 1997 Electronic Records Policy.' This Policy is now revoked, but identified several records types that were incorporated in the GDA
- The Archives New Zealand Local Government Authority and explanatory notes provided guidance on records group identification, format layout and guide content.
- GDAs produced by overseas institutions, particularly NSW State Archives New South Wales, Public Records Office, Victoria, National Archives of Australia, Canadian Federal Archives and The National Archives, UK. They provided valuable information on:
 - Function and activity structures
 - Records categories and types
 - Possible records disposal recommendations
 - Format layouts
 - Content of authority guides

6. METHODOLOGY

The development of the Administration GDA was mainly based on a functional analysis methodology. This involved defining the administration and corporate services functions and activities common to public offices, identifying the records relating to these functions and activities, and then determining which records should be retained as archives, which should be appraised after a specified period and which should be destroyed.

The methodology in this appraisal was applied in several steps:

Step 1. Research was done to establish common functions and the activities within each function as well as examples of records types produced by each activity. The research was based on a mixture of sources, including; published sources²; overseas GDAs; Individual agency authorities; Archives New Zealand General Disposal Agreement for District Offices 1990

Step 2. A draft GDA was developed, incorporating:

- Record class descriptions, with examples of relevant record types
- Retention periods
- Disposal actions

Step 3. The draft GDA was circulated in May 2004 to the Archives New Zealand Regional Archivists, Film Archivist and the Standards and Advice Section for review and comments. It was amended to reflect the feedback received.

Step 4. The draft GDA was tested in May-June 2004 during an appraisal of Archives New Zealand's administrative records. As a result some minor amendments were made.

Step 5. We formed a GDA Consultative Group consisting of agency records/information managers, a private sector consultant, a public historian, and Archives New Zealand staff. The Group provided input, comment and feedback on the authority to help ensure that the final product met agency and research needs. The Group met on 16 August 2004.³

Step 6. Feedback from stakeholders led to further work on the GDA including splitting it into separate sections, clarifying descriptions and examples and reducing the retention periods of some classes.

Step 7. At major stages in the development of the GDA, key staff and Regional Archivists within Archives New Zealand were consulted.

NB This research was compiled from an archival perspective; it did not attempt to identify specific legal obligations for record retention of individual agencies. This is a matter for individual agencies to establish.

² 'Keyword AAA - A Thesaurus of General Terms', State Records Authority NSW, 2000; 'The Disposal & Retention of Documentation', Chartered Institute of Corporate Management NZ; etc.

³ The members of the GDA Consultative Group and the minutes of the meeting can be found in Archives New Zealand Objective file 2003/5563.

7. DISPOSAL CRITERIA

The records recommended for destruction are uniformly low-level, temporary use material. Where records may document activities of more value requiring assessment on an agency-by-agency basis, they have been identified as 'retain for appraisal'.

Most records identified have little accountability or evidential value beyond the documentation of an internal business process.

8. DESCRIPTION, EVALUATION & DISPOSAL RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 *Pre-1946 Records*

Based on the disposal recommendation in previous GDA's we have recommended that all pre-1946 records be retained by agencies for appraisal. This is on the premise that prior to 1946 sources of information were limited and thus may have greater archival value.

8.2 *Records Types*

This GDA covers records opened after 1946, regardless of the records' systems of arrangement and physical format.

During the consultation process there was general consensus that the disposal recommendations should follow those currently in force in individual agency disposal authorities. The only areas where there was major discussion were:

- Multimedia Records
- Specific retention periods for some record classes

8.2.1 *Multimedia Records*

In the first exposure draft, records classes dealing with multimedia were included: films, videos, agency filmstrips, photographic material, digital images, art-work and audio recordings. At the Consultative Group meeting some members made the point that with multimedia records the GDA jumped from function to format, whereas the rest of the authority and the previous GDA's are function oriented.

Records in the various formats also have complex issues of their own attached, for example; copyright for artwork, contextual information or lack thereof for photographic images, the creation by agency staff of "unofficial" multimedia material, the management of the enormous number of telephone recordings etc. The Group advised setting aside such multimedia records for a separate GDA, and this has been done.

8.2.2 Specific retention periods for some records classes

It was suggested that some routine records without retention periods could be destroyed in 2-3 years instead of the standard 7-year period. It was also pointed out that the migration of electronic records is still an expensive and potentially inefficient use of resources. A balance should be struck between the cost of maintaining and migrating records of temporary value and the required retention period. These issues were considered in relation to some classes of records. In many cases the period was reduced to "2 years or until no longer administratively required". This both provides a specific retention period and allows for disposal once the agency has determined it has no further need for the records. This should include assessing their own risk levels if these records are required at any later point.

8.3 Records Categories

Due to the discussion around categories and retention periods, the 'higher' level records were split out into a separate authority. This means a high-level strategic retention class may be in one schedule while the lower level administration of the function/activity remains. This may cause some confusion in application, but we believe the action is justified on the grounds of clearly delineating between those records requiring a higher degree of consideration before destruction or transfer. Some of the major groupings that have been split out include;

- Corporate policy, particularly where it supports strategic outcomes
- Records of key corporate accountability activities, e.g. establishment, providing major input into legislation they are responsible for or controlling.

Some areas where there may be confusion over the split and subsequent application of retention periods are;

- Ministerial records. Ministerial material still in the Administration schedule are strictly to do with queries sent on from the Minister. Major ministerial servicing is largely in the governance section. In many records management systems there may be no delineation between the 2 categories.
- Ombudsman records. This is grouped together with Ministerial material; since it is logical in location i.e. people are more likely to think of Ombudsman enquiries at a high level rather than looking in administrative records. Again, the division may be arbitrary and could cause confusion in application.

We believe that splitting the categories is the best way of getting broad disposal coverage while still indicating that agencies need to consider such activities in light of their own functions.

8.4 Disposal Recommendations

These recommendations are based on current precedent and considerable overseas research.

Recommended for Retention

Records of activities that have long term accountability or historical value:

- External communications produced by agency
- Major ceremonial and celebratory events, exhibitions and displays
- Significant agency participation and input into committees or conferences
- Conferences sponsored or administered by agency
- Major construction, works and engineering
- Site plans and building details of agency owned property
- Hazardous substances
- Suggestion schemes mandate and decisions

Recommended for Destruction

Records of activities with only short term or general administrative value, retained only until they are not needed for ongoing business:

- Administrative planning & reporting
- Minor reviews and evaluations
- Meetings dealing with minor management or administrative matters
- Minor legislative submissions and legal opinions
- Minor legal agreements signed by agency
- External communications received by agency
- Routine administration of sponsorship
- Minor complaints
- Corporate uniform/wardrobe
- Administration of ceremonial and celebratory events
- Social functions
- Messages of condolence, appreciation, greeting etc
- Committees not created sponsored or administered by agency
- Routine administration of committees, meetings, working parties etc
- Conferences not sponsored or administered by agency
- Official Information Act requests (*does this entry need caveats around destruction or collection of information about such enquiries only after enquiry closed and no further enquiries planned?*)
- Operation and administration of records and information systems
- Duplicate and reference files
- Operation of library services
- Mail and distribution services
- Contact and address lists
- Accommodation and building services management and administration
- Minor construction, works and engineering
- Site plans and building details of non-agency property
- Tea room and cafeteria facilities
- Building and facility security
- Staff security and criminal vetting

- Stationery
- Secretarial and processing services
- Published, reference and information-only records
- Suggestion scheme administration

Retain for appraisal

Records to be retained and considered again later. 'Retain for appraisal' allows for re-assessment in situations where value may change over time, or where there are may be agency specific issues requiring specific attention.

- Corporate Identity/Brand
- Significant agency corporate objects
- Control and location indices/guides
- Information system structures
- Records disposal decisions
- Agency internet/intranet development, management and administration
- Historical/research material