

Record Keeping Policy

Appraisal Statement for Public Records required as State Archives

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Use of Terminology

For the purposes of this Policy the terms data, information and records are all used to refer to a Public Record as defined in the *Public Records Act 1973* (here after referred to as the Act).

Records Management Standards Application

The Recordkeeping Standards apply to all records in all formats, media or systems (including business systems).

1 Introduction

Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) as the archival authority for the State of Victoria is responsible for ensuring the recorded memory of government is preserved for present and future use.

Records required for preservation as State Archives are identified through appraisal; the evaluation of government activities to specify what records should be made and to determine how long records need to be kept to meet the government's needs, support organisational accountability and meet community expectations¹.

The Appraisal Statement for State Archives sets out the key appraisal considerations for specifying and identifying permanent value records. It is designed to:

- Support consistent and transparent appraisal by Victorian government
- Assist government agencies to appraise and identify public records to be preserved as State Archives
- Communicate our collecting objectives to our stakeholders
- Describe in summary the types of records we will preserve as Archives for future discovery and use.

¹ Based on Australian Standard (AS) 4390 Records Management, Part 1: General, Clause 4.3.

2 Appraisal Statement

2.1 Why we collect and preserve public records

PROV collects and preserve records to fulfil our responsibilities as outlined in the *Public Records Act 1973*. The Act requires PROV and Victorian government agencies to select public records for permanent preservation as State Archives.

Collecting and preserving public records enables PROV to:

- Act as the official archive of the State of Victoria, preserving evidence of the past decisions and actions
- Support transparency, openness and accountability in government
- Preserve a documented memory for government and its citizens
- Support research and re-use by providing documentary evidence for academic and research communities and the general public
- Support individuals and communities to reconnect and preserve identity and memory and facilitate redress, recovery and reconciliation.

2.2 Whose records we collect and preserve

We collect and preserve records from all Victorian government and local governing bodies whose records are public records under the Act. We also collect and preserve records of Victorian courts. Further advice about the public records bodies and public records is available in our Fact Sheet².

Records of outsourced³ activities that meet one or more of the appraisal characteristics are also required as State Archives. Further advice about outsourcing is available in our Guideline⁴.

2.3 How we select records for retention as archives

PROV, in collaboration with government agencies and stakeholders, selects records of enduring value to the government and people of Victoria by appraising the functional responsibilities and activities of government and the records generated by them. Our selection of archives is guided by a set of key characteristics that are intrinsic to public records we wish to retain as State Archives, see 2.5 below.

Appraisal is a planned and documented process based on research and analysis to provide transparent, reasoned and consistent reasons for the retention or non retention of records. It is a reasonably complex, judicious and somewhat subjective process that involves the evaluation of the continuing value of records for the government and community against the cost of retaining and keeping the records accessible in perpetuity.

² PROS 10/17 Fact Sheet 1 *What is a Public Record?*

³ Outsourcing is defined as the engagement of external service providers, by virtue of a contract or agreement, to perform functions and activities on behalf of an organisation. Government outsourcing arrangements include joint ventures and alliances, publicly funded research, public-private partnerships; and the engagement of non-government organisations for specific services

⁴ PROS 10/10 G2 *Managing records of outsourced activities guideline*.

2.4 Which records are specified for permanent preservation

Our aim as the archival authority for the State of Victoria is to preserve a concise public record of the State and its inter-action with its citizens within the broader context of Australian society. We aim to preserve documentary evidence of the authority and functions of state and local governments, their decision-making processes, the implementation and outcomes of those decisions, including the nature of their influence and effect on communities, individual lives and the environment.

We collect public records in many formats including paper, digital, film, and microform. Contemporary public records may be in organised recordkeeping systems, business systems, or reside in email and social media accounts and network drives.

The majority of public records we have collected to date are held on paper resulting in a collection that totals more than 90 km of physical storage. Our collecting priorities are shifting however, in support of the transition from paper to digital record keeping by the Victorian Government. The collection, preservation and provision of access to digital public records are key strategic priorities for PROV. We expect our collection of digital records will outnumber our paper records within the next two to three decades.

Only records that demonstrate continuing value to the Victorian Government and community are retained as State Archives. All modern records of government cannot for simple reasons of economy be retained. The cost and complexity of storing, preserving and keeping records accessible over time needs to be considered as part of the decision making process. Our selection process is underpinned therefore by the assumption that only a small proportion of all public records will be retained and preserved as State Archives.

Even if they are not required as State Archives all public records need to be retained by government agencies as long as they are needed to meet administrative needs, legislative requirements, support accountability and community expectations. Minimum retention periods for public records as well as more specific information about records required as State Archives are available in the retention and disposal authorities issued for use by government agencies; see our retention and disposal authorities.

2.5 Characteristics of permanent value records

Characteristics of permanent value records are described in the following paragraphs to assist the appraisal decision-making process and guide the identification of State Archives.

The characteristics are applicable to records in any format and their arrangement in this Statement does not mean to imply an order of priority.

Public records which demonstrate one or more of the following characteristics may be required as Archives. Examples of records that demonstrate the characteristics are provided for illustrative purposes and should not be considered an exhaustive list.

2.5.1 The authority, establishment and structure of government

Public records which provide concise evidence of the source of authority, establishment and structure of Victorian government including all agencies and local governments.

This characteristic includes public records that define the nature and extent of the government's jurisdiction, obligations and powers.

Examples of the activities and associated records that may meet this characteristic are provided in Table One, below.

Activity	Associated Records
Records which are illustrative of the constitutional relationships between the Victorian government, the Governor, the Victorian Parliament, and the Commonwealth of Australia.	
Formal instruments authorising the establishment or dissolution of an agency, setting out its purpose, functions and operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislation • Governor in Council approvals • Court judgements which lead to the establishment of agencies
Major reforms of the state's political and administrative structures and institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and reports into restructure proposals • Final, approved versions of machinery of government change
Development, passing, commencement and review of legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislation • Subordinate legislation (regulations) • Development and review records
Legal delegations to perform duties and functions of the state	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministerial delegations • Delegations of a chief executive officer or a statutory office holder
Judgements or rulings determining the extent of jurisdictions and powers	
Agreements with other state governments and the Commonwealth regarding responsibility for functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contracts • Complementary legislation • COAG (Council of Australian Governments) agreements.

Table One: Activities and Examples of Records illustrating Authority, Establishment and Structure of Government

Specific examples of records transferred to PROV custody include:

- [VPRS 14558 Acts of Parliament](#)
- [VPRS 10265 Parliamentary Counsel Bill Files](#)
- [VPRS 1080 Minutes of the Executive Council](#)

2.5.2 Primary functions and programs of government

Public records which provide concise evidence of the government's primary functions and programs.

This characteristic includes records which document the background to, basis for and outcomes of decisions and actions, especially those records that provide evidence of a new or changed policy decision, as these enable the government to be held accountable and provide the means for the citizenry to understand the basis for decisions and government expenditure.

Guidance concerning the primary functions and programs is available in our macro appraisal. This work identifies and documents⁵ the significant functions of government for which a more comprehensive level of documentation will be retained.

⁵ To commence 2014/15

A whole of government evaluation or macro appraisal determines a function’s relative significance and the enduring impact on the community. Defining significance is based on evaluative judgements. The following factors contribute to the weighting of significance:

- Economic impact
- Environmental impact
- Extent of the population affected
- Extent of profound changes to lives of individuals, families or communities
- Government expenditure or commitment
- International reaction
- New or changed policy position
- Political or legal ramifications
- Public reaction or sensitivity
- Public safety implications
- Social, cultural or artistic impact.

Examples of the activities and associated records that may meet this characteristic are provided in Table Two, below.

Activity	Associated Records
Cabinet decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet minutes and papers of Cabinet committees
<p>Local government decision-making</p> <p>Decisions of management boards and other project control or ad hoc working groups that have had a significant impact on public policy, events, or the community because of the costs involved and / or risks taken</p> <p>Records that illustrate the government’s role in the management of the Victorian economy</p> <p>Development of, reaction to, and impact of reports on major social and economic issues e.g. Forgotten Australians</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Minutes • State budget papers
<p>Development and implementation of high level policy and strategic management decisions within public authorities and across government sectors and industry, including those that have a major effect on the community (e.g. public housing policy, health services funding and provision, public education policy and programs, closure and replacement of psychiatric institutions with community based therapy)⁶</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy proposals, summaries of consultation undertaken and evaluation reports • Endorsed functional policy • Implementation plans and timeframes • Formulation of procedures and strategies
<p>Monitoring, analysis and review of policy affecting primary government functions as based on macro appraisal decisions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy evaluations

⁶ See macro appraisal for further detail

<p>Establishment and findings of major bodies of review</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Royal commissions • Commissions/boards of inquiry or review • Response of the Victorian government to reports and recommendations of royal commissions or commissions of inquiry or review
<p>Setting legal precedents and amendments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supreme Court decisions
<p>Design and construction of public buildings and infrastructure (e.g. public private partnerships, Southern Cross Station, Federation Square) and planning schemes developed by the central agency responsible for state-wide planning schemes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specifications for the design and construction of major infrastructure including major roads and highways • Planning schemes and/or town plans • “As-built” plans of public buildings, e.g. schools, hospitals, railway stations • Maps and plans of transport infrastructure, housing estates, cemeteries, crown land, public assets • Heritage registrations
<p>Major social, economic, cultural or scientific developments or discoveries with significance to, or a special relationship with Victoria</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and management of major infrastructure or development projects • Planning and management of Victoria’s economic resources
<p>Registration of highly regulated professions, such as legal or medical profession registration e.g. medical practitioners and nurses, excluding the less regulated industries/professions that are licensed or given permissions to operate</p>	

Table Two: Activities and Associated Records illustrating Primary Functions and Programs of Government

Specific examples of records transferred to PROV custody include:

- VPRS 11948 Cabinet Record I, Labor Government, Cain-Kirner
- VPRS 280 Supreme Court Appeals from the County Court
- VPRS 12166 Budget Statements
- VPRS 16412 Psychiatric Nurses Register
- VPRS 16284 Plans and Diplomas of the Organising Committee for the XVI Olympiad Melbourne 1956
- VPRS 30 Criminal Trial Briefs
- VPRS 5527 Eureka Stockade – Historical Collection.

2.5.3 Enduring rights and entitlements

Public records which provide concise evidence of the enduring rights and entitlements of individuals and groups, their interaction with the State of Victoria and which are needed on a continuing basis to prove entitlements for descendants beyond the life time of the data subjects.

This characteristic includes evidence of the legal status of individuals and groups within the community, as well as their fundamental rights to participate in the affairs of the State, and to lay claim to entitlements and protection provided by the State.

Examples of the activities and associated records that may meet this characteristic are provided in Table Three, below.

Activity	Associated Records
Significant life events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Births, deaths and marriages registration • Adoption or donor conception records • Official changes of name e.g. deed polls
Records of enduring rights and entitlements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration of deceased estates e.g. grants of probate • Aboriginal heritage site registration • Native title determinations of land owner rights • Land titles, parish plans and easements which document property rights and entitlements.

Table Three: Activities and Associated Records illustrating Enduring Rights and Entitlements

Specific examples of records transferred to PROV custody include:

- VPRS 17075 Register Book of Crown Lease Titles
- VPRS 14 Register of Assisted Immigrants from the United Kingdom
- VPRS 283 Divorce Case Files

2.5.4 Significant impact on individuals

Public records which provide evidence of the significant impact of Victorian government decisions and actions on individuals and communities, the interaction of people with the government, and the influence of the Victorian community on government decision-making.

This characteristic includes records where the government's actions alter or change the lives of individuals or groups of people, particularly the most vulnerable members of Victorian society. Records which display this characteristic may be created and received by agencies and organisations performing functions on behalf of government as well as agencies within government⁷.

Examples of the activities and associated records that may meet this characteristic are provided in Table Four, below.

Activity	Associated Records
Planning and decision-making in relation to issues significantly affecting the community or the provision of essential services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collections and analyses of data compiled for planning and decision making • High-level planning and execution of major public works, e.g. main roads and residential developments • Land-use and zoning plans developed by the central agency responsible for state-wide planning schemes
Identifying the persons, groups or areas affected by the implementation of policy decisions (whether positively or negatively)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representations and appeals against the decisions/actions of government or legislature • Petitions documenting significant community opposition to government actions or policies

⁷ See PROS 10/10 Guideline: Managing Records of Outsourced Activities

<p>Impact of legal decisions on the lives of individuals and communities and the setting of precedents for community behaviour</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criminal court decisions
<p>Individual case management where government functions and programs had far reaching impact or influence on the lives of individuals within the community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Records of when the State has acted as guardian • Details of the State’s care of children removed from their family • Prison admission and discharge records • Institutionalised care of individuals

Table Four: Activities and Associated Records illustrating Significant Impact on Individuals

Note: In relation to case management in the context of this appraisal characteristic, the entire case record might be required due to the nature of the State’s relationship with the individual concerned and the need to retain detailed evidence of the State’s management of the individual case. Databases and electronic case records do not present the same storage challenges as hardcopy records, making it possible for case records and large datasets to be retained in the entirety if the records meets one or more of the appraisal characteristics for permanent records.

Specific examples of records transferred to PROV custody include:

- VPRS 10204 Land Acquisition Files
- VPRS 7397 Case Books of Female Patients
- VPRS 30 Criminal Trial Briefs

2.5.5 Environmental management and change

Public records which provide evidence of the Victorian government’s significant actions in relation to environmental management and change, response to the impact of climate change, and the occupation, management and use of the state’s natural resources.

This characteristic includes records that contain a history of land use which has, or may impact on the health and well-being of the community, the economy and the natural environment, records that may contribute to an understanding of climatic change, weather patterns and natural disasters and the government’s view and response to climate change.

Examples of the activities and associated records that may meet this characteristic are provided in Table Five, below

Activity	Associated Records
<p>Evidence of land use and occupation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parish plans and planning authority records • Management and rehabilitation of landfill sites
<p>Collections and analyses of data compiled for planning and decision making in relation to issues significantly affecting the environment or resource management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental observational research and/or surveillance • Hydrographic charts and flood maps
<p>Collections and analyses of data detailing environmental changes which have occurred over time</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rainfall, temperature and soil feature statistics
<p>Government functions and programs which have far reaching impact or influence on the environment or the development of the state and its resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spread and control of diseases or biological agents • Major changes to land use, such as the establishment of National or State Parks
<p>Enforcement of environmentally relevant activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring and rehabilitation of land fill sites

Management of situations where there is potential for contaminants to be released into the environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development approvals for coal seam gas extraction and mining • Identification and monitoring of toxic sites
Central control and management for catastrophic natural disasters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning records, incident reports and response.

Table Five: Activities and Associated Records illustrating Environmental Management and Change

Specific examples of records transferred to PROV custody include:

- VPRS 16290 Soldier Settlement Estates Development Files
- VPRS 8208 Minutes of Meetings [Housing Investigation and Slum Abolition Board]
- VPRS 17413 Water Course Level Height Measurement Files
- VPRS 5359 Pastoral Run Files

2.5.6 Significant contribution to community memory

Public records that have a substantial capacity to enrich the memory, knowledge and understanding of aspects of Victoria's history, society, culture and people.

This characteristic includes public records relating to events, persons, places and phenomena of social, economic, environmental, cultural, aesthetic, scientific, research or technical significance to the broader community and public records that provide a representation of the Victorian way of life including work, education, leisure and culture.

Examples of the activities and associated records that may meet this characteristic are provided in Table Six, below.

Activity	Associated Records
Sites of conservation, cultural, social, spiritual or heritage significance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification, development and site management records • Heritage registrations
Victoria's population and its circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistical data • Council rate records
Major social, economic, cultural or scientific discoveries or developments with significance to, or having a special relationship with, specific regional or local communities	
Major advances, changes or achievements in a particular field or area of endeavour, and the key people or organisations contributing to it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical, botanical, scientific, social science, genealogical, medical or other specialist research
Records which significantly add to an understanding of how and where people lived, their concerns and issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council rate records • School building records
Major events, developments or trends in political, social, legal or economic history	
Strategic / high level planning and management of significant cultural events and celebration (e.g. 2006 Commonwealth Games)	

Table Six: Activities and Associated Records illustrating Significant Contributions to Community Memory

This characteristic may also include records that are retained due to rarity (for example due to age) or comprise the only extant record of a function, agency or geographic area.

Specific examples of records transferred to PROV custody include:

- **VPRS 7882 Public Building Files and VPRS 8044 Public Building Plans which includes records relating to VFL Park**
- **VPRS 15583 Student Assessment and Accreditation Publications**
- **VPRS 13962 Carriages and Brake Vans Design Files, Rolling Stock Branch**
- **VPRS 5359 Pastoral Run Files**
- **VPRS 16214 Artwork for Opening and Closing Ceremonies, Commonwealth Games, Melbourne**
- **VPRS 14004 Donations to the Education History Unit – includes War relief accounts**
- **VPRS 14520 Villers-Bretonneux School Photograph Collection**
- **VPRS 8122 Traffic Summary Sheets**

3 References

National Archives of Australia (NAA) 2003, *Why records are kept: directions in appraisal*, NAA 2003, Canberra, ACT.

Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) 2010, *PROS 10/10 Strategic Management guideline 2: managing records of outsourced activities*, PROV, North Melbourne, Victoria.

Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) 2010, *PROS 10/13 Disposal guideline 1: developing an RDA*, PROV, North Melbourne, Victoria.

Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) 2010, *PROS 10/17 Operations management guideline 2: appraisal*, PROV, North Melbourne, Victoria.

Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) 2010, *PROS 10/17 Fact Sheet 1 What is a Public Record?*.

Queensland State Archives (QSA) 2013. *Queensland State Archives' Appraisal Statement: a statement of the values guiding the appraisal and identification of permanent public records*, QSA 2013, Brisbane, Queensland.

The National Archives (TNA) 2012, *Records Collection Policy*, TNA, Kew, United Kingdom.

The National Archives (TNA), *Best practice guide to appraising and selecting records for The National Archives*, TNA, Kew, United Kingdom.

Other Resources

You can obtain relevant publications, supplies of relevant forms, and answers to any enquiries you may have by first contacting your agency's records manager or the Public Record Office Victoria.

For more information on records required as State Archives, please contact:

Government Services
Public Record Office Victoria
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