

## 6.29 Archives and records management

Schools are responsible for the creation, management and disposal of electronic and hardcopy records relating to all aspects of school administration. These records include school student files, student reports, school based personal staff files, financial records, building and facilities records, school council files, staff selection documents, correspondence, and Department of Education and Early Childhood Development circulars and memoranda.

[Circular 126/2001 Revision of the Department's record keeping policy, April 2001](#) establishes the scope, purpose, rationale and responsibility for record keeping as well as the Department's relationship with the Public Record Office Victoria (PROV).

The [Archives and Records Management Advice for Schools website](#) contains advice for schools on managing records.

### 6.29.1 Public Record Office Victoria

The Public Record Office Victoria was established under the *Public Records Act 1973* for the better preservation, management and utilisation of the public records of Victoria. Visit the [PROV website](#) for current information about their standards, services, roles and responsibilities.

#### 6.29.1.1 Public Record Office standards

The PROV issues standards with which officers in charge of public offices (schools) need to comply. Destruction or disposal of public records by a public officer is lawful only when done in accordance with these standards.

Public records include any records made or received by persons employed in a public office (school) in the course of their duties. 'Record' is defined to mean any document within the meaning of the *Evidence Act 1958*, and includes information whether on paper, film, magnetic tape, disc, or any other media.

The most common standards issued by the PROV relating to schools are known as Retention and Disposal Authorities (RDAs). These guide schools on how long their records need to be kept. The two RDAs relevant for school records are:

- PROS 01/01 *Schools General Records and Disposal Authority* (for records that are specific to schools)
- PROS 07/01 *General Retention and Disposal Authority for Records of Common Administrative Functions* (for administrative records common to most Government organisations)

Download these RDAs from the [PROV](#) to ensure you have the latest published version.

No public records may be destroyed or otherwise disposed of except in accordance with these standards. Destruction or disposal of public records is permitted by:

- reference to the relevant retention and disposal authority
- normal administrative practice (NAP).

Destruction according to NAP covers:

- working papers consisting of rough notes and calculations used solely to assist in the preparation of other records such as correspondence, reports and statistical tabulations
- drafts not intended for retention as part of the office's records the content of which has been reproduced and incorporated in the Public Record Office's record keeping systems
- extra copies of documents and published material preserved solely for reference.

Records covered by NAP can be destroyed when no longer required.

Destruction of any public record is not permitted if a request for access has been received under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* until such time as:

- access has been granted to the applicant, or
- in the case where access is denied, an appeal against the refusal to grant access has been determined, or
- in the case where no appeal is made, the period during which an appeal can be made has lapsed.

#### 6.29.1.2 Destruction notification

Where records are destroyed according to an RDA the Public Record Office Victoria must be notified. Prior to destruction, the form *PRO 29 Notification of Destruction of Public Records in Public Offices* must be completed in duplicate. This form is available from the [PROV website](#) (PDF document).

The school should retain one copy of the form and the other is forwarded to: Document and Disposal Team, Public Record Office Victoria, PO Box 2100, North Melbourne 3051.

#### 6.29.1.3 Temporary and permanent records

Most records made or received by schools are temporary records that can be destroyed after a set period of time. Sentences for the destruction of temporary records can vary from destroy immediately to keep for 100 years. Some records are deemed to have such long term value that they are to be kept permanently. Permanent records are eventually transferred to the PROV.

#### 6.29.1.4 Storage of temporary records

Principals should make secure arrangements for the storage of all temporary records. Introduction of a disposal cycle/program to enable the regular disposal of temporary records will ensure that storage difficulties

are kept to a minimum. Temporary value electronic records need to be readable for the duration of their lifespan.

#### 6.29.1.5 Retention of permanent records

All records designated permanent in the schedule must be retained by the school.

#### 6.29.1.6 Storage of permanent records

Permanent electronic and hardcopy records need to be maintained in safe and secure storage in a fashion that ensures their long term integrity and accessibility.

#### 6.29.1.7 School closures

Prior to the closure of a school, contact the regional office and Archives and Records Management staff. It is advisable to provide as much notice as possible to enable the school and regional office to process permanent records according to Public Record Office standards prior to the records being transferred to Archives and Records Management.

Procedures for managing the records of schools that close can be requested from [Archives and Records Management staff](#).

#### 6.29.1.8 Access to public records

Records transferred to the Public Record Office Victoria are available to the public for research purposes but records that contain personal, sensitive or confidential information are closed for specified periods under the Act. Application for access to closed records can be made under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

### 6.29.2 Notes on particular school records

Schools create, receive and manage records on matters such as administration, accountability, student management, curriculum, property and facilities, school heritage, finance and personnel. All such records need to be properly managed. Below are notes on some particular record types. It is **NOT** an exhaustive list. Refer to the relevant [RDAs](#) for sentences on specific records and to the 'Advice' [website](#) for guidance on records management.

#### 6.29.2.1 Department confidential student files

Department Confidential Student (DCS) files are established as a result of intervention by a designated caseworker as opposed to student files that a school might ordinarily keep on each student enrolled at the school. School student files usually contain term or semester reports.

DCS files can contain information of a highly confidential nature, including family details, records of counseling sessions with a range of caseworkers, and reports from other professionals working with the

student and/or family. DCS files must be kept secure from unauthorised access. In fact, all confidential records should be kept secure from unauthorised access.

All DCS files remain in the designated location until they can be destroyed, with the exception of files of children with a surname beginning with the letter 'P', according to section 3.8.0 of Public Record Office Standard 01/01. 'P' was chosen as a sample because it covers many different ethnic groups and has the in-built reminder that 'P is for permanent'. Temporary DCS files are kept for 30 years from date of birth of the student.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** The management of DCS files will be profoundly affected by enhancements to the student support services program during 2009. These files will be removed from the jurisdiction of schools and become the responsibility of student support services staff located in network or sub-regional settings. See [Strengthening Student Support Services](#) for more information on this program and [Health and Wellbeing](#) for general information.

See [Freedom of Information](#) and [Privacy](#) for information on issues surrounding requests for access to these files and how to handle transfer requests for these files.

#### 6.29.2.2 Staff personal (personnel) files

Essential personal documentation about each staff member must be maintained in a personal file. Schools are responsible for the security and maintenance of personal files. These must be held in a secure environment with restricted access.

For a previously employed staff member, a personal file will already exist. This file must be retrieved rather than creating a new personal file.

On cessation of employment, a staff member's personal file will be retained by the school where they were last employed for 50 years from date of cessation. The file may be reactivated if the staff member is re-employed prior to the appropriate destruction time.

If a previously employed staff member commences employment in a school, the employing school must retrieve the personal file from the school where that staff member last worked.

If a school closes, contact regional office staff for policy advice about the management of personal files for all former staff members.

See the [Human Resources website](#) for general personnel management information.

See [Freedom of Information](#) and [Privacy](#) for information on issues surrounding requests for access to these files and, especially, requests to remove or amend records contained in these files.

### 6.29.2.3 Pupils registers

Pupils Registers were used by (mainly) primary schools prior to CASES to manage student enrolments. Schools may be approached by those wanting proof of enrolments or by genealogists researching family history. Such access can be granted at the Principal's discretion with the following provisos;

- It is recommended that Pupils Registers covering the period of the last 40 years not be made publicly available.
- Fragile registers should be handled with care.
- Pupils Registers must **NOT** leave the school.

A circular was distributed to schools on this issue in 2000 and is available [here](#).

### 6.29.2.4 Student reports

Student reports are kept for varying time periods as below;

- Year Prep to 8 reports - Destroy 6 years after departure.
- Year 9 to 12 reports (excluding final report) - Destroy 30 years after departure.
- Year 9 to 12 report (final report) - Permanent record

Sentences were decided on to meet the needs of staff, students and posterity. Many ex-students approach schools for copies of their reports to enable them to join the military. This was the prime reason behind keeping some of the reports for 30 years.

### 6.29.2.5 Asbestos related records

Occasionally sentences from RDAs are over-ruled and records are kept for longer periods. This is the case with **ALL** asbestos related records. These records are to be kept indefinitely even if an RDA states that the record can be destroyed. The *Crimes (Document Destruction) Act 2006* precludes the destruction of records that might be needed for future court cases. The PROV has published '[Advice 18](#)' (PDF document) that gives guidance on the implications of this Act. A [Circular](#) was issued to schools in March 2007 forbidding the destruction of asbestos related records. All asbestos related records are to be kept indefinitely.

### 6.29.2.6 Financial records

Most school financial records such as statements, invoices, receipts, etc are kept for 7 years. The annual financial statement that is signed off by an auditor and (usually) presented to the school council and (usually) kept with the school council minutes is the only financial record that is permanent. See the [link](#) from the 'Records Management Advice for Schools' website that lists a selection of temporary records including temporary financial records.

## Resources

The resources below can assist schools to keep up to date with their records management knowledge and responsibilities.

### **Contact**

Archives and Records Management

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Telephone: 9637 3306

Fax: 9637 2860

Email: [archives.records@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:archives.records@edumail.vic.gov.au)

### **Links**

Records Management Advice for Schools [website](#)

[Website](#) for members of the public requesting school records

[Website](#) giving advice on school reunions

Public Record Office Victoria [website](#)

Freedom of Information [website](#)

Privacy [website](#)