



Government of Western Australia
Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries
State Records Office of Western Australia



Directions for keeping State archives awaiting transfer to the State Archives Collection

**State Records Office of WA
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CONTENTS

PURPOSE	3
RATIONALE	3
Directions for keeping State archives:	3
1. Environmental Conditions	4
2. Storage Mechanisms	5
3. Security and Disaster Management	5
4. Access and Control	5
5. Preservation	6
Further Advice	6

PURPOSE

These directions apply when the State Archivist is unable to accept a transfer of State archives from a State organization under s.32(4) of the *State Records Act 2000*. They provide minimal compliance requirements as to how State archives, in any format, are to be kept by State organizations until such time as transfer can take place.

These directions do not apply to government organizations which have, via their Recordkeeping Plan, applied for and received permission from the State Records Commission (SRC) to retain State archives beyond the compulsory transfer period. Such archives are to be kept in accordance with *SRC Standards*.

RATIONALE

Under s.32(1) of the *State Records Act 2000* (the Act), a government organization must transfer State archives to the State Archives Collection when they are 25 years old, unless its Recordkeeping Plan says otherwise. An organization may also seek to transfer State archives that are less than 25 years old, as identified in its Recordkeeping Plan.

Under s.32(3) of the Act, organizations are required to inform the State Archivist in writing of their intention to transfer archives to the State Archives Collection. Identification of State archives for transfer should occur as part of required reviews of Recordkeeping Plans (including Disposal Authorities). The State Records Office of Western Australia (SRO) provides an *Archives Transfer Request* form¹ as the mechanism by which an organization makes this request to transfer.

The State Archivist will register and consider all applications for transfer received from State organizations. Where the State Archivist is unable to accept a transfer of State archives the State Archivist must provide written notification and directions as to keeping the archives until transfer can take place.

The following directions are provided to assist State organizations to make the best arrangements possible, within their resources, for the safe storage and protection of State archives. The directions are issued as an interim measure to prevent the loss or destruction of archives awaiting transfer to the State Archives Collection.

Organizations are encouraged to pursue best practice options in line with Australian and International standards².

Directions for keeping State archives:

¹ See <http://www.sro.wa.gov.au/state-recordkeeping/disposal-state-records/transferring-archival-records-state-records-office>

² See Standards Australia (1995) – AS 4390:1995 *Records Management. Part 6 – Storage*; Standards Australia (2002) – AS ISO 15489.2-2002 *Records Management*; National Archives of Australia (2014) – *National Archives of Australia Standard for the storage of archival records (excluding digital records)*. <http://naa.gov.au/records-management/publications/standard-for-storage/index.aspx>; International Standards Organization (2015) – ISO 11799:2015 *Information and documentation – Document storage requirements for archive and library materials*.

Organizations storing records under the *Common Use Arrangements for storage, retrieval, destruction and digitisation of paper and electronic records* (CUAREC2015) should note storage conditions specified in this contract are unsuited to the long term storage of archives.

Organizations must notify and gain permission from the State Archivist to store State archives under the CUA. Such permission is obtained by including information regarding locations used for storage of archives in the organization's Recordkeeping Plan and submitting an *Archives Transfer Request* form.

Organizations may also consider options such as office storage or self-storage companies with controlled climate storage.

Organizations with museum storage areas that meet the Western Australian Museum's guidelines for storage should consider co-location of archives to the museum store.

Records storage areas within an organization should meet the following minimum requirements:

1. Environmental Conditions

- a. Storage areas should be away from areas of environmental risk, such as heavy industry or manufacturing zones, airfields, and floodplains. Storage must be away from materials such as food, garbage, paint or fuel, and away from water storage or pipes;
- b. Storage areas should be fully lined and sealed so as to prevent water, dust, dirt, insects and mould from entering. Where possible, buildings should be insulated. Unlined sheds, such as metal storage sheds, garage sheds and un-modified sea containers are unsuitable for record storage, while modified sea containers are suitable for short-term temporary record storage only;
- c. Storage areas should be well ventilated. Temperature and humidity should be monitored, to provide early warning of potential damage such as mould. Humidity should not exceed 60% RH due to the risk of mould growth. Where possible archive storage should be air-conditioned, or have passive temperature and climate controls to ensure that temperature and humidity remain relatively constant³;
- d. Lighting levels should be kept at the minimum required for safe passage through the archives. Fluorescent lights emit ultraviolet light which is damaging to archival material, and should have filters fitted. Windows should have curtains or other window treatments fitted; and,
- e. Storage areas should be cleaned regularly, and checked at least twice a year for insect or mould infestations. Fumigation of archive storage areas should be discussed with the SRO to ensure that archives are not damaged by chemical residue.

³ For more information see: *SRO Guideline: Archival Storage Specification* (2016).

2. Storage Mechanisms

- a. Technology dependent media is of a format that remains usable by the government organization;
- b. Shelving should be of metal or sealed wood⁴. MDF or particle board should not be used due to the potential carcinogenic risk; and
- c. Where possible, State archives should be housed in archival quality folders and boxes, as this will minimise handling and cost when archives are transferred:
 - A4, legal and foolscap files should be kept in approved archive boxes⁵;
 - Outsize volumes should be stored flat;
 - Maps and plans should be stored flat;
 - Photographic material should be stored in albums, sleeves and boxes that have passed the Photographic Activity Test⁶.

3. Security and Disaster Management

- a. Storage areas should be secure, with limited and controlled staff access; and
- b. All record storage areas are to be included in disaster recovery plans.

4. Access and Control

- a. State archives must be identified in accordance with an approved Disposal Authority. State archives should be listed and their location identified in a recordkeeping system;
- b. Organizations should have policies and procedures in place to manage requests for access to archives in their custody. Access to archives less than 25 years old, or which have been approved as restricted access archives by the State Records Commission, may be requested under the *Freedom of Information Act 1992*. FOI procedures and applications do not apply to open access archives older than 25 years old, whether or not they have been transferred;
- c. Once records have been closed, they must not be altered. No new materials may be added or removed; and
- d. Adhesives, including sticky tape, 'post-it notes' and 'sign here' flags must not be used on archival material⁷.

⁴ Powder coated metal shelving is preferred. All shelving, walls and floors that have been sealed or painted should be allowed to stand for several weeks before use to allow residual chemicals to dissipate.

⁵ SRO uses 'standard archive' or 'type 1' boxes for the storage of foolscap to A4 files, volumes and documents. This box is approximately 385L X 250H X168mmW (internal dimensions), and is made in one piece with a flap lid inclusive. The size takes both A4 and foolscap documents, and is easy to lift and handle. The inclusive lid ensures that the documents are not exposed to dust and other environmental factors. Boxes may be stored upright, with the lid at the top, or on their side so that the lid may be opened downwards.

⁶ See: *SRO Guideline: Archival Storage Specification* (2016).

5. Preservation

- a. State archives in digital format must be stored in an appropriate file format;
- b. Strategies and procedures for the preservation and usability of digital information must be developed, implemented and reviewed at regular intervals and staff should be aware of and trained in these processes; and
- c. Repairs to damaged archives including minor repairs must not be attempted without first consulting the SRO.

Further Advice

Additional advice and information on storage and preservation are available in the first instance through the SRO, contact number 9427 3600.

⁷ While this applies specifically to archival material awaiting transfer, that is, archives that are closed and inactive, records managers should consider the following – ‘post-it notes’ and other adhesive markers leave a residue, even if the marker is removed immediately, which hardens and causes damage to the paper which has been so marked. In addition, the use of ‘post-it notes’ for recording comments or actions, rather than recording those comments directly on a document, may lead to loss of information if the note falls off or is removed.