

SESLHD PROCEDURE COVER SHEET



Health
South Eastern Sydney
Local Health District

NAME OF DOCUMENT	Records Management – Destruction of
TYPE OF DOCUMENT	Procedure
DOCUMENT NUMBER	SESLHDPR/220
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LEVEL OF EVIDENCE	National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards: Standard 1 – Clinical Governance <i>State Records Act 1998</i>
REVIEW DATE	July 2030
FORMER REFERENCE(S)	Area P-CGOV-23– October 2004 SESIAHS PD 021
EXECUTIVE SPONSOR or EXECUTIVE CLINICAL SPONSOR	Head, Office of the Chief Executive as nominated Senior Responsible Officer for Records, Information and data
AUTHOR	Records Management Coordinator Jocelyn.Bullard@health.nsw.gov.au
POSITION RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DOCUMENT	Manager, Executive Services
FUNCTIONAL GROUP(S)	Records Management - Corporate
KEY TERMS	Records Management; destruction
SUMMARY	<p>Under the terms of the <i>State Records Act 1998</i> only State Records NSW can authorise the destruction of public records. Approval to dispose of records (by transfer as State Archives or destruction) is given under an authority known as the General Retention and Disposal Authorities.</p> <p>This procedure includes the destruction of both paper hard copies and electronic soft copies of records.</p> <p>The documents define the range of record types and assign a minimum period of retention before disposal action can commence.</p>

COMPLIANCE WITH THIS DOCUMENT IS MANDATORY

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1. POLICY STATEMENT

This policy will apply throughout the Local Health District (LHD) and should be read in conjunction with the following legislation and policies:

- [SESLHDPD/196 - Records Management](#)
- [SESLHDPD/203 - Records Management - Retention Periods](#)
- [State Records Act 1998](#)

2. RESPONSIBILITIES

The Chief Executive has ultimate responsibility with delegated responsibility to Head, Office of the Chief Executive, as Senior Responsible Officer, to set and issue standards in relation to Records Management and to monitor and audit compliance with these standards.

3. DEFINITIONS

General Retention and Disposal Authorities

Documents authorised by the Board of State Records NSW that set out appropriate retention periods for classes of records.

Records

Recorded information, in any form, including data in computer systems, created or received and maintained by an organisation or person in the transaction of business or the conduct of affairs and kept as evidence of such activity.

Records Management

The discipline and organisation function of managing records to meet operational business needs, accountability requirements and community expectations.

State Records

Any record made and kept, or received and kept, by any person in the course of the exercise of official functions in a public office, or for any purpose of a public office, or for the use of a public office (State Records Act 1998).

4. PROCEDURE

4.1 General Retention and Disposal Authorities

The proper and timely disposal of records is an important aspect of good record management.

Under the terms of the *State Records Act 1998* only State Records NSW can authorise the destruction of public records. Approval to dispose of records (by transfer as State Archives or destruction) is given under an authority known as a General Retention and Disposal Authority. The document defines the range of record types and assigns a minimum period of retention before disposal action can commence.

The current General Retention and Disposal Authorities include:

GA28	Administrative Records
GA45	Original or source records that have been copied
GDA21	Public Health Administrative Records
GDA17	Public Health Services, Patient / Client Records
GA31	Royal Commissions, Special Commissions of Inquiry and enquiries established by letters patent or Ministerial directive
GA44	Health Services: statewide health services, quality assurance, reporting, education and training
GA48	Source records that have been migrated

4.2 Before destruction

You should be aware of any legal obligations or requirements relating to the records you wish to destroy. These requirements may affect retention periods and methods of destruction.

Generally, records may be destroyed when they have reached the end of a specified retention period as determined by the relevant General Retention and Disposal Authority.

Prior to their destruction, ascertain that the record is no longer required for administrative or business use, or that the risk involved in destroying the record is less than the cost of maintaining the record.

Once all requirements have been met, approval must be sought prior to the records being destroyed from the Chief Executive or Delegate – For corporate records this is Tier 2 Director, Executive Director Operations, General Managers or the Department Manager. For clinical records, the Health Information Manager.

Where there is not an appropriate General Retention and Disposal Authority contact State Records by telephone 02 9714 3080 or email govrec@staterecords.nsw.gov.au.

4.3 Archive records

The General Retention and Disposal Authority nominates a selected range of records to be retained at State Archives, which must not be destroyed. There are specific procedures to be followed for transferring records as State Archives to the Museums of History NSW.

The [transferring custody of physical format records as State Archives procedure](#) and [transferring custody of digital records as State Archives procedure](#) is available on Museums of History web site <https://mhns.w.au/> or State Archives Agency Services <https://mhns.w.au/government-services/state-archives-agency-services/>.

4.4 Documenting destroyed records

It is vitally important that you document the destruction of all records. This is necessary for you to be able to ascertain what records have been destroyed. Proof of destruction

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may be required in legal proceedings and in response to [Government Information \(Public Access\) Act 2009 \(GIPA\)](#) requests.

Any documentation should note under which disposal recommendation or disposal authority the records are authorised for destruction eg. Give a specific descriptive entry – e.g. General Retention and Disposal Authority GA28 Administrative Records, GA28-10.10.01 and the date of destruction.

Records Destruction Checklist (Appendix A) is required to be completed to ensure the details of records to be destroyed are documented.

Prior to implementation of disposal action, this form must be authorised by the Chief Executive or Delegate – For corporate records this is Tier 2 Director, Executive Director Operations, General Managers or the Department Manager. For clinical records, the Health Information Manager.

Records relating to the implementation of records disposal decisions includes internal lists and approval for the destruction of records, advice from State Records regarding authorisation for the disposal of records and certificates of destruction. Excludes internal decisions to extend retention periods. Note: Records may be required for long periods as evidence of accountable destruction. Records regarding core business functions and areas of risk may need to be retained for longer periods.

Retain minimum of 20 years after action completed, then destroy.

4.5 Principles of destruction**4.5.1 Make sure it is destroyed**

To protect the interests of the Local Health District it is important to ensure that records are destroyed in an appropriate and secure manner. Failure to ensure the authorised destruction of records may lead to the unauthorised release of sensitive information.

Failure to ensure destruction may also lead to the circulation of forged documents based on records, which were not properly destroyed. For this reason it is important to ensure that unused accountable documents and unused letterhead / stationery have been destroyed.

In addition, if relocating from a building or public office it is essential to ensure that records are not left behind. A documented plan of action/s for the management of records when vacating premises must be approved and the actions overseen by the relevant Tier 2 Director, Executive Director Operations, General Manager or the Department Manager responsible for the relocation.

4.5.2 Destroy in a manner appropriate to the risk

Great care should be taken when destroying records, which contain sensitive information (refer to "what is sensitive information" below)

4.5.3 Destroy in an environmentally friendly manner

In these environmentally aware times, it is important to destroy records in an environmentally friendly manner, and to recycle paper where it is possible.

4.6 Methods of destruction

4.6.1 Paper records – shredding

Shredding is the preferred method of destruction. The security provided by the shredding of records depends on how fine the paper is shredded. For particularly sensitive documents cross shredding may be needed. For large quantities refer to **Using a Contractor** below.

4.6.2 Electronic / magnetic media

Records stored on magnetic media can be "bulk erased" by subjecting them to a strong magnetic field. The media can then be reused. Contact SESLHD Digital Health for further instructions.

Records held on optical media, and particularly sensitive records held on magnetic media, can be destroyed by cutting, crushing or other physical means of destruction.

Hard discs of computers should be reformatted before the computers are disposed of (other magnetic media can also be reformatted).

Important: Do not just delete files from magnetic media, including hard discs, the information can be recovered.

Non-electronic and non-paper media, videos, cinematographic film and microfilms (microfilm / fiche / aperture cards) can be destroyed by shredding, cutting, crushing and other physical means of destruction.

NEVER SEND RECORDS TO THE LOCAL GARBAGE TIP AND NEVER BURY THEM

4.7 Using a Contractor

A contractor may be used to destroy records on your behalf. They can collect the records from your office for destruction, or you can deliver the records to them. A closed truck should be used whenever possible. However, if the contractor is using an open truck, ensure that a cover secures the load.

NOTE: If you are using a contractor to destroy records, always insist on a certificate of destruction.

For particularly sensitive records, the use of lockable wheelie bins is appropriate. For sensitive records, which are not binned, you should ensure they are delivered in a totally enclosed vehicle (to prevent records falling off the back of trucks).

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4.8 What is sensitive information

4.8.1 Personal information

Government agencies collect a great deal of information about individuals, and much of this information is quite sensitive. Records relating to possible criminal activity, welfare, mental and physical health can contain sensitive information. It is also possible that records relating to the licensing of drivers, professions, trades and commercial activities may contain personal information that could be sensitive.

4.8.2 Financial or commercially sensitive information

Records may contain information of a commercially sensitive nature. Examples include files containing information on the Agencies financial position, tender bids, and any information, which may give an unfair financial advantage to another.

4.8.3 Information given in confidence

Records may contain information, which is given on condition that the information is not released. Examples include personal information and financial information, information given by government agencies (foreign governments, interstate / federal bodies) and information from any source where the provider specifies that it is given in confidence.

4.8.4 Information relating to an investigation

Records relating to an investigation, for example malpractice or criminal activity, may contain sensitive information. With such records, it is important to ensure that sensitive information is not released through inadequate or inappropriate destruction techniques.

4.8.5 Information posing a security risk

Records may contain information dealing with high security risk activities and premises. For example, records of cash collection or delivery times by a security firm.

5. DOCUMENTATION

- Records destruction checklist - Appendix A
- GA28-12.11.01 INFORMATION MANAGEMENT – Disposal

6. REFERENCES

6.1 External references

- [State Records Act 1998](#)
- [National Safety and Quality Health Service Standard – Standard 1 – Clinical Governance](#)
- [State Records NSW General Retention and Disposal Authorities](#)

7. VERSION AND APPROVAL HISTORY

Date	Version No.	Author and approval notes
October 2002	Draft	Written by Area Records Management Committee and has been utilised since.

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October 2004	0	Re-formatted with minor changes approved by Area Records Officer and re-issued by Systems Integration & Improvement Manager
September 2005	1	Minor changes made by Records Manager, Executive Support Unit following feedback from consultation with stakeholders. Approved by the Executive Management Committee 27 Sept 2005
March 2007	2	Manager, Systems Integration, minor changes to titles and updating references in Section 3.1
February 2011	3	Updated by Records Manager, minor changes to policy and updating references. Formatting changes due to change to Local Health Network
September 2012	4	Formatting changes due to change to Local Health District
October 2012	4	Approved by DET
November 2012	5	Minor changes made by Manager Executive Services in consultation with Chief Executive.
July 2016	6	Updated by Records Coordinator with minor changes to policy and updating references
July 2016	6	Updates endorsed by Executive Sponsor
May 2020	7	Updated by Corporate Records Coordinator, minor changes to policy and updating references
May 2020	7	Minor review - changes to references and the checklist at appendix A. Updates endorsed by Executive Sponsor. Processed by Executive Services prior to publishing.
18 December 2023	7.1	Minor review - change of Senior Responsible Officer to Director, Digital Health (CIO) and update broken hyperlinks.
7 July 2025	7.2	Minor review – change of Senior responsible Officer to Head, Officer of the Chief Executive and update broken hyperlinks and changed agency name from NSW State Archives and Records to State Records NSW.

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*Adapted from State Records NSW Guideline N° 3 Destruction of Records – a practical guide Dec 2010;
Checklist to be read in conjunction with SESLHDPR/220 Records – Destruction of*

Criteria		Yes	No
1.	The records are authorised for destruction under a disposal authority		
2.	The records are no longer required by South Eastern Sydney Local Health District		
3.	The records are not the subject of a current or pending court case or Government Information Public Access (GIPA) Act request		
4.	Internal authorisation has been obtained via the Records Destruction Form		
5.	The records have no special security requirements		
6.	The records have high security level and locked bins are required for security destruction		
7.	Appropriate service provider contacted		
8.	A covered van / truck specified for records removal		
9.	Service provider asked to supply a certificate of destruction		
10.	Specified that records are to be destroyed on day of collection		
11.	Certificate received from contractor		
12.	Records destroyed and date of destruction documented on the Records Destruction Form		
13.	All appropriate documentation attached to the form and retained by the Site / Department Manager		

Records Destruction Checklist

Appendix A



Health
South Eastern Sydney
Local Health District

UNIT

DEPARTMENT

CONTACT NAME:

POSITION

PHONE

							Corporate Records	Medical Records
Document Name	Record Number / Reference	Format Paper / Electronic	Date range of records	General Retention & Disposal Authority No. Authorising Disposal eg. GA28-12.11.01	How Disposed Eg Shred / Contractor Bulk erased	Disposal Date	(CE or delegate Signature & Date)	Health Information Manager (Signature & Date)