

POLICY REGISTER

RECORDS MANAGEMENT POLICY

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DOCUMENT CONTROL

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POLICY SCOPE:

This policy applies to all councillors, employees of Warren Shire Council and contractors and external consultants carrying out work on behalf of Warren Shire Council.

This policy applies to all records, both physical and digital, created or received, in the conduct of the official business of Warren Shire Council. This includes all aspects of all records created during business transactions and all business applications used to create records including email, databases and websites.

E-mails, which are relevant to the information gathering, policy formation or decision-making processes of Council, are part of the scope of this policy.

All records management procedures and systems are to be in accordance with this policy.

POLICY OBJECTIVE:

Warren Shire Council is committed to meeting its responsibilities under the State Records Act 1998 and to implementing best practice for its information management practices and procedures. The purpose of this policy is to:

- Establish a framework for the implementation of a records management program to ensure Warren Shire Council's records meet operational business needs, accountability requirements and community expectations;
- Ensure the preservation of Council's corporate memory through appropriate record keeping practices; and
- Drive efficiencies through implementing best practice.

POLICY STATEMENT:

Council's records are a unique and vital asset that cannot be easily reconstructed or replaced.

They exist for a variety of administrative, functional, historical and legal reasons. Their existence protects Council's interests and the interests of the community Council serve. The effective management and preservation of Council's records is intrinsic to both the decision-making process and productivity within the organisation.

Records must be created in all instances where there is a need for Council or an individual to be accountable for, and/or provide evidence of decisions made or actions taken.

1. Records Management Program

Under the State Records Act 1998 public offices, such as Warren Shire Council, are required to establish and maintain a records management program in conformity with standards and codes of best practice approved by the State Records Authority.

Warren Shire Councils Records management program will:

- *Ensure that the management of Councils information resources provides timely and comprehensive information to meet operational business needs, accountability requirements and community expectations.*
- *Ensure the preservation of Councils corporate memory through sound recordkeeping practices and the accurate capture of information to meet legal, evidential and accountability requirements.*

2. Responsibility

The State Records Act 1998 requires Council to make and keep full and accurate records as evidence of business activities.

Council is responsible for the protection, safe custody and return of all State Records under its control, ensuring accessibility to all equipment or technology dependant records.

Under the State Records Act (Part 2 Section10) the **General Manager** is responsible for ensuring that Warren Shire Council complies with the regulations and requirements of the Act;

10 Chief executives to ensure compliance with Act

The chief executive of each public office has a duty to ensure that the public office complies with the requirements of this Act and the regulations and that the requirements of this Act and the regulations with respect to State records that the public office is responsible for are complied with.

The Corporate Records Manager is the **Divisional Manager Finance and Administration**. The Corporate Records Manager has the responsibility and authority to set and issue corporate standards, and to monitor and audit compliance with these standards throughout Council.

The Corporate Information Officer is operationally responsible for the efficient management of Council records incorporating sound recordkeeping principles and records management best practice guidelines. They will also will assist staff in fulfilling their recordkeeping responsibilities and provide advice and training on compliance with this policy and its associated procedures.

All Managers and Supervisors are responsible for ensuring their staff receives training in records management and the use of Council's record management systems. They are also responsible for ensuring appropriate records management facilities are in place for their business functions and that their staff comply with all recordkeeping requirements.

Public sector employees need to be aware of the recordkeeping requirements that affect the performance of their duties.

Council staff have a number of basic obligations regarding records:

- Make records to support the conduct of their business activities
- Create records that would not otherwise be created, e.g. File Notes
- Capture records into the corporate record management systems
- Learn how and where records are kept within Council
- Do not destroy Council records without authority from the Corporate Information Officer
- Handle records with care and respect with a view to prolonging their life span
- Do not alter, damage or lose records
- Do not remove records from Council buildings without the permission of the Corporate Information Officer
- Maintain confidentiality of records they have access to
- Be aware of records management procedures

Councillors/Elected Members

Elected members, too, must display sound recordkeeping practices. In the “good Conduct and Administrative Practice” document prepared by the NSW Ombudsman, the following is recommended:

Agencies are obliged to make and keep full and accurate records of their activities. Public officials should help their agency meet this obligation by creating and maintaining full and accurate records of the work in which they are involved and of the decisions they make, including the reasons for those decisions. They should ensure the routine capture of these records into recordkeeping systems in the course of their duties.

Note: Councillors should follow the same prescribed obligations as Council staff (see above).

3. Records Management Functions

Warren Shire Council operates under a centralised Records management model, where corporate records management activities are carried out by the corporate information officer located within Finance and Corporate Services Division.

3.1 Records Management Systems

Warren Shire’s Councils principal recordkeeping system is paper based.

In addition, Council operates various specific purpose systems, where records are created and stored. These include, but are not limited to, Practical Plus and other electronic databases.

Records are the property of Warren Shire Council and electronic documents must be stored on Council’s servers only. Information on desktop computers, notebooks, memory keys, external drives or CD/DVD discs is not admissible as a record of Council and is in breach of the State Records Act 1998, Council policies and administrative practices. External and temporary devices are to be used for copies of records stored on Council’s servers only.

3.2 File Creation and Classification

File or container creation within Council’s electronic management system is monitored by the corporate information officer and select staff who have received specialised training. This allows files to be controlled and consistently named within the system.

The application of classification, using Government Authority 39 (GA 39), issued and authorised by NSW State Records, allows the allocation of security and sentencing to records.

3.3 Registration

Inwards correspondence is registered into Access Database after initial appraisal by the Records Clerk based on legal, evidential and accountability requirements.

A unique identifier is assigned to each record and a date and time stamp affixed as it is entered into Access Database. Metadata is captured at the point of registration, with details such as author, version and assignee.

This registration process provides evidence that a record has been created into Access Database and enables the management of the record over time.

3.4 Storage, Access and Security

The system provides a multilevel security facility which can be applied to individual documents, containers or specific classifications.

Security levels based on the organisational structure and individuals log in is applied to control access on a 'read only' or 'edit' level.

Records are available to all authorised staff that requires access to them for business purposes. Access is restricted on the written request of departmental managers based on the protection of personal privacy. Staff access to records is monitored by the Corporate Information Officer.

All access to Warren Shire Council records by members of the public will be at the discretion of the Public Officer and in accordance with the GIPPA Act.

Originals of imaged records are retained for a period of 6 months. These are placed in date order in batches and stored in the records storage area of Council. Exceptions to this are originals of imaged records that have been identified as State Records, have a legal or locally significant function or are part of a development application.

Hard copy files are maintained for these records. A report library is also operated. These physical documents replicate records registered into Council's electronic document management system and are maintained by the Corporate Information Officer.

Legal documents and Council Business Papers are stored in the strong room of the Council Administration building. All other physical records, including semi active, inactive and archived files, are located in records storage in XXXXX. All areas used for records storage have controlled access.

Active hard copy files stored within each department are the responsibility of that department and may not constitute official Warren Shire Council records.

3.5 Tracking

XXXXXXX (Councils electronic document management system) facilitates tracking of electronic documents by providing the functionality of auditing and reporting.

Warren Shire Council uses a manual system to track its active physical files. It is based on the premise of consideration and awareness of the value of records.

Physical files are not to be removed from their location for prolonged periods nor are they to be removed from the Council Administration building without the permission of the Divisional Manager Finance and Administration.

3.6 Monitoring and Maintenance

The management of records within Warren Shire Council is constantly monitored. Recordkeeping systems, processes and procedures are regularly reviewed and opportunities for improving effectiveness and/or efficiencies identified.

Regular planning for records management will be undertaken through specific strategic and operational plans, which will be reviewed on a regular basis.

3.7 Disposal

Warren Shire Council records must be protected, maintained, retrievable and usable for their total retention period as outlined by the Government Authority 39 (GA39), and disposed of in accordance with the State Records Act 1998.

Council's records are appraised and sentenced through the application of classification. A retention period and disposal action, determined by GA 39, is applied to all classes of activities.

Hard copy documents of short term value which have been scanned and captured into Council's electronic document management system are disposed of in accordance with the Government Authority 28 (GA 28) "General Retention and Disposal Authority – Imaged Records".

Council's method of destruction is pulping. This activity is carried out by an independent contractor under the supervision of corporate information staff.

No records of Council are to be destroyed without the authorisation of the Corporate Information Officer.

4. Definitions:

Record - any document or other source of information compiled, recorded or stored in written form or on film, or by electronic process, or in any other manner or by any other means.

State Records - any record made or 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...' *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*.

Policy Review

This policy should be reviewed every 4 years. The policy may be reviewed and amended at any time at Council's discretion (or if legislative or State Government Policy changes occur).