

2010

**THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR
THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**Report on Progress and Effectiveness of Implementing
Recommendations of Auditor General's Report No 3 of
2008: Records Management in ACT Government
Agencies**

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INTRODUCTION

On 26 August 2010, the Chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (the Committee) tabled the Committee's report on Review of Auditor-General's Report No. 3 of 2008: Records Management in ACT Government Agencies in the Legislative Assembly. The Committee's report made three recommendations:

- a) by the last sitting day in 2010, the Minister will report to the Legislative Assembly on the progress and effectiveness of the Department of Territory and Municipal Services' implementation of the Auditor-General's recommendations that were accepted. This should include: (i) a summary of action to date, either completed or in progress (including milestones completed), and (ii) the proposed action (including timetable), for implementing those recommendations;
- b) by the last sitting day in June 2011, the Minister will report to the Legislative Assembly on the progress and effectiveness of the Department of Territory and Municipal Services' implementation of the recommendations of the *Review of the Operation of the Territory Records Act 2002* that have been accepted. This should include: (i) a summary of action to date, either completed or in progress (including milestones completed), and (ii) the proposed action (including timetable), for implementing those recommendations; and
- c) by the last sitting day in February 2012 on the effectiveness of: (i) amendments made to the Territory Records Act 2002, and (ii) standards either revised or issued under the Act, in response to the *Review of the Operation of the Territory Records Act 2002*.

Recommendations 2 and 3 relate to the *Review of the Operation of the Territory Records Act 2002* that was tabled on 1 July 2010.

The Committee's recommendations essentially require the Government to keep the Legislative Assembly informed of progress in implementing better records management in the Territory.

This Report addresses Recommendation 1, which applies to the recommendations made in Auditor-General's Report No. 3 of 2008: *Records Management in ACT Government Agencies*, and is structured to follow the Auditor-General's 11 recommendations.

THE PROGRESS AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AUDITOR-GENERAL'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

The Territory Records Office should increase its compliance activities to ensure agencies comply with their approved Records Management Programs and the *Territory Records Act 2002* and to provide input to the required review of the *Territory Records Act 2002*.

The Territory Records Office (TRO) is a unit in the Department of Territory and Municipal Services, which carries out the work program of the Director of Territory Records. The position of Director of Territory Records is created by the *Territory Records Act 2002* (the Act), which confers certain duties and responsibilities onto the position. The Territory Records Office comprises three staff including the Director.

Action to date	Proposed action
TRO has increased its compliance activities. The duties of one of the two available staff members in the TRO have been redefined to focus solely on agency compliance and support. This archivist meets with agencies on each agency's premises to ensure her advice and support is provided in the context of that agency's need. This cooperative approach enables compliance issues to be resolved in the early stages of formulating records handling and management procedures. In place	Ongoing – arrangements will continue
Two surveys of agency compliance have been undertaken, in 2009 and 2010. As well as identifying agency-specific compliance procedures and problems, surveys also help scope the size of the task facing each agency. Completed	Ongoing – further surveys will be undertaken as required
TRO has identified agencies that may face greater compliance risk, arising from administrative or structural changes. Agencies' Records Management Programs must reflect current arrangements, so revision or amendment will usually be required where administrative arrangements and responsibilities change. Completed	Ongoing – monitoring will continue

The increased monitoring of compliance has been made possible by the success of agency efforts to prepare for public access to records that are over 20 years old unless there is a declared reason why they should not be open to public scrutiny, such as privacy considerations. The Committee noted the considerable effort made by all agencies in the preparation of their records for general public access.

Recommendation 2

The Territory Records Office should investigate and promote consistent records management practices across all ACT Government agencies.

Action to date	Proposed action
Expansion of the consolidated whole of government records management thesaurus, to ensure consistency of records titling and control across all agencies. Active management of this thesaurus by TRO. In place	Ongoing – arrangements will continue
Further Records Disposal Schedules have been developed, and will continue to be developed as the need arises. Consolidation and rationalisation will also occur where practical. Disposing of records that are no longer required for any purpose reduces agency storage costs. Ongoing	Ongoing
Issue additional Standards for Records Management to ensure the continuation of a rigorous records regime that meets agencies' needs. Territory Records Standard No.7 – Physical Storage of Records, and Territory Records Standard No.8 – Business Continuity and Records Management are now operating. Completed	Updating will occur as required
Issue further Standards for Records Management as required. A Standard for the digitisation and conversion of records is in preparation. Digitisation allows a record to be converted to a digital format, which allows in certain circumstances the disposal of the original record (in paper or other format) while meeting the evidential requirements of a record. This offers considerable gains in efficiency and effectiveness for agencies. In preparation	Develop new Standards as required
Use the recognition that the Director of Territory Records has responsibility for all records regardless of format to assist in establishing consistent records management practices across all ACT Government agencies. The Director will continue to work closely with InTACT on all matters relating to digital records. In place	Ongoing
The Territory Records Advisory Council provides a high level of archival and recordkeeping expertise to create consistency in ACT records management. The Council ensures that community views inform the records management regime that is created, and that Records Managers are aware of community views. The Council has worked most effectively and cooperatively in achieving its goals. Ongoing	Ongoing
TRO convenes regular meetings with agency Records Managers. The Records Managers' Forum allows the Director to keep Records Managers informed, and ideas and practices are shared across agencies. It is a valuable initiative. Implemented	Ongoing

Recommendation 3

The Government should consider the merit of consolidating InTACT's Record Services of the Department of Treasury, within the Territory Records Office with a view to creating a single records management agency.

Action to date	Proposed action
The Government agreed in principle with this recommendation, and the merit of consolidating Records Services with the TRO was considered. Completed	No further action
Records Services was functionally relocated with Shared Services to TAMS. This collocation within the same agency as TRO facilitated a closer working relationship between TRO and Records Services, which is a key provider of records management services to many ACT agencies. Completed	Continuing close working relationship
TRO has achieved a strong and active working relationship with agency records management systems, ensuring a consistent application of ACT's records regime. This approach commenced with ACT Records Services' records management systems and has now extended to other agencies. ACT Records Services retains all other existing functions, and continues to operate on a fee-for-service basis. Completed	Ongoing – developing working relationships with agency records management systems
There is a program to encourage consistency within records management database licences held across government. This approach will greatly assist with the management of these systems in a consistent manner. Ongoing	Ongoing – opportunities for efficiencies will be sought
Roles have been clearly established. TRO has responsibility for establishing the records regime, offering advice and support to agencies, and monitoring agencies' compliance with their Records Management Programs. At the level of day-to-day operations, ACT Records Services and agency recordkeeping units implement the regulatory regime created by the TRO utilising either their own or external records management units or engaging the services of ACT Records Services. Further amalgamation of functions is not being considered at the present time. Completed	Clarification of roles will continue to evolve as required

Recommendation 4

The Department of Treasury should finalise its Records Management Program for implementation throughout the Department.

Action to date	Proposed action
The Department of Treasury has an approved Records Management Program reflecting its current functional responsibilities. The legacy records of Rhodium Asset Solutions have now been incorporated into the Treasury Records Management Program. Completed	All agency's RMPs will be updated as required

Recommendation 5

Agencies should ensure recordkeeping procedures and guidance material address the business activities specific to their operations.

Action to date	Proposed action
TRO has increased compliance monitoring of the way agencies develop their Records Management Programs (see also Recommendation 1 above). Recommendation 5 identifies the core issue that effective recordkeeping must be tailored to the needs of each particular business. The initial steps required in constructing each agency's Records Management Program involve analysing the needs of the activities specific to that agency's operations. Where this analysis is thorough, an agency can be confident that its recordkeeping will meet its business needs. Implemented	Ongoing
TRO identifies when new agencies are created or existing agencies are rearranged, or when enquiries are to be held. TRO seeks to ensure that recordkeeping is an early priority for those developing the infrastructure of the new or re-ordered agency, or the enquiry. This includes the physical recordkeeping facilities and relevant training that will give rise to an effective and efficient records management system. Ongoing	TRO will continue to offer support and advice to agencies and enquiries
Agencies undertake thorough risk-based analysis of their business needs. Analyses need updating and refining in light of changing demands, organisational structures and technology. Initial analysis completed	Ongoing refinement and adjustment
Agencies undertake adequate staff training and guidance to ensure recordkeeping operations are satisfactory. Initial training completed	Ongoing

Recommendation 6

The Territory Records Office should:

- subject to legal advice, improve the *Standard for Records Management No. 6 Digital Records* to provide sufficient information for agencies to assess the legal validity of their digital records;
- assist agencies in assessing the suitability of electronic recordkeeping systems or tools (including those currently in use such as *Objective* or *TRIM*); and
- assess the suitability of electronic recordkeeping systems or tools for wider application across government.

Digital records are playing an increasing role in the day-to-day business activity of governments. In implementing the Standard for Digital Records, it was realised that agencies require the capacity to convert records from one format to another.

Converting paper records to digital format is perhaps the most common example (known as “digitisation”), but other conversions are also required, including conversion between different electronic forms. A recent request for public consultation responses to be made in the form of social networking formats demonstrates the immediacy of this need – these digital responses are Territory records. This changing demand requires significant additional guidance about Government records management. There are benefits and efficiencies for all ACT Government agencies in having a structure in place to facilitate the emerging trend for digitisation activities.

Recommendation 6 is interpreted broadly as a call for records managers to be proactive and flexible, while not forgetting the fundamental drivers of recordkeeping in government – good governance and the preservation of our community’s cultural heritage.

Action to date	Proposed action
TRO has monitored ideas elsewhere in Australia and New Zealand, and has developed a draft Territory Records Standard No.9 – Records Digitisation and Conversion. TRO has taken the initiative to establish procedures for converting records from one format to another that will satisfy evidential requirements. Striving to introduce best practice in a form that is sensible in ACT’s context, it draws on ideas that have gained evidential acceptance elsewhere in Australia. Draft Standard developed	Finalise Standard
TRO has sought advice from the ACT Government Solicitor about the evidential value of records created or converted under the draft	Finalise Standard 9 so

Territory Records Standard No.9 – Records Digitisation and Conversion, and managed under Territory Records Standard No.6 – Digital Records. Legal advice sought	as to ensure the evidential value of records
TRO continues to monitor advances in digital technology that can usefully be applied in ACT agencies. The Director of Territory Records has responsibility for regulating all records, in whatever format they occur. The Director provides advice to agencies, which will facilitate appropriate use of recordkeeping tools and systems, as part of the support provided to agencies. Ongoing	Ongoing
ACTPLA currently scans and digitises documents which are then quality controlled and provided to staff as required. ACTPLA has provided comment on the draft standard and procedures and the potential agency impact of implementing the digitisation standard. ACTPLA has in storage a large number of paper records which will be able to be sentenced and destroyed following the approval of the Territory Records Standard – Records Digitisation and Conversion and the associated Records Disposal Schedule for Source Records	Ongoing

Recommendation 7

Agencies should assess the risks associated with the physical storage of records, within both in-house and outsourced storage facilities, and develop appropriate strategies to address these risks.

The Government accepts that some aspects of physical storage and risk management must be introduced over time.

Action to date	Proposed action
The Government and ACT Records Services are to be congratulated on the opening of the new records repository. This new facility used the new Territory Records Standard No.7 – Physical Storage of Records as a key specification in the development brief. As a result, the Government can have greater confidence that records are stored in a fully compliant manner. Repository opened	Enjoy the benefits of the facility
As well as Territory Records Standard No.7 – Physical Storage of Records, a new Territory Records Standard No.8 – Business Continuity and Records Management has been approved and incorporated into agencies' Records Management Programs. This Standard establishes the concept of "vital" records, or records that are vital to an agency's ongoing business needs. Also, this Standard requires a risk management perspective to be added to all records management processes and procedures, so that the most serious risks receive the greatest attention. Not only is physical storage of records	A risk-management-orientated records regime to be more fully integrated into Records Management Programs over

an inherent part of managing risk, but the lowest risk repositories are finding themselves home to the most vital records. A whole of government risk-management-orientated records regime is now in place. Completed	time.
As well as creating a risk-management-orientated records regime for records stored internally, such a regime must become integral for records held by outsourced providers on behalf of agencies. Agencies continue to own the records and to be held responsible for them. More work is needed to ensure external providers meet the required regime. Together with Standards 7 and 8, Territory Records Standard No.5 – Recordkeeping and Outsourced Government Business, a consistent whole of government regime now exists. Implementation has commenced. Commenced	Agencies to ensure all records held by all external providers meet each agencies' Records Management Program
As part of planning input for the ACT Health Capital Asset Development Program (CADP), ACT Health has specified that new records storage facilities must comply with Territory Records Standard No.7 – Physical Storage of Records.	Ongoing
TAMS is progressively consolidating off site storage to ACT Record Services new repository at Mitchell, and actively managing their off site storage by identifying records for disposal. Active management of on site storage of current records is also promoted.	Ongoing
When outsourcing the Department's records storage, DET ensured that the contracted supplier complied with the TRO Standard Number 7 – Physical Storage of Records	Ongoing
ACTPLA is undertaking a comprehensive back scanning project to capture electronically a large range of records that are at risk of being lost due to age and quality. These building records include large plans, and applications that have deteriorated in quality over time. The back scanning process will ensure these records are available long term, and retained in a more accessible format than current paper files. The original documents will continue to be stored as Territory Archives in a protected storage facility meeting the required standards.	Ongoing

Recommendation 8

Agencies should implement a system, including conducting internal audits, to formally and regularly monitor and review their recordkeeping practices, systems, policies and procedures.

Action to date	Proposed action
The most effective test of ACT's records regime is whether it meets the present and future requirements of users. Use of their records by agencies has not been found wanting. The most recent additional test has been the opening of records to public access. Again, ACT's records regime and its operation have met the demand placed on it by the community. Agencies are to be congratulated on the success of the efforts that went into preparing records and responding to requests. Agencies have generally provided very good responses and the community has appreciated it. Implemented and ongoing	Ongoing
TRO is being pro-active in encouraging agencies to implement internal reviews of the effectiveness of their procedures. This is being undertaken in conjunction with the increased emphasis on compliance monitoring that TRO is now undertaking in response to Recommendation 1 of the Auditor-General's Report. Being implemented	Ongoing
ACTPLA is undertaking monthly audits on recordkeeping and document management. This includes auditing the compliance of created files, the accuracy of document naming and the volume of staff H drive storage. This information is reported to the ACTPLA Executive Management Committee bi-monthly and used to schedule focused training with individual staff or teams that require additional support. ACTPLA has required records management to be a KRA on all section work plans to provide additional focus for managers on the vital importance for accurate recordkeeping.	Ongoing
ACT Health's records management activities were subjected to an internal audit in 2006/07. Thirteen recommendations made by the auditor were agreed by management, an action plan was developed and implemented and all recommendations have now been addressed	Ongoing

Recommendation 9

Agencies should disseminate recordkeeping guidance material to staff through means such as staff forums, induction programs and staff bulletins.

Action to date	Proposed action
DET has conducted school visits to liaise with School Principals and Business Managers in relation to registering school administration records and school student records as well as arranging the archiving of records of closing schools	Ongoing
ACT Health utilises its intranet to disseminate information on recordkeeping to all staff. Additionally, information on recordkeeping is provided to new managers during their formal agency orientation program, TRIM system user training sessions and basic recordkeeping training sessions. 164 agency staff received this training during 2009-10. In 2010-11, ACT Health commenced a comprehensive review of its recordkeeping training and is progressing with development of a multi-tiered training program targeting staff at all levels.	Ongoing
TAMS maintains an intranet site for records management. Policy and procedures are published here along with appropriate Records Disposal Schedules, the thesaurus and a training calendar. TAMS also has a network of record contact officers who meet as required.	Ongoing
During 2009-10 ACTPLA completed 'Understanding Recordkeeping' in-house training for over 200 staff. In 2010-11 ACTPLA has scheduled fortnightly training sessions on a variety of recordkeeping topics, as well as providing focussed training for staff to enhance their understanding and practical implementation of recordkeeping procedures. A specific training officer has been transferred to the records management area to drive this program, which is regularly reported to the Executive Management Committee.	Ongoing

Recommendation 10

Agencies should develop formal training programs that improve the skills and understanding of all staff in recordkeeping.

Action to date	Proposed action
TRO has arranged a contract with an approved provider, so that agencies can easily obtain training that will be consistent with the ACT Government's records regime. At the instigation of agencies, the CIT provides whole of government records management training at both the Introductory and Certificate III levels throughout the ACT Government. Agencies may tailor some aspects of the training so as to be confident that their particular business needs are met. Implemented	Ongoing
ACTPLA is providing training to all staff in recordkeeping and document management. These training sessions are actively encouraged by the Executive and managers. These sessions are similar in content to the CIT program, but specifically aimed at ACTPLA procedures and processes. Additional one-on-one training is provided as required. The effectiveness of these training programs and performance across the Authority is closely monitored and assists the records officer in targeting one on one training as needed.	Ongoing
During 2009-10, 62 staff from ACT Health completed the Certificate II level Introduction to Recordkeeping at the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) and five records management staff continued their Certificate III studies in Recordkeeping at CIT.	Ongoing
TAMS staff have access to internal records management training sessions covering all aspects of records management including the use of the thesaurus for classifying records. Sessions are scheduled every month.	Ongoing
DET continued regular training for central office staff and introduced training for managing administrative records for these staff, and for archiving student records and class rolls for school staff. The Department also delivered records training specifically prepared for school business managers and assistants as part of the School Records Plan.	Ongoing

Recommendation 11

Agencies should develop procedures that provide sufficient practical guidance to enable all staff to capture both paper and digital records.

Action to date	Proposed action
TRO advises agencies in their management of all types of records. TRO will continue to provide whole of government Records Advices on topics of practical importance as the need arises. So far, 57 Records Advices have been issued. Ongoing	Ongoing
ACTPLA has developed a large range of guidance material that is provided in the staff news letter <i>InHouse</i> and via the ACTPLA intranet. This includes a range of Records Management Best Practice Guides, a large range of work instructions, and a FAQ page on the intranet for common errors or operational issues. ACTPLA is in the process of developing a reference folder to be provided to all staff, with updates to come out monthly. This is intended to be a 'one stop shop' for recordkeeping and procedures and information.	Ongoing

CONCLUSION

The Committee stressed the importance of effective recordkeeping, saying that:

- 4.1 The Committee is firmly of the view that good recordkeeping, and its subsequent management, is a fundamental core function of all public sector agencies. The importance of good records management to the functioning of the public sector is succinctly captured by the Australian Public Service Commissioner in her 2007–08 *State of the Service Report* to Parliament:

Effective recordkeeping is essential in enabling agencies to meet their accountability obligations to the Government, Parliament and the Australian public. The maintenance of effective recordkeeping systems allows agencies to demonstrate that due process has been followed in their actions and decisions. It allows the Government to keep track of what it has done, so that future activities can be examined on the basis of comprehensive and accurate knowledge of what has occurred and what has been decided in the past. (Para 4.1)

The Government is confident that all agencies take their recordkeeping responsibilities seriously, as required by the *Territory Records Act 2002*. The Government recognises the progress that agencies are making towards better practice in their records management, and the effort that is being applied to this aspect of daily work. The Government also recognises that continuing improvement in the management of Territory records is required, and that changing circumstances must be reflected in recordkeeping practices.

The Government's Submission to the Committee outlined the changing environment faced by Records Managers. In the period since the Auditor-General's investigation of agency practices, changing demands have continued. The most pressing have been increasing levels of demand for:

- Access to digital records, for both new records and the ability to access paper records electronically
- Certainty regarding the evidential value of digital records
- Public access to records
- Higher standards for records management and storage, and
- Greater efficiency in all aspects of records management

The Government is confident that all agencies will continue to strive for better practice in records management while addressing emerging demands for efficiency and effectiveness in business practices.

Members of the Legislative Assembly and the ACT community can be confident that the Territory's records management regime is robust and responsive, and that our records management practices are meeting the demands created by our recognition of the importance of good governance, by our day-to-day business needs of Government, and by our wish to preserve appropriate parts of our community's cultural heritage