

2022

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

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE ACT AUDIT OFFICE REPORT NO
11/2021 – *Digital Records Management***

**Presented by
Chris Steel, MLA
Special Minister of State**

Introduction

The ACT Government welcomes report No 11/2021 *Digital Records Management*. This audit examined the effectiveness of ACT Government agencies' transition to the whole-of-government electronic document and records management systems (EDRMS). The report was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 23 November 2021.

In 2018-19 the ACT Government approved the *Better Government: Digitising Government Records* budget initiative, which aimed to substantially increase the rate of transition of agencies to reliable, authoritative digital recordkeeping systems. Access to up to date, authoritative digital records is vital to support a flexible, agile workforce in an activity based working environment. A shift to digital recordkeeping can bring improvements to the ACT's ability to efficiently and effectively serve its customers and the community more broadly.

With a net cost of \$4.1 million, the initiative's four deliverables provide a clear focus and purpose that enhances understanding and accountability. The initiative represents a major whole-of government endeavour involving technical, procedural, and cultural change over a four-year period that is likely to affect, at least in some way, the majority of staff working in the ACT Public Service.

The audit report concludes that the rollout and consolidation of whole of government electronic document and records management systems (EDRMS) has been supported by improved governance arrangements, and the provision of advice, support, policies and procedures.

The report also notes that each of the three directorates considered as part of the audit, the Community Services Directorate, the Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate and the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, have demonstrated improved digital record-keeping practices between 2018 and 2021. While the auditors observe that this progress has involved an increase in the number of stand-alone EDRMS databases during this period, the ACT Government notes that this has been a transitional step. Since finalisation of the report, the decommissioning of further standalone instances has been planned or completed, with migrations of existing digital records to the whole of government systems continuing to take place.

Planning also continues for the deployment of digital recordkeeping capability to additional ACT Public Service directorates and agencies. The project is on track to exceed its goal of providing full EDRMS services to 8,500 office-based workers in the ACTPS.

The Government thanks the Audit Office for its audit and agrees with its findings and agrees, or agrees-in-principle with its five recommendations.

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1 STANDALONE TRIM INSTANCES

The Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, through the Digital Records Governance Committee, should agree a strategy with directorates and agencies for the migration of standalone TRIM versions to the whole of government TRIM.

RECOMMENDATION 2 EDRMS PERFORMANCE

The Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, through the Digital Records Governance Committee, should develop a performance framework for the implementation of EDRMS across ACT Government directorates and agencies. The performance framework should focus on the achievement and realisation of benefits associated with EDRMS implementation and inform the monitoring of progress beyond the number of users migrating to EDRMS platforms.

RECOMMENDATION 3 EDRMS FUNDING

The Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, through the Digital Records Governance Committee, should review and evaluate the funding arrangements and determine if a central recurrent funding model for the whole-of-government EDRMS is appropriate.

RECOMMENDATION 4 DIGITISATION OF HARDCOPY FILES

The Community Services Directorate should:

- a) identify and document the outcome of the *Better Government: Digitising Government Records* Budget initiative goal of digitalising 161,000 hardcopy files; and
- b) if the estimated outcome does not meet the business requirements of the Directorate, prepare a strategy to complete the digitisation.

RECOMMENDATION 5 MODEL FOR THE DIGITISATION OF HARDCOPY FILES

The Community Services Directorate, in conjunction with the Digital Records Governance Committee, should:

- a) review and evaluate the outcome of the *Better Government: Digitising Government Records* Budget initiative; and
- b) finalise the secondary aim of the initiative and prepare a model that can be used across ACT Government directorates and agencies for the digitisation of hardcopy files.

Government Response to The Act Audit Office Report No 11/2021 – Digital Records Management

Recommendation 1 Standalone TRIM instances

The Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, through the Digital Records Governance Committee, should agree a strategy with directorates and agencies for the migration of standalone TRIM versions to the whole of government TRIM.

Response

Agreed

Planning for the consolidation and decommissioning of TRIM instances is already underway; however, has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic which diverted resources to more urgent work. There would; however, be benefit in agreeing a forward program for this work. Digital Records Support will continue to negotiate and document timeframes for migration and decommissioning work, and will establish a standing agenda item for the Digital Records Governance Committee.

Recommendation 2 EDRMS performance

The Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, through the Digital Records Governance Committee, should develop a performance framework for the implementation of EDRMS across ACT Government directorates and agencies. The performance framework should focus on the achievement and realisation of benefits associated with EDRMS implementation and inform the monitoring of progress beyond the number of users migrating to EDRMS platforms.

Response

Agreed

The benefits of digital recordkeeping accrue to the business areas which make the transition from hard copy business processes. As was demonstrated by the 2016 EDRMS pilot project, benefits can include savings in staff time, decreased paper file storage and movement costs, decreased data storage costs through decreased duplication, reduction of business continuity and disaster recovery risks, improved collaboration, and enhanced user experience.

Digital Records Support has already commenced the development of a systems performance plan that will assist in performance monitoring for centralised services and processes. The Territory Records Office will work with Digital Records Support to develop advice for agencies using EDRMS services on how they can realise and measure the benefits of the transition to whole of government digital recordkeeping.

Recommendation 3 EDRMS funding

The Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, through the Digital Records Governance Committee, should review and evaluate the funding arrangements and determine if a central recurrent funding model for the whole-of-government EDRMS is appropriate, noting that a number of records functions still need to be maintained within agencies.

Response

Agreed

Partnership Services Group continues to review its cost models for EDRMS services, and will provide a recommendation to the DRGC on potential funding arrangements. Any change to funding arrangements would be considered through an appropriate budget process.

Recommendation 4 Digitisation of hard copy files

The Community Services Directorate should:

- a) identify and document the outcome of the Better Government: Digitising Government Records Budget initiative goal of digitalising 161,000 hardcopy files; and
- b) if the estimated outcome does not meet the business requirements of the Directorate, prepare a strategy to complete the digitisation

Response

Agreed in principle

Community Services Directorate will document the outcomes and learnings from its digitisation work, as well as identify options for next steps. An aspect of these learnings will be an assessment of the return on investment for digitising inactive records. This analysis will inform the Directorate's decision as to whether it will complete the digitisation of all 161,000 files as originally envisaged by the project.

Recommendation 5 Model for the digitisation of hard copy files

The Community Services Directorate, in conjunction with the Digital Records Governance Committee, should:

- a) review and evaluate the outcome of the Better Government: Digitising Government Records Budget initiative; and

- b) finalise the secondary aim of the initiative and prepare a model that can be used across ACT Government directorates and agencies for the digitisation of hardcopy files.

Response

Agreed

Community Services Directorate is developing a model for the digitisation of active hard copy files. The Directorate will work with the Territory Records Office to develop whole of government guidance that draws on this model for consideration by the Digital Records Governance Committee.