

General Retention and Disposal Authority - Imaged Records (GA36)

Document Number IB2009_064

Publication date 18-Nov-2009

Functional Sub group Corporate Administration - Records

Summary Provides details of the latest General Retention and Disposal Authority - imaged records GA36 issued by the State Records Authority to replace the 2006 version GDA24.

Replaces Doc. No. General Retention and Disposal Authority - Imaged Records GDA 24 [IB2007_007]

Author Branch Corporate Governance and Risk Management

Branch contact Michelle Stonehouse 9391 9404

Applies to Area Health Services/Chief Executive Governed Statutory Health Corporation, Board Governed Statutory Health Corporations, Affiliated Health Organisations - Non Declared, Affiliated Health Organisations - Declared, Public Health System Support Division, Community Health Centres, Dental Schools and Clinics, NSW Ambulance Service, NSW Dept of Health, Public Health Units, Public Hospitals

Audience Records management and administration staff

Distributed to Public Health System, NSW Ambulance Service, NSW Department of Health

Review date 18-Nov-2014

Policy Manual Health Records & Information, Patient Matters

File No. 09/2573

Status Active

GENERAL RETENTION AND DISPOSAL AUTHORITY: IMAGED RECORDS (GA 36)

PURPOSE

To notify health services of the recently released State Records Authority *General Retention and Disposal Authority: imaged records* (GA 36) which replaces the 2006 *General Retention and Disposal Authority: imaged records* (GDA 24)

KEY INFORMATION

General Retention and Disposal Authority: imaged records (GA 36) provides for the authorised disposal of certain State records which have been successfully copied using microfilming or digital imaging processes. In particular, it describes the circumstances under which the destruction of original records is authorised.

The main changes from the previous authority include:

- Coverage for records that do not have an identified final disposal action (i.e. records in an approved retention and disposal authority with a disposal action of “Retain in agency”).
- Records that are subject to current or pending legal proceedings or an application for access under legislation such as the Freedom of Information Act 1989, the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009, the Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002 or the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 are no longer included as a class of records excluded from the Authority. However they should be considered for exclusion from this authority based on a risk assessment by the public office of the destruction of the records that fall into this category.

Note: With the issue of GDA 24 in 2006 the State Records Authority amended clause 9.0.0 Records Imaging of the *General Disposal Authority: Public health services: patient/client records* (GDA 17) to include those State archives that were created or received from 1 January 2000 onwards. This amendment remains current and reflects the provisions of the latest version of State Records Authority of *General Retention and Disposal Authority: imaged records* (GA 36)

ATTACHMENTS

1. General Retention and Disposal Authority: imaged records (GA 36) – State Records Authority

State Records Authority of New South Wales

General retention and disposal authority: imaged records (GA36)

This general retention and disposal authority is approved under section 21(2)c of the *State Records Act 1998* following prior approval by the Board of the State Records Authority of New South Wales in accordance with section 21(3) of the Act.

© State of New South Wales through the State Records Authority of New South Wales, 2009. This work may be freely reproduced for personal, educational or government purposes. Permission must be received from the State Records Authority for or all other uses.

ISBN 978-0-9806390-4-9

State Records Authority of New South Wales

General Retention and Disposal Authority

Authority no GA36

SR file no 06/0392

Scope This general retention and disposal authority covers certain categories of records that have been imaged or microfilmed.

Public office This authority applies to all public offices as defined under the *State Records Act 1998*.

Approval date 19/10/2009

Alan Ventress
Director
State Records Authority of New South Wales

Date

Table of Contents

1	Overview	3
1.1	Purpose of the Authority.....	3
1.2	What records does the Authority cover?	3
1.3	Conditions for the destruction of records.....	3
1.4	Records excluded from this Authority	3
1.5	Originals of records to be considered for retention after copying even when authorised for destruction under this Authority	4
1.6	Status of this Authority	4
1.7	How long is the Authority in force?	4
1.8	For more information	4
2	Records authorised for disposal	5
3	Guidelines for use	6
3.1	Meeting the conditions for the destruction of records.....	6
3.2	Records with no final disposal action (known as 'retain in agency' records)	7
3.3	Documenting the imaging process	8
3.4	Further guidance.....	8
3.5	Acknowledgements.....	8

1 Overview

1.1 Purpose of the Authority

The purpose of this General Retention and Disposal Authority is to provide for the authorised disposal of certain State records which have been successfully copied using microfilming or digital imaging processes. In particular, it describes the circumstances under which the destruction of original records is authorised.

1.2 What records does the Authority cover?

This General Retention and Disposal Authority applies to State records that have been copied into a digital or microform format. The table below illustrates in general terms the classes of records that are permitted for destruction after copying:

Permission under this Authority to destroy originals after copying, provided the conditions listed in this Authority (section 1.3) are met, is given for:	Permission is not given under this Authority for the destruction after copying of:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">records created at any time that are not required as State archives, andrecords that are required as State archives or required to be retained in agency that were created or received from January 1, 2000 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">records that were created or received before January 1, 2000 that are identified in an approved Retention and Disposal Authority as 'Required as State archives' or required to be 'Retained in agency'records of the classes listed in the 'Exclusions' section of this Authority (section 1.4).

In addition, under this Authority, where original records are destroyed, public offices must retain the image copies for the records' full retention periods, as required in the relevant retention and disposal authority.

Public offices wishing to copy and destroy the originals of records that are required as State archives or required to be retained in agency and which were created before January 1, 2000 should contact State Records.

1.3 Conditions for the destruction of records

To be able to legally destroy records that have been imaged, a public office must ensure that the conditions for destruction described in this Authority are met. These conditions are that:

- all requirements for retaining originals have been assessed and fulfilled
- copies are made which are authentic, complete and accessible
- copies are kept for the authorised retention period, and
- originals are kept for quality control purposes for an appropriate length of time after copying.

Guidance on complying with each of these conditions is provided in section 3.

1.4 Records excluded from this Authority

This Authority may not be used to dispose of the following classes of records:

- records that are subject to a Government policy or directive not to be destroyed

- records that are considered to have intrinsic value e.g. original artworks
- original proclamations, charters, testimonials and intergovernmental agreements or treaties.

1.5 Originals of records to be considered for retention after copying even when authorised for destruction under this Authority

Records that are subject to current or pending legal proceedings or an application for access under legislation such as the *Freedom of Information Act 1989*, the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*, the *Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002* or the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* should be considered for exclusion from this authority based on a risk assessment by the public office of the destruction of the records that fall into this category.

1.6 Status of this Authority

This Authority for the disposal of State records has been approved by the Board of the State Records Authority of New South Wales and may be implemented without further reference to State Records.

Nevertheless, this Authority should be applied with caution, bearing in mind that the authorisations for disposal are given in terms of the *State Records Act 1998* only, and that care must be taken not to dispose of records in contravention of any legal responsibilities or business interests unique to a public office. For further explanation of this, see section 3.1.1.

1.7 How long is the Authority in force?

This Authority will remain in force until it is superseded or withdrawn from use by State Records.

1.8 For more information

To suggest amendments or alterations to this Authority, or to obtain assistance in the interpretation or implementation of the Authority, contact State Records on (02) 8247 8627 or at govrec@records.nsw.gov.au.

2 Records authorised for disposal

No	Description	Disposal action
1	<p>Records which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • authorised for eventual destruction in an approved retention and disposal authority, or • identified in an approved retention and disposal authority as having no final disposal action as the records are required for ongoing operational or reference use by the public office and created or received from 1 January, 2000 onwards or • identified as State archives in an approved general or functional retention and disposal authority and created or received from 1 January, 2000 onwards <p>and which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • are not of a type listed in the exclusions to this Authority (section 1.4), and • have been successfully copied into a digital or microform format. 	<p>Records may be destroyed if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all requirements for retaining originals have been assessed and fulfilled • copies are made which are authentic, complete and accessible • copies are kept for the authorised retention period, and • originals are kept for quality control purposes for an appropriate length of time after copying.

3 Guidelines for use

3.1 Meeting the conditions for the destruction of records

To be able to legally destroy records that have been imaged, a public office must ensure that the conditions for destruction described in this Authority are met. These conditions are that:

- all requirements for retaining originals have been assessed and fulfilled
- copies are made which are authentic, complete and accessible
- copies are kept for the authorised retention period, and
- originals are kept for quality control purposes for an appropriate length of time after copying.

3.1.1 All requirements for retaining originals have been assessed and fulfilled

When using this Authority to dispose of originals that have been imaged, care must be taken to ensure that no special requirements exist to retain the records in their original format.

While the exclusions to the Authority (section 1.4) identify common classes of records that may not be destroyed after copying, there may be other requirements to retain originals that are unique to your public office.

Examples of unique requirements to retain records in their original formats that may apply to a public office could include:

- a business rule that relies on distribution of a hard copy record around the organisation
- the possible use in the future of graphic materials e.g. posters, designs, photographs, brochures for display, or
- a special legislative requirement for a record to be retained in its original form.

Where there is concern about the destruction of originals and the retention of image copies in their place for particularly high risk areas of business, public offices should seek a legal opinion.

Officers responsible for imaging projects should document the results of their assessment of such requirements for retaining originals, and obtain approval to proceed from a senior manager before commencing routine destruction of records.

3.1.2 Copies are made which are authentic, complete and accessible

To be..	..an image copy must be:
Authentic	the product of routine, authorised copying and registration processes
Complete	an accurate, legible reproduction of the original, in its entirety
accessible	available and readable to all those with a right to access it, for as long as it is required

To make and keep image copies that have these qualities, there are a number of measures that can be put in place in both the imaging process and the management of the copies as records.

Imaging process

Measures which are recommended include:

- policy and procedures on imaging of records that are known by staff and authorised at a senior level

- routine, documented procedures for verifying that the image copies are accurate and complete reproductions of the originals
- the use of standard formats for images (eg TIFF, JPEG, PDF)
- the use of Write Once Read Many (WORM) optical media or 'read-only' controls in network servers used for storing images
- the maintenance of thorough system documentation, including description of any image enhancement techniques, and
- the use of security controls such as access passwords and audit trails to prevent any alteration of the images.

Managing images as records

Measures which are recommended include:

- capture of the image copies as records into organisational recordkeeping systems
- management of the image copies under the usual framework of organisational recordkeeping rules
- keeping adequate recordkeeping metadata to facilitate the records' migration, preservation, use and retrieval, and
- documented planning for long term accessibility of the images.

For minimum requirements for recordkeeping metadata and recordkeeping system functionality, please see the *Standard on Digital Recordkeeping*.

3.1.3 Copies are kept for the authorised retention period

Where an original State record is legally destroyed, the image copy becomes the official State record. Therefore, it must be retained for the period specified in the appropriate disposal class in an approved retention and disposal authority under which the original record was covered.

For example:

If a public office is routinely imaging then destroying records relating to applications for leave and the administration of leave, the image copies must be retained in accordance with the retention periods specified in the *General Retention and Disposal Authority – Personnel Records* (GDA 12).

3.1.4 Originals are kept for quality control purposes for an appropriate period of time

Public offices must keep the originals of records that have been copied for a period of time for 'quality control' purposes before destroying those records that are authorised for destruction under this Authority.

The retention of originals for a period of time is recommended in industry standards for the purposes of checking the quality of the images. In addition, they provide an extra safeguard in case of loss of images in the copying or registration process.

Public offices must determine an appropriate period for retaining originals for 'quality control' purposes based on an understanding of their own copying and recordkeeping processes. State Records recommends a minimum retention period of six months, however other common periods implemented include one or three months for low risk records.

3.2 Records with no final disposal action (known as 'retain in agency' records)

This authority authorises the destruction of records with no final disposal action that were created or received from 1 January, 2000 onwards. Also known as 'retain in agency' records, these are special records that have ongoing value to their agency and hence are retained by the agency. Some of these records are yet to be determined to have ongoing value to the State while others may be appropriate or eligible for destruction after imaging. For records created or received before 1 January 2000 public offices are advised

to contact State Records for an assessment and separate authorisation for approval to destroy the original records after imaging.

3.3 Documenting the imaging process

In this Authority it is recommended that various types of documentation are made and kept to record the imaging process and the ongoing management of the images. Keeping such documentation will support the images' admissibility in legal proceedings and assist in their management through time. Documentation that is recommended includes:

- the public office's policy and procedures for imaging of records (may be incorporated into general records management policy / procedures), including the period for which originals are held for 'quality control' purposes
- documentation of the design of the imaging system indicating controls put in place to ensure images are complete, accurate and accessible
- documentation of assessments carried out on any requirements to retain records in original format from legislation or business requirements, and
- documented planning for the long term accessibility of the image copies.

3.4 Further guidance

Further guidance from State Records on managing the digital imaging of records can be found in our publication [Recordkeeping in Brief: Digital Imaging and Recordkeeping](#). Public offices requiring any assistance in the interpretation or implementation of this authority are encouraged to [contact State Records](#).

Strategies for ensuring the long term accessibility of records in digital and other technology dependent formats are provided in *Managing Digital Records*.

3.5 Acknowledgements

State Records would also like to thank the public offices that took the time to answer questions and provide details on their own organisation's use of GDA 24.