

SESLHD PROCEDURE COVER SHEET



| | |
|--|--|
| NAME OF DOCUMENT | Records Management – Destruction of |
| TYPE OF DOCUMENT | Procedure |
| DOCUMENT NUMBER | SESLHDPR/220 |
| DATE OF PUBLICATION | May 2020 |
| RISK RATING | Low |
| LEVEL OF EVIDENCE | Standard 1 – Governance for Safety and Quality in Health Service Organisations NSW Legislation |
| REVIEW DATE | May 2025 |
| FORMER REFERENCE(S) | Area P-CGOV-23– October 2004 SESIAHS PD 021 |
| EXECUTIVE SPONSOR or EXECUTIVE CLINICAL SPONSOR | Director Corporate and Legal Services as nominated Senior Responsible Officer for Corporate Records. |
| AUTHOR | Records Management Coordinator Jocelyn.Bullard@health.nsw.gov.au |
| POSITION RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DOCUMENT | Manager Executive Services |
| KEY TERMS | Records Management; destruction |
| SUMMARY | <p>Under the terms of the State Records Act, 1998 (under review) only NSW State Archives and Records 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

**This Procedure is intellectual property of South Eastern Sydney Local Health District.
Procedure content cannot be duplicated.**

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 Policy
- SESLHDPD/203 Records Management – Retention Periods
- [State Records Act, 1998 \(under review\)](#)

2. RESPONSIBILITIES

The Chief Executive has ultimate responsibility with delegated responsibility to Director Corporate and Legal Services, 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**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.

General Retention and Disposal Authorities

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

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) (under review).

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* (under review) only NSW State Archives and Records 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:

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| GA 28 | Administrative Records (revised 2015) |
| GA 26 | Approved screening agencies: records relating to the conduct of working with children checks (2007) |
| GDA 11 | Audio Visual Programs & Readings (2002) |
| GDA 19 | Health System, Public: Departments of Forensic medicine |
| GA 45 | Original or source records that have been copied (2015) |
| GDA 21 | Public Health Administrative Records (2005) |
| GDA 17 | Public Health Services, Patient / Client Records (2004) |
| GA 31 | Royal Commissions, Special Commissions of Inquiry and enquiries established by letters patent or Ministerial directive (2008) |
| GDA 8 | Video / Visual Surveillance Records (1999) |
| GA44 | Health Services: statewide health services, quality assurance, reporting, education and training |
| GA31 | Royal Commissions, Special Commissions of Inquiry, Commissions of Inquiry and Inquiries established by Letters Patent or Ministerial Directive |
| 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 Medical Records Manager.

Where there is not an appropriate General Retention and Disposal Authority contact NSW State Archives and Records by telephone 02 96731788 or email info@records.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 NSW State Archives and Records Repository (Sydney).

The [transferring custody of records as State Archives procedure](#) is available on the internet at NSW State Archives and Records NSW web site www.records.nsw.gov.au

4.4 Documenting destroyed records

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

4.5 Principles of destruction

- **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.

- **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)

- **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

- **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.

- **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 Health ICT 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)

4.8 What is sensitive information

- **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.

- **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.

- **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.

- **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.

- **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

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

6. REFERENCES

6.1 External references

[National Safety and Quality Health Service Standard – Standard 1 Governance for Safety and Quality in Health Service Organisations](#)

[State Records Act, 1998](#)

[State Records General Retention and Disposal Authorities Overview](#)

7. REVISION AND APPROVAL HISTORY

| Date | Revision No. | Author and Approval |
|----------------|--------------|---|
| October 2002 | Draft | Written by Area Records Management Committee and has been utilised since. |
| 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. |

SESLHD PROCEDURE

Records Management – Destruction of

SESLHDPR/220

*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 | | |

