

# **RCAHMW Records Management Policy.**

## **Policy.**

Records, whether in electronic or hard-copy formats, which are generated or received by RCAHMW in the course of fulfilling its duties, as laid down in the Royal Warrant, are the official records of the Commission. Such records serve to make the RCAHMW accountable for its actions and decisions, and must be maintained to meet the Commission's legal, evidential, operational and archival requirements.

The records produced or collected by RCAHMW fall into two groups. First, those that accrue from administration of the Commission, its general business functions and its external communications with relevant bodies and individuals in relation to these functions. These can be termed *administrative records*. Second, those which constitute the end product of RCAHMW's prime function, namely to create a record of the historic environment. These records can be termed *heritage records*. Both groups are public records, and as such are subject to the terms of the Public Records Acts.

## **1) Requirements.**

There are four broad requirements for RCAHMW's records:

### **1. To provide a comprehensive record of the historic environment.**

RCAHMW's *heritage records* must be readily accessible to the public for research, study and heritage management purposes, in order to fulfil RCAHMW's prime function.

### **2. To service current operational needs.**

All RCAHMW's records must provide prompt information to staff in the course of the Commission's business and, where appropriate, to other bodies and the public, with due reference to the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts.

### **3. To make RCAHMW accountable.**

RCAHMW should maintain secure, legally admissible records in order to ensure accountability for RCAHMW's actions.

### **4. To provide an historical record of the RCAHMW.**

The records should form the corporate memory of the Commission, providing historical information on RCAHMW's past activities.

## **2) Records management systems.**

RCAHMW's record management systems can meet the above requirements, by adopting the following imperatives:

### **1. The records must exist**

RCAHMW must have the systems and facilities to compile and curate its records effectively.

### **2. The records must be accessible.**

RCAHMW must be able to locate and retrieve the records efficiently. In the case of electronic records RCAHMW must possess the appropriate software to do this and display them in a way consistent with their original form.

### **3. Their context must be preserved.**

It must be possible to understand the records within the context of the business process which produced them, to identify who produced them, and how they relate to other relevant records.

### **4. The records must be accurate.**

RCAHMW must be able to demonstrate the authenticity and integrity of the records. They must reliably represent the business process from which they derive.

### **5. The records must be maintained for the future.**

Meeting the above imperatives must be sustainable for the life of the records and, where necessary, permanently. In the case of electronic records, this means ensuring hardware and software continue to be readable, and that migration takes place to new formats when required.

## **3) Management of RCAHMW Records – Principles and Strategy.**

### **Principles.**

- The Commission must have procedures that capture the records for each business process, whether in electronic or hard copy formats. These records must provide evidence of RCAHMW activities emerging from each business process.
- Procedures must ensure that the records captured are genuine, comprehensive accounts of the business operations from which they accrue, and retain the order and context of their creation.
- All essential metadata, required to fully understand and manage the records, must be included as part of the record capture procedure. Where RCAHMW's *heritage records* are concerned, this should form part of the record creation process, according to agreed procedures.

- Responsibility for meeting the records management requirements of each record producing business process should be clear for nominated staff members and the RCAHMW as a whole.
- The Commission must have the means to make its records available to the public.

### **Strategy**

- Each business process should be identified, stated and clearly defined. Any legal or other requirements that affect the records should be established.
- The record keeping requirements for each defined business process should be determined, and appropriate records management practices applied accordingly. For example, retention and destruction policies should be produced and review procedures agreed.
- Record keeping requirements should specify the best format of each record type within the defined business process; whether hard copies are needed or electronic formats can be retained, for example.
- All necessary metadata elements required from each business process should be set out, and in the case of electronic records their generating systems should allow for capture of this metadata.
- The records management responsibilities of each staff member within a defined business process should be made clear, and guidance and training should be widely available.

## **4) Managing Electronic Records – Principles and Strategy.**

The Modernising Government White Paper sets 2004 as the date by which government departments must achieve the effective storage and retrieval of electronic records. Accordingly, the following principles and strategy form an addition to RCAHMW's general records policy in order to address those issues that specifically affect electronic records, and provide a framework for their management.

### **Principles**

- The content, context and structure of electronic records should be managed by the system RCAHMW adopts. It must ensure the reliability and authenticity of electronic records, and that these remain protected over time.
- Where electronic documents form the primary record of an activity or decision, they must be retained in an accessible electronic format. The format of the records should be maintained and accessible in the future.
- Electronic records, like hard copy records, must have retention and destruction policies that take account of current operational and future evidential needs, as well as statutory duties and requirements.
- Electronic records must be maintained in a suitable management system for as long as is required by RCAHMW's operational and statutory needs, and in accordance with RCAHMW's retention schedules.

- The management of such records should adhere to procedures under both the Data Protection Act and the Freedom of Information Act.

### **Strategy.**

- Records management requirements must be defined, with reference to ongoing operational needs, accountability, legal duties and broader responsibilities to the public. The electronic records management system should be designed to support these requirements.
- Record appraisal, through analysis of each business process, should inform the design of the system, ensuring the minimum of data migration is necessary, and that records chosen for permanent preservation are safeguarded.
- The electronic records management system should identify and capture the metadata required to understand the background of electronic records, including information about their context and the business processes from which they accrue.
- The system must be able to retain those records that need to be kept, allow for the transfer, to RCAHMW's archive, of records for long-term preservation, and facilitate permanent deletion of records chosen for destruction, in line with the Commission's retention schedules.
- The system must allow for the migration of data, through successive upgrades of both hardware and software, whilst maintaining the content, context and structure of the records.
- User access to specific record categories should be efficiently controlled by the system, which should allocate permissible actions and access rights to individual staff members or user groups.
- The system design should ensure compliance with relevant national legislation and standards for records management, such as the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts.
- The system should enable regular audits to be carried out, in order to assess compliance with specified requirements.

### **Acknowledgement**

This document is based on the policy adopted by the Charity Commission, which is informed by the principles and strategies developed by the Australian Council of Archives and endorsed by the Public Record Office.