



Records Management Policy

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Responsible Officer	Chief Executive Officer
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1. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to establish a framework for the implementation of a records management system. The Council operates in an accountable and community orientated environment and is committed to maintaining a records management system that meets its business needs and accountability requirements.

2. Definitions

2.1 Continuing Value - records of continuing value are those that contain information that is of administrative, legal, fiscal, evidential or historical value to the Council.

2.2 Council Business - may include the provision of services, delivery of programs, development of policies, making of decisions, performance of Council functions and other similar types of transactions.

2.3 Council staff – includes persons employed by the Council, volunteers, trainees, work experience placements, independent consultants and contractors and other authorised personnel offered access to the Council's resources.

2.4 Dispose of - to dispose of an official record means to:

- destroy or abandon the record;
- carry out an act or process as a result of which it is no longer possible or reasonably practicable to reproduce the whole or a part of the information contained in the record; or
- transfer or deliver ownership or possession of or sell the record, or purport to do so, but does not include to transfer or deliver the record to the State Records Office or between the Council and another agency.¹

2.5 Email - Is a service that enables people to exchange documents or messages in electronic form. It is a system in which people can send and receive messages through their computers. Each person has a designated mailbox that stores messages sent by other users. You may retrieve, read and forward or re-transmit messages from your mailbox.

2.6 Ephemeral/Transitory Record - A record is transitory or ephemeral in nature if it is of little or no continuing value to the Council and only needs to be kept for a limited or short period of time, such as a few hours or a few days.

2.7 Normal Administrative Practice - Normal Administrative Practice provides for the routine destruction of drafts, duplicates and publications, with the test that it is obvious that no information of more than transitory or ephemeral value to the Council will be destroyed. Material that can be disposed of under Normal Administrative Practice comprises items of an ephemeral or transitory nature created, acquired or collected by Council staff or Council Members in the course of their official duties. Such material has no ongoing value and is not usually incorporated into the Council's record keeping system.

¹ See definition in Section 3(1) of the *State Records Act 1997*



2.8 Record - A record means:

- written, graphic or pictorial matter; or
- a disk, tape, film or other object that contains information or from which information may be reproduced (with or without the aid of another object or device).

2.9 Official Record - A record made or received by the Council in the conduct of its business, but does not include:

- a record made or received by an agency for delivery or transmission to another person or body (other than an agency) and so delivered or transmitted; or
- a record made by an agency as a draft only and not for further use or reference; or
- a record received into or made for the collection of a library, museum or art gallery and not otherwise associated with the business of the agency; or
- a Commonwealth record as defined by the Archives Act 1983 of the Commonwealth, as amended from time to time, or an Act of the Commonwealth enacted in substitution for that Act; or
- a record that has been transferred to the Commonwealth².

3. Policy

3.1. Introduction

- 3.1.1. The *State Records Act 1997* (the Act) governs the obligations and responsibilities of councils in relation to the management of official records. Under the Act, the Council has an obligation to maintain official records in its custody in good order and condition. Not only does this include obligations in relation to the capture, storage, maintenance and disposal of physical records but also records in electronic format.
- 3.1.2. An official record is a record made or received by the Council in the conduct of its business. Therefore, any record created, sent, received, forwarded or transmitted by Council staff and/or Council Members in the performance and discharge of their functions and duties may be classified as official records. However, records that are merely transitory, ephemeral, personal or private in nature will fall outside the definition of "*official records*".
- 3.1.3. Mid Murray Council has selected Synergy Soft Records Management Software as the corporate records management system.
- 3.1.4. This Policy provides the policy framework for the Council to effectively fulfill its obligations and statutory requirements under the Act.
- 3.1.5. The establishment of an effective and efficient record keeping environment ensures standardisation, protection and retrieval of information improving levels of quality customer service.

² See definition in Section 3(1) of the *State Records Act 1997*



- 3.1.6. Good records management is of key importance to good governance. Records are vital ingredients in the support of the Council's ongoing business activities. The Council is committed to managing its records of continuing value and their timely transfer to the State Records Office.
- 3.1.7. Council has certain legal obligations in relation to records management and records are themselves subject to legislation, such as the *Freedom of Information Act 1991*, and legal processes, such as discovery and subpoenas. The records may also be required by Royal Commissions, the Ombudsman, the Courts, auditors and other people or bodies to whom or which they may be subject.

3.2. Scope

- 3.2.1. This Policy applies to all Council business, including electronic business. It concerns records, which are created, collected, processed, used, sentenced, stored and disposed of in the conduct of official business. It applies to all Council staff and Council Members.
- 3.2.2. Electronic communications which are relevant to the information gathering, policy formulation or decision-making processes of Council are part of the scope of this Policy. (See separate *Electronic Communication Facilities Policy*) Electronic messages that document business activity should be registered into Council's corporate records management system.

3.3. Objectives of the Records Management System

The Records Management System has been established to meet the following objectives:

- 3.3.1. To ensure that the management of the Council's information resources and records management system provide timely and comprehensive information to meet operational business needs, accountability requirements and community expectations.
- 3.3.2. To ensure the preservation of the Council's "corporate memory" through sound record keeping practices and the accurate capture of information to meet legal, evidential and accountability requirements.

3.4. Obligations of Records Users

- 3.4.1. Council staff and Council Members must not intentionally damage, alter, dispose of or remove official records of the Council without authorisation to do so. Council staff and Council Members are required to handle Council records with care and respect in a sensible manner to avoid damaging records and with a view to prolonging their life span. Council staff and Council Members should not eat, drink or smoke near Council records or in records storage areas.
- 3.4.2. Council staff and Council Members shall ensure that Council records in any format, including electronic documents and electronic messages, which they personally receive or send are to be captured into the Council's record keeping systems. Records must be readily accessible to meet business and accountability requirements.



- 3.4.3. Staff are required to follow authorised procedures in carrying out records management functions.
- 3.4.4. Electronic records are to be captured and maintained as functioning records by preserving their structure, context and content. In order to maintain their value as evidence, electronic records must be inviolate. That is, they cannot be altered or manipulated for as long as they are retained.
- 3.4.5. Council staff or Council Members who do not comply with this Policy may be subject to disciplinary action under the relevant Code of Conduct, and/or subject to criminal or civil proceedings. Council Members and staff should report breaches of this Policy to the Senior Records Management Officer.

3.5. Confidential Records

If a staff member or Council Member believes that a record captured into the record keeping system is of a highly sensitive or confidential nature, they should advise the Senior Records Management Officer of that view. It will be at the discretion of Senior Records Management Officer as to whether such information will then be treated as confidential and access to those records restricted.

3.6. Destruction Methods

Official records must be disposed of in accordance with the General Disposal Schedule No.40 for Local Government Authorities in South Australia. Transitory or ephemeral records, or records that are personal or private in nature, may be destroyed in accordance with Normal Administrative Practice.

3.7. Records Security

- 3.7.1. The security of all Council records is crucial, as records provide evidence of business transactions, support management decisions and ensure public accountability requirements are met. Records in all formats should be stored securely to prevent unauthorised access, destruction, alteration or removal.
- 3.7.2. Council staff are responsible for the safe custody of all files and documents that are allocated to them. Sensitive or confidential information should be placed in a secure storage area when not in use. When the action has been completed the file/documents should be returned to the Records Unit for storage.
- 3.7.3. File storage units should be locked overnight wherever possible to prevent unauthorised access. Amongst other risk management considerations, this reduces the possibility of damage by water or fire in the event of a disaster.
- 3.7.4. Council records are not to be stored at home or left in cars unattended as they could be lost or damaged or stolen. Vital records should be stored in protective or fire resistant conditions with suitable access conditions. Confidential records must be stored in locked storage cabinets which are accessible only by authorised persons.



3.8. Business Systems

Council has adopted the following business systems where metadata is held. The source document is captured into Synergy Soft for best record keeping practices.

- 3.8.1. Skytrust – a cloud base system which captures information to maintain a safe and effective working environment for council's staff, contractors and volunteers.
- 3.8.2. Workforce Management – A system where metadata is captured for infrastructure works requests. The source document is captured into Synergy Soft for best record keeping practices.

4. Policy Responsibility

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for ensuring the proper operation of this Policy.

5. Availability/Accessibility

- 5.1. This Policy and Council's Fees and Charges Register are available to be downloaded free of charge from Council's website: www.mid-murray.sa.gov.au.
- 5.2. This Policy is available for inspection at Council's principal office during ordinary business hours. Hard copies, for a fee in accordance with Council's schedule of Fees and Charges can be provided upon request.

6. Legislative Framework / Other References

- *The State Records Act 1997*
- *Freedom of Information Act 1991*
- *The Archives Act 1983*
- *Council's Electronic Communication Facilities Policy*
- *Council's Codes of Conduct for Council Members and Council staff*
- *Council's Records Management Procedure;*
- *Council's Records Management Procedure Manual for Elected Members*



7. Document History

Version	Adopted	Minute No	Description of Change
1	13 June 2006	9091/4	Policy adopted
2	6 November 2006	9401/1	Policy reviewed
3	10 May 2010	11901/1	Policy reviewed
4	11 August 2020	20998/2	Policy reviewed, Business Systems Clause 3.8 added, alteration to Scope Clause 3.2.2 and minor procedural and position title amendments.

