



## Adequate Records Management in Perspective - Capturing Official Records

### What does capturing records mean?

*Australian Standard AS ISO 15489 – 2002* describes the purpose of capturing records into a records system to:

- establish a relationship between the record, the creator and the business context that originated it
- place the record and its relationship within a records system and
- link it to other records.

The process of capturing records can be undertaken by the allocation of explicit metadata, embedded in, attached to or associated with the specific record, irrespective of its format. This process should be designed into the procedures of a recordkeeping system. The metadata is essential for retracing, with authority, the status, structure and integrity of the record at any time and demonstrating its relationships to other records.

Capture may be ensured by the following techniques:

- classification and indexing, which allow appropriate linking, grouping, naming, security protection, user permissions and retrieval, disposition and identifying vital records
- arrangement in a logical structure and sequence, whether a physical file or an electronic directory, which facilitates subsequent use and reference
- registration which provides evidence of the existence of records in a records system and
- systems which profile or template the actions undertaken in business.

Capture involves the organisation of official records with unique identifiers in some form of logical sequence.

By ensuring that its official records are captured appropriately, an agency will satisfy the requirements of Outcome 2 of the *Adequate Records Management - Meeting the Standard*.

### Why should records be captured?

The capture of official records helps to ensure that they are:

- accessible to all who require them, subject to any restrictions that may apply
- controlled and managed in accordance with policy and procedures
- secured against tampering, unauthorised access or unlawful deletion and

- disposed of promptly in accordance with legal authority<sup>1</sup>.

Where possible, records capture should be a routine part of doing business and integrated into standard business processes. The failure to capture records in official systems leads to personal stores of records that often remain uncontrolled, unmanaged and inaccessible to others who may need them<sup>2</sup>.

## **What is a records system?**

Broadly speaking a records system can be any system of arrangement, identification and storage of records.

The key characteristic of all records systems is that controls, rules and procedures exist for capturing records into the system. These controls relate to the naming, numbering and arrangement of records within the system.

A records system also ensures that records documenting similar business actions are stored together. For example, client management files are stored separately from the stores and equipment records of the agency.

Examples of official records systems include paper-based filing systems, electronic document & records management systems and business systems that manage records.

## **How can official records be captured?**

In some cases the very act of creating an official record will result in the record being created and then captured, e.g. an e-mail system that keeps a copy of a sent message.

In other cases the creation of a record may automatically complete some of the steps required to capture an official record. However, the officer concerned may have to add additional information to complete the process. For example, a document management system that captures a copy of an e-mail but which requires the officer to complete data fields in a metadata profile to register the copy.

The final method involves the manual capture of a record following its creation, e.g. the placing of a hard copy of a letter on a correspondence file by an officer.

Each agency needs to determine for itself which official records it must capture, and how, into its official records system. Agencies and authorities can do this by examining their business, legal and accountability requirements for evidence that can be fulfilled by the creation and capture of records. Agencies and authorities can also employ risk management strategies to determine what records should be captured. In addition, agencies and authorities can carry out business process and workflow analysis to identify at what points in business functions and activities records need to be captured.

Agencies should be working towards the establishment of a single corporate electronic document and records management system (EDRMS) and where warranted the migration of official records captured in other information system silos.

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<sup>1</sup> State Records Authority of New South Wales, *Create and Capture: Guidelines on Better Recordkeeping*.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

## Who should capture official records?

All staff of an agency are responsible for the capture of the official records that they create. This general view is dependent on:

- the technology available to the agency
- the records management procedures and practices in place within the agency and
- the existence, or not, of dedicated records management staff.

## Further information

- State Records of South Australia, *Adequate Records Management – Meeting the Standard* (2002).
- State Records of South Australia, *South Australian Recordkeeping Metadata Standard (SARKMS)* (2003).
- State Records Authority of New South Wales, *Create and Capture: Guidelines on Better Recordkeeping* (2001).
- Standards Australia, Australian Standard AS ISO 15489-2002, *Records Management* (2002).
- Standards Australia, Australian Standard AS 5090-2003 *Work Process Analysis for Recordkeeping* (2003).
- International Standards Organisation, *ISO 9000 Quality Management Systems* series.

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