

Public Record Office Victoria
Standards and Policy

Recordkeeping Policy



Use of Back Up Technology to Archive

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Acronyms

The following acronyms are used throughout this document.

PROV	Public Record Office Victoria
RDA	Retention and Disposal Authorities

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General

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Records Management Standards Application

The Recordkeeping Standards apply to all records in all formats, media or systems (including business systems). This Policy relates to use of back up technology to archive by government agencies. Agencies are advised to conduct an independent assessment to determine what other records management requirements apply.

Use of Terminology

The terms 'record,' 'information' and 'data' are used in this document. These terms should all be defined as meaning 'public record.'

Definitions

Archiving: the process of ensuring that data is kept accessible for future use, even though day-to-day use of the data has ceased.

Back up technology: used to recover data over the short term when it has been corrupted or destroyed by hardware failure, software failure, operator error, or malicious action.

Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary	3
2. Introduction	3
2.1. Purpose.....	3
2.2. Scope.....	3
2.3. Background.....	3
2.4. Related Documents	4
3. Policy Directives	4
3.1. Back up technologies should not be used to archive.....	4
3.2. Minimise use of individual media to archive.....	4

1. Executive Summary

Back up technologies should not be used to archive as it places data at risk of being un-retrievable or unreadable over time.

Use of individual media as a means to archive data should be minimised and only be utilised as part of an ongoing management routine.



Justine Heazlewood
Director and Keeper of Public Records

2. Introduction

2.1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide principles for making decisions and implementing actions about use of back up technologies to archive across the Victorian government.

2.2. Scope

This policy is to be adopted by Victorian government agencies to support best practice recordkeeping regarding the preservation of data over time.

2.3. Background

The period for which data must be kept accessible is determined by agencies, and approved by the Keeper of Public Records. These determinations are published in Retention and Disposal Authorities (RDAs) available from the PROV website.

The retention period depends on the purpose of the data, and can range from immediate destruction after use to being kept permanently. A significant amount of data needs to be kept for a decade or more.

Agencies that do not keep data accessible for the required periods may be:

- Infringing citizen's entitlements,
- Not supplying the quality of service they are required to,
- At risk in legal proceedings,
- Unable to demonstrate appropriate governance and accountability
- Affecting the right of the Victorian public to understand their history.

2.4. Related Documents

- [Use of Back Up Technologies to Archive Issues Paper](#)
- [Retention and Disposal Authorities](#)

3. Policy Directives

3.1. Back up technologies should not be used to archive

Agencies are advised not to use back-up technology as a means to archive data. Use of back up technologies to archive will place data at risk of being unretrievable or unreadable when needed, and therefore will not meet the requirements of PROV standards.

Back-up is effective at short term recovery, but archiving is about long term access. This conflict in time frames means that there is a significant risk when using back-up technology to archive that the data will not be able to be recovered. The risk is caused by the need to have both the back-up software and the original application in order to extract meaning from the backed-up data.

3.2. Minimise use of individual media to archive

PROV does not recommend the use of individual media (such as tape) to archive data. Individual media should only be used when the quantity of data makes other storage uneconomic.

If individual media is used to archive data, an agency should institute a management regime to ensure that:

- Media is not lost
- The condition of the media is tracked
- The information is copied off media before the media deteriorates or the technology becomes obsolete.

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