

Government Services Programs

Public Record Office Victoria

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Government Services Programs sets out the range of services that our clients and stakeholders can expect from the PROV Government Services workgroup. This document should be used in conjunction with other information available from PROV, particularly the Government Services, Service Level Charter.



Justine Heazlewood
Director and Keeper of Public Records

ROLE OF PROV GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Section 12 of the *Public Records Act (Vic) 1973* (the Act) states that the Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) must establish standards for the efficient management of public records and assist public officers in applying these standards. The Act then states that it is the responsibility of the Head of every Victorian public sector agency to establish and maintain an effective Records Management Program.

The Act defines records very broadly as being all of the information created and received in the course of agency staff members' duties, which is recorded in some way. This includes all of the data and information, both digital and physical, which is captured and recorded, irrespective of format or system used.

To fulfil PROV's responsibilities under the Act, the Government Services Team develops a range of Standards and Specifications, which all Victorian public sector agencies must comply with, and delivers a range of programs and services to assist agencies to achieve this.

We use the following approaches when designing and delivering programs and services and deciding which opportunities and initiatives to pursue:

High Value High Risk – we focus on the areas of government which create or hold the most critical and significant records, particularly if there is risk associated with the records not being captured and managed appropriately.

Transition to Digital – we focus on programs, services, opportunities and engagements to enable and support Government transition to digital recordkeeping, with the aim of improving the capture and control of information.

Digital Continuity – we focus on programs and initiatives which will ensure that information is preserved and accessible for as long as required by all stakeholders (government, business, community).

Whole of Government or Whole of Sector – we focus on programs, services, opportunities and engagements which will deliver the most benefit to the most stakeholders. This may mean working on a Whole of Sector project, developing a product for Whole of Government use or undertaking a pilot where the outcomes will benefit multiple agencies.

The major programs and services we deliver to Victorian public sector agencies are outlined in this statement.

STANDARDS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Under the *Public Record Act (Vic) 1973* (the Act), PROV is required to establish Standards which all Victorian public sector agencies must meet. To achieve this, Government Services develops Recordkeeping Standards and Specifications which cover all aspects of agency recordkeeping for digital and physical information. Agencies use these Standards to help them develop and implement effective records management programs, which are appropriate to their environment and meet the needs of their agency. They also provide a framework for agencies to assess their practices and implement improvement programs.

Government Services staff work with agency staff to ensure Standards and associated Specifications remain current, useful and applicable. The input of agency staff, plus other stakeholders where appropriate, is sought to regularly review and revise these documents through a Continuous Improvement Program. We also continually seek ways to make the Standards and Specifications easier to use and apply, and to ensure that any gaps in coverage are rectified. We welcome input and assistance from agency staff to achieve this.

APPRAISAL, DISPOSAL AUTHORISATION AND TRANSFER PROGRAMS

Government Services works across the Victorian public sector to appraise the functions of government in order to assess the value and significance of the records they hold and to specify records required as State Archives. This *High Value High Risk* approach enables agencies to identify their most critical records so that they can ensure that appropriate processes and systems are employed to manage them.

Disposal of public records is sanctioned with explicit permission from the Keeper of Public Records. This authorisation is given through Retention and Disposal Authorities (RDAs) and Single Instance Disposal Authorities, that identify the government functions which create records of permanent value to the State and set out the minimum retention periods for temporary value records, authorising their destruction when this period has expired.

Government Services can advise agencies on the most appropriate disposal authorisation techniques for their record holdings. The best approach might be the use of existing Retention and Disposal Authorities (RDAs) or the creation of a new Single Instance Disposal Authority or Retention and Disposal Authority (RDA). Government Services has a work program to plan, prioritise, develop and review RDAs. This program is built around cooperation with agency staff and engagement with key stakeholders, both inside and outside the public service.

Records identified as being of permanent value must be transferred by Victorian public sector agencies to PROV custody, when ready access to them is no longer required for ongoing work. Digital records must be transferred to PROV's world-leading Digital Archive and physical records to PROV's state-of-the-art Repository.

Government Services provides transfer advice and guidance, particularly in respect to documenting and preparing the records and determining whether it is appropriate for the records to be open to the public or whether they should be closed for a period of time under a section of the Act. Please note that agencies are responsible for physically preparing the records, whether this means boxing and creating manifests (known as records description lists) or converting digital records into VERS compliant records, and transporting the prepared records to PROV.

We have a work program which plans and prioritises transfers, working cooperatively with agency staff to ensure that the highest value and most at risk permanent records are progressively transferred to PROV custody, guaranteeing that they are preserved and accessible into the future.

Once transferred to PROV custody, authorised officers in agencies are able to retrieve records for business and information purposes through the Records Issues Office.

DIGITAL CONTINUITY

PROV is ensuring digital continuity by working with government to process information. PROV has implemented the Victorian Electronic Record Strategy (VERS), a framework of standards, specifications, guidance and tools to enable accurate, reliable and authentic electronic records to be captured and preserved in accessible formats, for as long as required. VERS Specifications set out the requirements for enabling permanent value digital records to be transferred to PROV's Digital Archive when no longer needed in the agency.

To make sure it remains at the cutting edge of technical and policy change, VERS is continually reviewed and adjusted, with major redevelopments occurring periodically. We consult and seek input from agency staff and other stakeholders throughout the review process to ensure VERS remains current, useful and applicable.

ADVICE AND ENGAGEMENT

Government Services provides advice to agencies to assist them in improving their recordkeeping practices and complying with requirements. Due to resourcing constraints, detailed advice is only given where the result will be a major improvement in government recordkeeping capacity or practice, where there are significant risks to government or the community or where substantial benefit can be obtained for multiple agencies (preferably for whole of sector or whole of government). In these cases, this advice may be written or delivered during visits or meetings.

Government Services staff engage in committees, taskforces, forums, projects and initiatives designed to improve recordkeeping across government and solve the issues and challenges facing agencies, especially in respect to transitioning to a fully digital environment. This involves partnering with other organisations within Victoria and nationally, sometimes including the university and private sectors. As part of our High Value High Risk approach to ensuring that the most benefit is obtained for the least resources, we use stakeholder engagement criteria to assess opportunities for providing advice and engaging in initiatives.

Government Services also responds to questions submitted through the online enquiry form, on topics where PROV staff have expertise. The responses provided are high level and general and, where possible, will direct the enquirer to existing resources. As PROV increases and extends its online content to provide advice and guidance on a wide range of recordkeeping topics, it is expected that the need to provide tailored responses will reduce.

GUIDELINES AND TOOLS

To assist and support government agencies, Government Services develops a comprehensive set of guidelines, fact sheets, advices and case studies, which are published on the PROV website and communicated to audiences. Agency staff use these documents to help them plan and implement effective and efficient records management programs which will progressively enable them to meet the mandatory Standards and Specifications they must comply with.

These documents are continually being improved and extended and ways sought to make them more accessible and useful. We welcome advice and input from agency staff to help us ensure that these documents are comprehensive, current, useful and applicable.

We are increasingly engaged in developing and providing tools to assist agencies in complying with requirements and improving their practices. Examples are:

- the ORDA System, which PROV and agencies use to develop Retention and Disposal Authorities; and
- the Information Management Maturity Measurement (IM3) Tool, which has been developed to enable agencies to assess the maturity of their current information management practices and identify the areas they need to focus on.

EDUCATION, AWARENESS AND RECOGNITION PROGRAMS

Government Services delivers a small program of awareness and recognition events each year, depending on resource availability. Generally this includes some Records Management Network events and the Sir Rupert Hamer Awards for Excellence and Innovation in Records Management.

Information about recordkeeping issues, practices, processes and requirements is increasingly developed and published on the Government Services section of the PROV website. This is now the hub for agency staff to obtain resources that will assist in improving records management practices and complying with requirements. Information and advice is regularly disseminated through blogposts, Twitter (@PROV_RKS) and the Government Services e-newsletter; PROV Bytes.

Government Services provides a basic on-line training course – Recordkeeping Fundamentals e-Learning- to assist agencies in ensuring that all staff have an understanding of their records management obligations. The content covers basic principles from each of PROV's Recordkeeping Standards and includes a multiple choice learning review and a completion certificate that can be printed when the learning review is successfully completed.

PROV does not deliver training – for information about accessing training services contact professional associations such as Records and Information Management Professionals Australia (RIMPA) and the Australian Society of Archivists (ASA).

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

As resources permit, Government Services conducts research into recordkeeping in the Victorian public sector, especially in relation to technological and legislative changes, and produces reports and papers, which are communicated widely. This includes monitoring recordkeeping issues and problems across government and undertaking surveys and assessments, as well as piloting and testing possible solutions and providing them to agencies when useful. We have limited resources for undertaking this work so welcome ideas, input and assistance from agency staff and are keen to partner with others when possible.

INDUSTRY COMPLIANCE PROGRAMS

PROV undertakes assessment and certification of commercial providers in the following areas, in order to set minimum standards and reduce work for individual agencies:

- Commercial storage provision against PROV's Storage Standard and Specification requirements – Approved Public Record Office Storage Supplier (APROSS) Program.
- Compliance of software against Victorian Electronic Record Strategy (VERS) requirements – VERS Vendor Compliance Program.