

Request for Feedback

Office of the Governor Retention and Disposal Authority

BACKGROUND

Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) is Victoria's state archival authority and is responsible for the establishment of standards for the management of public records under Section 12 of the *Public Records Act 1973*. This includes the issuing of retention and disposal authorities (RDAs) authorising the disposal of public records.

The development of this RDA was undertaken by the Office of the Governor (OOG) in collaboration with PROV, in order to produce a new RDA covering the functions performed by the Office of the Governor of Victoria. These functions include their constitutional and ceremonial responsibilities and their custodianship of Government House.

This RDA is required as there is no existing coverage for the unique records created and functions performed by the Office of the Governor. As there are no other Victorian public offices that perform similar roles, a new agency-specific RDA is required to fill the gaps in coverage.

SCOPE

The aim of the RDA, once issued as a Standard, is to specify records of the Office of the Governor that are required as State Archives and to provide for the lawful disposal of records not required permanently after specified periods.

This RDA is to apply to records created by the Office of the Governor, including records of the management of Government House. It does not apply to records of the Department of Premier and Cabinet that involve the Governor, which are covered in other RDAs.

Functions outside the scope of this RDA include:

- Common administrative functions, which are covered by PROS 07/01 RDA for Records of Common Administrative Functions
- Records of the Executive Council, which are covered in PROS 13/06 RDA for Records of the Department of Premier and Cabinet
- Records of managing the gardens of Government House, including bookings, which are covered in PROS 10/04 RDA for Records of the Royal Botanic Gardens Board
- Records of managing the Government House collection of art, furniture, and other cultural artefacts, which are covered in PROS 17/03 RDA for Records of Museum and Gallery Functions
- Incidents involving allegations and disclosure of child sexual abuse, which are covered by PROS 19/08 RDA for Records of Organisational Response to Child Sexual Abuse Incidents and Allegations.



ADMINISTRATIVE AND FUNCTIONAL CONTEXT

The three functions of the RDA are therefore described as:

- Constitutional Role Management
- Program Delivery – Patronage and Ceremonial
- Government House and Household Management

APPRAISAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Each function has been appraised in the light of the Appraisal Statement for Public Records required as State Archives. Compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements, risk should the information not be available when required, operational needs, and support of public interest have all been key considerations underpinning the appraisal.

Constitutional Role Management

The function of carrying out the constitutional role of the Governor, ensuring that the government acts within the boundaries of the Victorian Constitution and the rule of law. This function includes calling elections, opening Parliament, giving Royal Assent to passed Bills, and appointing Ministers.

Records that have been appraised as having continuing value include records of swearing in and resignations of Ministers and Supreme Court judges, advice and correspondence on constitutional matters, the exercise of the Prerogative of Mercy, and the Governor serving as Administrator of the Commonwealth. The records covered here are of continuing value as they document the authority, establishment and structure of government through the Governor's constitutional role. These records provide evidence of the interaction between the Governor, Premier, Parliament, and the Crown in an official capacity, as well as documenting how the Governor fulfilled their obligations under the constitution. These are crucial records of the authority of government.

Due to the significance of this function, there are no records that fall into any temporary retention categories. All records that fall under this function are to be retained permanently and transferred to PROV.

Program Delivery – Patronage and Ceremonial

The function of managing the community and ceremonial roles of the Governor. This includes the granting and non-granting of Vice-Regal patronage, the management of events hosted at Government House, and events attended by the Governor or to which the Governor was invited. This function also includes the management of community liaison activities such as visits to schools and invitations to non-profit organisations to attend Government House.

Records that have been appraised as having continuing value are visitor books, official diaries, official commissioned photographs, the summary record of patronages granted and not granted and the Brief for VIP events. The Brief (developed by the aides) is the running order and all the details for the event/visit, including VIPs, key background information and biographies, speeches, guest lists for major dinners, etc. More information is listed for very important events such as Royal and Head of State visits and commemorative dinners for significant events. These are to be retained as they provide a significant contribution to ongoing community memory, as records of official events hosted or attended by the Governor are of ongoing historical interest. Outside of the constitutional role, these records document the important community-based work of the Governor and provide evidence showing the people and organisations that were considered significant to the state of Victoria and the public. These records will also provide future researchers with an insight into the day-to-day schedule of the Governor and their role in the community.

Records that have been appraised as having long-term value include records of non-VIP events including the Brief, the daily program, weekly event planning, and running sheets. These include events hosted at Government House as well as those to which the Governor and/or spouse are invited. While the disposal trigger here is 'destroy after reference use ceases', it is intended both by PROV and the Office of the Governor that these records will be retained long term. It is current practice by OOG to retain these records for many decades. While 'reference use' can signal a short time frame, in the case of OOG they will regularly refer back to records of past events years or even decades later so as to duplicate elements of the event. In some cases, it may be that reference use never ceases. It was decided that an open-ended disposal trigger was appropriate for this class as it gives OOG the flexibility to retain the records for as long as they are required. The records are operationally significant to OOG, but document less significant and routine events, and so are not required for permanent retention as they do not provide the same contribution to community memory.

Records that are recommended for a short-term retention period of 3 years are records relating to requests for Vice-Regal patronage, and the granting or non-granting of patronage. Three years after patronage ceases or is refused is appropriate for these records as many requests are received each year, and while there is occasional reference back to an application while a patronage is being considered or is current, there is rarely ever reference made to records of ceased or refused patronages. Three years is sufficient time to ensure the full record is available if needed. The summary record is to be retained permanently and will be available for any reference required after the three years has lapsed.

Records that are recommended for short term temporary retention are records of declined invitations to events, research notes gathered in relation to an event, routine correspondence and greetings, and non-official photographs. Records in this class require retention only briefly, and the disposal trigger 'destroy after reference use ceases' has also been used here to allow the OOG to dispose of these records as soon as they are no longer in use.

Government House and Household Management

The function of managing Government House as a residence, office, official reception space, and heritage building. This involves running the Government House Complex, which includes the main house, outbuildings, and gardens, in line with its inclusion on the Victorian Heritage Register. This also includes conservation activities as well as the everyday running of the household such as housekeeping, catering, and cleaning.

Records that have been appraised as having continuing value are records of continuing value documenting any works proposed, planned, and undertaken prior to when the Office of the Governor was required to seek permits from the state's heritage body (currently known as Heritage Victoria). This includes records of later works where a permit has been granted by the state's heritage body, but where significant records of continuing value were not submitted to them and remained with the OOG. The records in this class provide a significant contribution to community memory as they document works conducted on Government House, a public building of great significance and historical value. The inclusion of this class recognises that, while most records of building works will have been lodged with Heritage Victoria, there may be early records before this process was formalised that are not duplicated with Heritage Victoria and therefore are of ongoing value.

Records that are recommended for a medium-term temporary retention period are records of works proposed, planned, and undertaken where permission has been granted by the state's Heritage body. This includes records of permit exemptions granted by the state's Heritage body, contracts and maintenance schedules. This class has also been given the disposal trigger of 'destroy after reference use ceases' as the time period that records of different works are required for business use will likely vary considerably. This gives the OOG the ability to dispose of records of minor works soon after copies have been lodged with Heritage Victoria, while also recognising that records of more significant works may be required as

reference material for many years. Unlike the previous class, these are not required as permanent records as the equivalent records that are lodged with Heritage Victoria have previously been appraised as permanent (see PROS 00/02 Function 5) and will be transferred to PROV.

Records that are recommended for a short-term temporary retention period of 3 years are records documenting the routine aspects of the management and administration of Government House, including housekeeping, catering, cleaning, and setting up for events. A 3-year retention period is recommended as the records in this class document the routine administrative and logistical activities associated with running the household. These records are rarely referred to after 2 to 3 years, so the retention period that has been applied covers the business needs of OOG. The class includes records such as housekeeping schedules and stocktake data, which do not have any long-term significance.

WHAT WE NEED FROM YOU

To ensure the RDA is as robust and valid as possible once issued, we would appreciate feedback on any of the following questions:

- Are the retention periods reasonable?
- Is the language used in the RDAs clear enough?
- Can you identify any gaps in the RDA coverage?

Please send your feedback to agency.queries@prov.vic.gov.au by COB **Friday 7 October 2022**.

