

# Public Record Office Victoria

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## Access Standard

### PROS 26/01

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This Standard sets out the principles and requirements that Victorian public offices must comply with in order to ensure records are accessible for the period of time they must be retained and that access is not restricted, unless required by legislation, regulation or policy.

The Access Standard is comprised of the following areas:

- Access to records held by public offices
- Managing access
- Access to records held at PROV

## Authority of Standards

Under section 12 of the *Public Records Act 1973*, the Keeper of Public Records ('the Keeper') is responsible for the establishment of Standards for the efficient management of public records and for assisting Victorian public offices to apply those Standards to records under their control.

Heads of public offices are responsible under section 13b of the *Public records Act 1973* for carrying out a program of efficient management of public records. The program of records management needs to cover all records created by the public office, in all formats, media and systems across the organisation.

This Standard, as varied or amended from time to time, shall have effect for a period of ten (10) years from the date of issue unless revoked prior to that date.

## Obligation

It is mandatory for all Victorian public offices to follow the principles and comply with the requirements of the Standards issued by the Keeper.

# Principles & Requirements

## Access to records held by public offices

**PRINCIPLE:** Access to records held by public offices must not be restricted unless there are sound reasons for limiting or withholding it, such as legislative, regulatory, contractual or policy requirements.

### REQUIREMENTS

1. External access – public offices must support open and transparent government by making records available to the public or to organisations/groups, unless there are sound reasons to limit or withhold access.
2. Access within or across government – public offices must support the sharing and re-use of records within or across government (State, Commonwealth or Local), unless there are sound reasons to limit or withhold access.

## Managing access

**PRINCIPLE:** Public offices must ensure access to records is managed appropriately.

*Note: Possible measures for this include governance arrangements, an information asset register, access/release policies, risk assessments, system/process design, staff training, incident reporting, and audits/reviews.*

### REQUIREMENTS

1. Policies, processes and measures must be established, implemented and maintained to ensure that access to records is managed appropriately. They must be based on an assessment of legislative, regulatory and administrative requirements and the potential benefits, impacts and risks of records being made available.
2. Access policies, processes and measures must be reviewed, validated and updated as required to ensure they are operating properly and remain appropriate.
3. Where records need to be shared with another organisation and this is permitted by organisational access policies, public offices must ensure that appropriate measures are in place to maintain any confidentiality associated with the records. This includes informing the recipient of their obligations and requiring them to demonstrate that they are managing the records appropriately.

*Note: possible measures for this include data sharing agreements, contracts and systems which only allow access for a set period of time.*

## Access to records held at PROV

**PRINCIPLE:** Most records held at PROV as part of the State Archival Collection are available for public access. Some records are withheld from public access for a specified period of time under one of the *Public Records Act 1973* closure provisions.

*Note: this Principle and Requirements are included for completeness – public offices do not need to comply with them as part of their routine operational processes. PROV provides detailed guidance when public offices are transferring records or when organisations are seeking appointment as Places of Deposit.*

### REQUIREMENTS

1. Prior to transfer to PROV, the access status of the records must be determined, in accordance with *Public Records Act 1973* requirements.  
*Note: the access status will either be “open” (meaning that they can be accessed by the public) or “closed” (meaning they will be withheld from public access for a period of time).*

2. Organisations appointed as Class A Places of Deposit may hold records:

- that have been assessed as being suitable for public access; and/or
- that must be withheld from public access for a specified time, if this has been agreed with PROV and if the records closure is authorised in accordance with the *Public Records Act 1973*.

Organisations appointed as Class B Places of Deposit may ONLY hold records that have been assessed as being suitable for public access.

*Note: the Public Records Act 1973 allows places outside of PROV to be appointed as Places of Deposit for the safe-keeping and preservation of specified public records. Places of Deposit must comply with conditions specified by PROV.*

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