

# Records Management in the Public Sector

Report 6 – June 2013

## Background and objective

Good recordkeeping makes good business sense. It enables informed and consistent decision-making and provides evidence of key decisions and events. Recordkeeping is an important component of an agency's governance framework that effectively supports the management of business activities and risks.

The *State Records Act 2000* (the Act) governs agencies' recordkeeping practices. It requires agencies develop a recordkeeping plan, and ensure records are created, retained or destroyed in line with this plan. The audit examined whether recordkeeping practices at six agencies comply with the requirements of the Act.

## Conclusion

Although the Act has been in place for over a decade and all agencies now have recordkeeping plans, inadequate practices amongst the sampled agencies were still common. Most concerning is that key records are not being captured in some agency record's management systems with the result that they can become lost or difficult to locate or be at greater risk of unauthorised access or alteration. Greater commitment to good recordkeeping systems on the part of some agencies would address the weaknesses we identified.

## Key Findings

- All agencies met the key requirement of the Act to have an approved recordkeeping plan, supported by policies and procedures.
- Four agencies had records that were not referenced in their recordkeeping plans. This makes it difficult for these agencies to manage these types of records. The most serious concern was Fremantle Hospital which uses a records management system to manage its patient records but has no similar system for non-patient records.



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- Despite the weaknesses identified above, we were able to track a sample of key business decisions or processes through each agency's records. We found no evidence of key records missing from our sample.
- Four agencies have assessed the risks associated with their records and developed business continuity plans to manage these. One agency does not have these plans in place but has recently drafted a disaster recovery plan for its records.
- Two agencies disposed of records after authorisation by senior officers and in compliance with their retention and disposal schedule. However, four agencies did not dispose of any records in 2012 and may be over-retaining records leading to higher storage costs.
- All agencies use offsite storage for some records. The records were stored securely. However, some agencies need to ensure these arrangements are reflected in their approved recordkeeping plan and use government approved suppliers for offsite storage.
- All agencies provide some training to their staff on records management, however only at BPA was it comprehensive and undertaken by all required staff. Adequate staff training is essential to ensuring that records are created and retained as needed.

## Recommendations

Agencies should ensure they manage their records well and meet the requirements of the *State Records Act 2000*.



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