

Office of the State Archivist

Disposal Schedule conventions

SUMMARY

Disposal Schedule conventions is the fifth part of an FAQ series on disposal. It is for consultants who write schedules. It explains:

- general conventions
- conventions for each schedule sections
- conventions for minor and major amendments to schedules.

Online Retention and Disposal Application (ORDA) is the web-based system used to draft schedules. Use this document with the ORDA:

- *End user manual*
- *Quick tips library*.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN CONVENTIONS FOR WRITING SCHEDULES?

Write clearly

Disposal Schedules describe the functions and activities of government. This means some jargon and complicated language is unavoidable. Write in plain English as much as possible.

The audience for Disposal Schedules is wider than records staff and includes:

- employees
- contractors
- the Tasmanian community.

Employees and contractors should be able to understand and use the schedule.

We publish all current Disposal Schedules on our website. The public has a right to know about:

- the records government creates
- how long records are kept and
- which records will be kept forever as State archives.

Contact us for our style guides.

Name schedules for functions

Name Disposal Schedules for functions, not organisations. For example, *Disposal Schedule for public health services records* rather than *Disposal Schedule for the Department of Health*.

Many schedules in use have outdated names. Government administrative change is common, especially for inner budget departments. Organisational restructures take place more often than schedules are updated.

Legacy functions

Records from legacy functions are not normally included in schedules. Please contact us to discuss including these records in a Destruction Authority.

Small schedules

Keep schedules small if possible. Several small schedules are better than a single large one. Small schedules with only a few functions are easier, quicker and cheaper to update.

Structure

Develop Disposal Schedules as either three or two tiered structures:

- traditional schedules have three tiers: Term (Function) – Term (Activity) – Class (Disposal class)
- rolled up schedules have two tiers: Term (Function) – Class (Disposal class).

Appraisal notes and justifications

Appraisal notes and justifications:

- explain why records are permanent or temporary
- propose retention periods
- assess the risk of keeping or not keeping records.

In ORDA, Appraisal notes and justifications are called:

- 'Appraisal' at the Function level
- 'Justifications' at the Activity and Disposal class level.

Write appraisal notes and justifications for all permanent and temporary records. Do this in the 'description' part of the Disposal Justification field. Provide disposal justifications that:

- explain your reason for your retention recommendation with references to:
 - comparable schedules in other jurisdictions
 - regulatory frameworks (legislative or accountability requirements)
 - business needs (as identified in staff interviews)
 - stakeholder expectations (internal, external and community).

The more detailed the justifications the better. Justifications record decisions made. They provide information that will help when the schedule is reviewed.

You also need to select:

- one (or more) appraisal criteria from the drop-down menu (for permanent records)
- a preloaded disposal actions or trigger (for temporary records).

We explain what makes a record permanent in the *Appraisal Statement for State records required as State archives*.

Point-in-time references

Avoid 'point-in-time' references that will date quickly, for example:

- specific legislation
- business systems
- project names.

Acronyms

Avoid acronyms unless names are also spelt out in full.

See references

Common schedules include:

- administrative functions
- local government
- statutory governing bodies
- short term value records
- and more.

Avoid duplication of Disposal classes covered by common schedules. Instead, create 'see' references at the Function, Activity or Class level. This helps readers find similar or related Disposal classes:

- in the schedule
- in other relevant schedules
- in common schedules.

Copying and pasting text

We recommend you work in ORDA. Copying and pasting from Word, PDF etc documents into ORDA cause errors. You won't be aware of these errors until you export the document.

If you must copy and paste, copy text and save it as a plain text document first without any formatting. You can then copy it, without line breaks, into the relevant ORDA field. You will need to apply line breaks and rich text formatting in ORDA after this.

WHAT ARE THE CONVENTIONS FOR WRITING EACH SECTION?

Introduction

Most of the 'Introduction' section has standardised text. But you will need to write text for the 'Records covered' section. This includes:

- a brief history of the organisation
- its objectives
- unique functions
- references to other relevant schedules.

Functions and Activities

Arrangement

Arrange Functions and their related Activities in alphabetical order.

Capitals

Write Function titles in full capitals, for example 'FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT'.

Scope notes

Write specific and meaningful scope notes for the Function/Activity. Each scope note should clearly and briefly:

- describe all work performed as part of the function
- include work done to administer or support the function
- include any exclusions to the function.

Disposal classes

Stand-alone

Disposal classes should be able to stand-alone. They generally start with:

- 'Records relating to...'
- 'Records documenting...'
- or variants of 'Records of long-term value documenting...'

Describe Disposal classes independently of each other. For example, do not use phrases such as 'not described in xx.xx.xx'.

You can use a see reference to draw attention to a complementary class.

Arrangement

List Disposal classes from longest retention period to shortest:

- Permanent records appear first
- the shortest retention period of all is 'Temporary – Destroy when reference ceases'.

Sentence case

Write Disposal class titles (where used) in sentence case, for example, 'Budgeting'.

Examples of records

Ensure Disposal classes provide bulleted examples of records where appropriate. For example, 'Records may include:

- maintenance logbooks
- inspection certificates
- inspection reports.'

Format neutral

Disposal schedules are format neutral. Where possible, write Disposal Classes in functional terms. The format or medium of the records is irrelevant.

Major/minor and significant/not significant

You may divide Disposal classes into:

- 'major' or 'minor'
- 'significant' or 'not significant'.

'Major' are generally long-term or permanent, and 'minor' short-term.

Generally, 'major' or 'significant' events or matters:

- affect the State, whole-of-government or an entire organisation
- are of strategic (not operational) importance
- set a precedent and affect policy
- are controversial matters, often with intense public or media interest.

Avoid jargon, ambiguous and subjective statements. For example, do not use 'records considered significant' unless you provide definitions. Write specific descriptions that can be:

- understood by people outside your organisation
- applied to records they refer to.

Rolled up descriptions of records

In rolled-up schedules, use the following descriptions in Disposal classes:

- 'Records of continuing value' (for Permanent records)
- 'Long-term records' (temporary records with a retention of 26+ years)
- 'Medium-term records' (temporary records with a retention of approx. 11 to 25 years*)
- 'Short-term records' (temporary records with a retention of approx. three to ten years*)
- 'Facilitative records' (temporary records with a retention of two years or less).

Note: * these retentions are flexible, please contact us.

For example, you identify records with retentions of three, five, seven, 20 and 25 years. In a traditional schedule this would be one class for each retention. In a rolled up schedule, the best approach would be to create two classes:

- Short-term records – with rolled up retention of seven years
- Medium-term records – with a rolled up retention of 25 years.

Retention period

For temporary records, enter the retention period and choose 'years' or 'months' from the drop-down menu.

Disposal triggers

Select from the drop-down menu of disposal triggers. These triggers are standard across Australasian records and archives authorities.

Where possible, triggers should reference a specific event to minimise confusion or misinterpretation. For example:

- after date of birth
- after expiry of contract
- after superseded.

The generic trigger 'After action completed' will need to be translated into an event in a business system. For example, the last record added to the file, or the closure of the file.

Consider how triggers may be implemented in business systems or hybrid systems.

While you can enter your own specific trigger as free text, this is not encouraged.

Compound disposal triggers

Compound triggers have two potential events in the disposal trigger. For example, 'Destroy 7 years after action completed, or patient is 25 years of age, whichever is later'.

Try to avoid compound triggers because they can be difficult to set up in digital systems.

Disposal actions

Select from the drop-down menu of actions. The most common are:

- 'Destroy' – for all temporary records
- 'Retain as State archives' – for permanent records to be transferred to the Archives.

Another option that is less commonly used is:

- 'Retain in Agency' – for permanent records that your organisation will continue to hold.

Access restrictions

Records transferred to the Tasmanian Archives without access restrictions become publicly available. To avoid this, you need to set access restrictions before you transfer records. Access restrictions are in section 15 of the *Archives Act 1983* (Tas).

You can highlight access restrictions in your schedule. This will help you reference restrictions when you start transferring records.

You don't need to do this in ORDA, but you will need to do it later when you transfer records to the Archives. You will include access restrictions in your *Transfer and Access Agreement*.

WHAT ARE THE CONVENTIONS FOR MINOR AND MAJOR AMENDMENTS TO SCHEDULES?

Contact us

Contact us to discuss your plans so we can understand if this is a minor or major update. The difference may mean:

- 'version 1.1' for a minor update or 'version 2' for a major update
- a new title if your schedule is named after an organisation that has changed its name
- reauthorisation from the State Archivist.

Sometimes we may suggest a new schedule.

Appraisal notes and justifications

Provide disposal justifications for all Disposal classes, whether new or original. With time, major legislative and business changes are likely. This may mean former appraisal decisions no longer apply.

Retention periods

If you update any retention periods, this is a major amendment. It means the State Archivist will need to reauthorise the schedule.

Renumbering

If a term or class is revoked, combined or replaced, renumbering will likely occur in the schedule in ORDA. This will cause major issues, please contact us. It may also impact sentencing of records already undertaken. You may need IT help to develop scripts to update classes already loaded in your business system.

So re-numbering doesn't happen, we leave the 'lost' numbers in the schedule with a direction.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This publication is based on the following, now withdrawn Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office publication *ORDA Quick Tips Library: OQT 1.2 – TAHO Business rules*.

- Office of the State Archivist (2015) [Appraisal statement for State records required as State archives](#), Version 1.1, Office of the State Archivist website, accessed 24 June 2025.
- Office of the State Archivist (June 2018) 'Writing a future-proof Disposal Schedule', [On the Record](#), accessed 24 June 2025.
- Public Record Office Victoria (n.d.) [RDA development guide 3: drafting RDAs with rolled up classes](#), PROV, accessed 25 June 2025.
- Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office (2015) [Advice 13: writing disposal classes](#), Version 2.0, Office of the State Archivist website, accessed 24 June 2025.
- Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office (2015) [Guideline 6: developing a functional retention and disposal schedule](#), Version 2.0, Office of the State Archivist website, accessed 24 June 2025.
- Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office (2015) [Online Retention and Disposal Application \(ORDA\): end user manual](#), Version 2.0, Office of the State Archivist website, accessed 8 July 2025.
- Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office (2015) *ORDA quick tips library: OQT 1.2 – TAHO business rules*, Version 2.0, TAHO.
- Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office (2015) [ORDA quick tips library](#) [23-part series], Version 2.0, Office of the State Archivist website, accessed 7 July 2025.

MORE INFORMATION

Documents in this series are:

- *What is disposal?*
- *What is a Disposal Schedule?*
- *How do I use a Disposal Schedule?*
- *How do I get a Disposal Schedule?*
- *Disposal Schedule conventions.*

CONTACT US

Office of the State Archivist | <https://osa.tas.gov.au/> | enquiries@osa.tas.gov.au | 03 6165 5581

Disposal Schedule conventions is part of the *Tasmanian Government Information Management Framework*. It supports the *Information and records management standard*. This is a living document and we will make minor changes as needed. If you notice anything that needs updating, please let us know.



License URL: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>
Please give attribution to: © State of Tasmania, 2025.

Document Development History

Version	Date	Comments
1	12/08/2025	Initial release