Office of the
State Archivist

# What is disposal?

## SUMMARY

*What is disposal?* is the first part of an FAQ series on disposal. It explains:

- what disposal is
- why it is important
- destroying records
- transferring records.

## WHAT IS DISPOSAL?

Most people think disposal means getting rid of something. When referring to archives and records, disposal means:

- **destroying** records or
- **transferring** records
  - to another government organisation (Transfer of Custody)
  - to private ownership (Transfer of Ownership)
  - to the Tasmanian Archives.

## WHY DO I NEED TO DISPOSE OF RECORDS?

Authorised records disposal:

- saves time and money if done before migrating systems
- saves space and costs of physical and digital storage
- minimises the impact of data breaches and helps protect privacy
- reduces staff time finding records
- enables you to identify and manage permanent and long-term temporary records.

## DESTROYING RECORDS

A Disposal Schedule or Destruction Authority allows you to destroy records legally. Both are authorised by the State Archivist.

### What is a Disposal Schedule?

Disposal Schedules are the State Archivist's ongoing permission to dispose of records. Disposal Schedules are comprehensive lists of records. They identify:

- the minimum time that temporary records need to be kept before you can destroy them
- permanent records which will be transferred to the Tasmanian Archives.

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## What is a Destruction Authority?

A Destruction Authority is a one-off authority from the State Archivist. The Authority allows you to destroy unscheduled records. Unscheduled records are any records not covered by a Disposal Schedule.

Destruction Authorities are uncommon and are issued to cover:

- Damaged records that have not reached their retention date.
- Legacy records (closed or non-current records) created:
  - under a defunct recordkeeping system
  - under a defunct function or activity
  - by a predecessor organisation.

Please contact us to apply for a Destruction Authority.

## How do I destroy records?

Use the most appropriate destruction method with the least environmental impact. The *Destruction Methods Technical Standard* describes these methods.

Destroy records securely and ensure delegated officers approve destruction.

Record destruction in your *Register of Records Destroyed*. This is your proof of legal destruction.

# TRANSFERRING RECORDS

## What is a Transfer of Custody?

A Transfer of Custody is an authority from the State Archivist. It allows the transfer of records between Tasmanian government organisations.

Government administrative change can cause amalgamations or the transfer of functions to other organisations. If the enabling legislation or administrative orders includes records, you don't need to do anything. If records aren't included, please contact us to arrange a Transfer of Custody.

## What is a Transfer of Ownership?

A Transfer of Ownership is an authority from the State Archivist. It allows the transfer of records outside Tasmanian government control. For example:

- transfer of a function from the Tasmanian government to the Commonwealth
- privatisation of a function to a private provider
- the transfer of records to a non-government organisation, like a local history society.

Government administrative change is common. It includes the creation, merger, closure or privatisation of organisations. It also includes the creation, abolition or transfer of functions. If the enabling legislation or administrative orders includes records, you don't need to do anything. If records aren't included, please contact us to arrange a Transfer of Ownership.

## How do I transfer records to the Tasmanian Archives?

Permanent records are transferred to the Tasmanian Archives when business use ends.

You can apply for an early transfer of records if needed. For example, because of government administrative change or moving offices at short notice.

Please contact us to discuss transferring records. You will need to complete an *Application to dispose of State records (AOT48)* form. This form describes the records you are proposing to transfer. Different processes apply for digital or physical records.

Transfers are formalised in a *Transfer and Access Agreement*. Agreements are between the Head of the organisation and the State Archivist. The Agreement is an official receipt acknowledging the transfer of records to the custody of the State Archivist.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS


- Office of the State Archivist (n.d.) *Glossary,* OSA website, accessed 25 June 2025.
- Office of the State Archivist (n.d.) *Retention and Disposal Schedules,* OSA website, accessed 25 June 2025.
- Office of the State Archivist (n.d.) *Transferring records*, OSA website, 25 June 2025.
- Office of the State Archivist (2020) *Dealing with legacy records*, OSA, accessed 25 June 2025.
- Office of the State Archivist (2024) *Information and records management standard*, Version 1.1, OSA, accessed 25 June 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

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*What is disposal?* 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.

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**Document Development History**

| Version | Date | Comments |
|---|---|---|
| 1.1 | 11/11/2026 | Update to unscheduled records (pre-1960) |
| 1 | 12/08/2025 | Initial release |