



Adequate Records Management in Perspective - Designing and Implementing a Records System

What is a records system?

State Records of South Australia defines a records system as an:

Information system that captures, manages and provides access to records through time¹.

In this context, an information system is not limited to the Information Technology industry concept of an information system.

A records system can include software and hardware, people, procedures and policies all relating to the storing, processing and accessing of information.

The State Records definition of a records system should not be solely equated with a central registry, or correspondence filing system. All records, in all formats, created or received by an agency in the course of business, are official records and should be managed in systematic ways.

By implementing adequate records systems, an agency will ensure compliance with Outcomes 2, 5, 6, 7 and 9 of the *Adequate Records Management – Meeting the Standard*.

Why do records systems need to be designed?

The expression ‘garbage in, garbage out’ is often used to justify the need for information technology system design processes. It can also be applied to records systems.

If a records system is not carefully designed and implemented, the chances of managing, finding and preserving the records it contains, is almost impossible to achieve. This is particularly true in the modern world with the vast numbers of records being managed. The increasing use of electronic records to document business also drives the need for adequate records system design and implementation.

What are the key steps in designing and implementing a records system?

State Records recommends that agencies use the following methodology when designing and implementing a records system. The methodology is based on the DIRKS methodology developed by the National Archives of Australia and the State Records Authority of New South Wales.

¹ AS ISO 15489.1-2002, Records Management – Part 1: General.

The methodology contains the following steps:

- Step 1 - Preliminary investigation
- Step 2 - Analysis of business activity
- Step 3 - Identification of recordkeeping requirement
- Step 4 - Assessment of existing system
- Step 5 - Design of recordkeeping program
- Step 6 - Implementation of a recordkeeping program
- Step 7 - Post implementation review.

Each of these steps contains a number of sub steps and processes to be followed during the design and implementation of a records system.

Does State Records provide training?

State Records offers a training course that provides participants with an overview of the principles and processes involved in designing, implementing and managing a records management program. For further information concerning the course please contact the Course Registrar <http://www.archives.sa.gov.au/contact.html>

Further information

- State Records of South Australia, *Adequate Records Management Meeting the Standard, Improvement Matrix and Implementation Plan* (2002).
- The DIRKS (Designing and Implementing a Recordkeeping System) Methodology and supporting publications are available from the National Archives of Australia (<http://www.naa.gov.au>) and from the State Records Authority of New South Wales (<http://www.records.nsw.gov.au>).

Visit our website: <http://www.archives.sa.gov.au>