

# General Disposal Schedule No 21 (Version 5)

**For disposal of hardcopy source documents after  
digitisation**

Approved: 11 December 2019

Effective: From 11 December 2019 to 31 December 2029

Determined and approved by

Director, State Records

Chair, State Records Council

## Scope

GDS 21 applies to hardcopy source documents that are converted to digital format (digitised) as part of active business processes.

Examples of digitisation as part of active business processes include:

- » Digitisation of mail received by post for forwarding to officers for action
- » Photographing receipts and loading the image file into an expense management system
- » Scanning signed documents to add them to an electronic file to ensure the file is complete (where the rest of the file comprises emails and born digital documents).

GDS 21 only provides approval for destruction of hardcopy source documents that are covered by a General Disposal Schedule (GDS) or operational Records Disposal Schedule (RDS).

GDS 21 does not apply to the conversion or migration of official 'born digital' records.

## Objectives

The purpose of GDS 21 is to provide State government agencies and local councils with approval to destroy certain hardcopy source documents that have been digitised as part of active business processes.

State government agencies and local councils have been digitising documents as part of active business processes since before 2000. The first version of GDS 21 was approved in April 2005.

Since that time, digitisation of hardcopy source documents has become routine business practice across many agencies and local councils. There is greater awareness of the need to manage and ensure the accessibility of digital files to satisfy business, legal, audit and community needs.

Agencies and local councils are best placed to manage the risk of destroying hardcopy source documents, and to ensure the ongoing accessibility of digital files, relating to their business.

Section 11(2) of the Electronic Communications Act 2000 (the Act) enables agencies and councils to retain an electronic form of a document, rather than in the form of paper, an article or other material required to be retained under South Australian law. This is allowed where at the time of generating the electronic form of the document:

- » the method of generating the electronic form of the document provided a reliable means of assuring the maintenance of the integrity of the information contained in the document, and
- » it was reasonable to expect that the information in the electronic form of the document would be readily accessible so as to be useable for subsequent reference.

The Act states that integrity of information contained in a document is maintained only if the information has remained complete and unaltered, apart from the addition of any endorsement, or any immaterial change arising in the course of communication, storage or display. There is also a requirement that the electronic form of the document be retained on a particular kind of data storage device, where this is required by regulations.

State Records suggests that agencies should obtain legal advice if there is any possibility that destruction of an official record could be prejudicial to the interests of the agency, its clients or the Crown.

## Standards for recordkeeping systems storing digital images

Agencies are required to ensure recordkeeping systems used to store digital images of hardcopy source documents meet the minimum requirements in the standards issued by State Records.

### Authorisation

GDS 21 authorises the following:

- » Any hardcopy source document with a retention period approved by the State Records Council of less than 10 years may be destroyed once digitised and stored in a system that manages digital records in a manner consistent with the minimum requirements in the standards issued by State Records.
- » Any hardcopy source document created on or before 31 December 2004 with a temporary retention period approved by the State Records Council may be destroyed once digitised and stored in a system that manages digital records in a manner consistent with the minimum requirements in the standards issued by State Records, where the agency meets the conditions set out below.
- » Any hardcopy source document created on or from 1 January 2005 with a temporary or permanent retention period approved by the State Records Council may be destroyed once digitised and stored in a system that manages digital records in a manner consistent with the minimum requirements in the standards issued by State Records, where the agency meets the conditions set out below.

### Conditions

In order to implement GDS 21 agencies must ensure the following conditions are met (for points two and three above):

- » A disposal schedule approved by the State Records Council can be applied to the records
- » The digital image is an accurate and complete rendition of the hardcopy source record
- » The digital image is fit for purpose for the business needs of the agency, and any other likely purposes e.g. disclosure under FOI, legal challenges
- » That the digital image is managed in an appropriate system ensuring:
  - necessary metadata is created and maintained about the record
  - the digital images cannot be altered
  - security and access controls restrict and log unauthorised attempts at access
- » The digital images can be maintained readily accessible for subsequent reference for the minimum retention periods applicable to the record
- » The hardcopy source records are managed in accordance with agency policy until they are disposed of.

Agencies must retain a record indicating that these conditions have been met. This must be approved by the Chief Executive or delegate.

## Exclusions

The following exclusions apply to destroying hardcopy source documents:

- » Documents not authorised for destruction under a records disposal schedule (RDS), general disposal schedule (GDS) or other disposal determination
- » Records subject to a disposal freeze or required for or are likely to be required for legal purposes
- » Documents identified through an approved disposal schedule for permanent retention with intrinsic value in hardcopy format e.g. architectural drawings and artwork, poster artwork, photographs and film, documents containing physical seals.

Agencies should obtain legal advice if there is any possibility that destruction of an official record could be prejudicial to the interests of the agency, its clients or the Crown.

## Disposal Determination

Item No.	Description (Disposal Class)	Disposal Action
1	Hardcopy source documents with a retention period approved by the State Records Council of less than 10 years.	Retain until no longer required for agency purposes.
2	Hardcopy source documents created on or before 31 December 2004 with a temporary retention period approved by the State Records Council and where the conditions outlined in GDS 21 are met.	Retain until no longer required for agency purposes.
3	Hardcopy source documents created on or from 1 January 2005 with a temporary or permanent retention period approved by the State Records Council and where the conditions outlined in GDS 21 are met.	Retain until no longer required for agency purposes.

### Need further assistance?

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