



Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga

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NEW ZEALAND

Guide to Implementing a Disposal Schedule



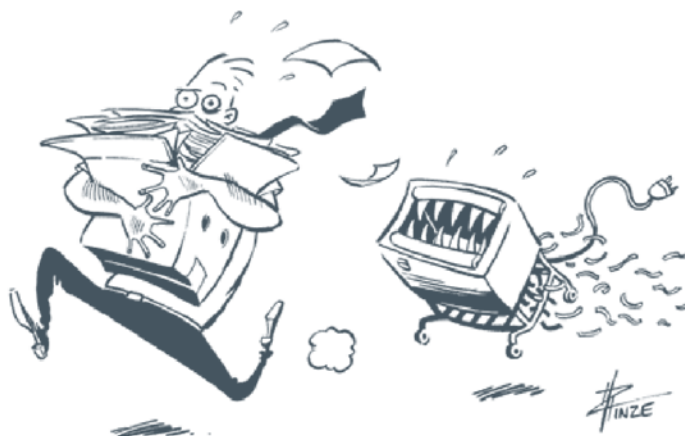
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CONTINUUM

RECORDKEEPING GUIDE G10

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Contents

1	Introduction	3
	Purpose of Guide	3
	Scope	3
	Definitions	3
	Benefits of Sentencing	3
	When to Sentence	3
	Electronic Records	4
2	Planning for Sentencing Projects	4
	Project Timing	4
	Using the Right Disposal Authority	5
	Sentencing Tools	5
	Staffing Requirements	6
	Facilities and Supplies	7
	Internal Approval	7
	Managing Records After Sentencing	7
3	How to Sentence Records	8
	Steps for Sentencing	8
	General Rules for Sentencing	9
	Records Over 25 Years Old	10
	Appendix A: Sentencing Flowchart	11
	Appendix B: Checklist for Sentencing	12
	Appendix C: Precedent Register Template	13
	Appendix D: Disposal Register Template	14



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1. Introduction

Purpose of Guide

Disposal is an important part of an efficient and effective records management programme. This guide aims to help public offices through the sentencing and disposal process. It outlines a step-by-step method for sentencing and provides some general rules for implementation.

Scope

This guide can be used for sentencing records of low level administrative activities through the General Disposal Authorities or core functions (primary duties or responsibilities), through a disposal authority specific to your organisation.

Definitions

Sentencing is the process of identifying and classifying records according to a disposal authority and applying the actions specified.

For definitions of all other recordkeeping terms used in this guide, please refer to Archives New Zealand's *Glossary of Archives and Recordkeeping Terms*.

Benefits of Sentencing

As part of a well-managed disposal programme, sentencing records allows you to:

- > save resources by not storing records for longer than necessary
- > maximise the ability to retrieve records of continuing value to the public office
- > save unnecessary time and expense migrating electronic records that could otherwise be disposed of
- > demonstrate an effective records management programme
- > demonstrate legal disposal under the Public Records Act.

When to Sentence

This depends on whether you are allocating the appropriate class to a current or a closed record. Archives New Zealand encourages the sentencing of records as close as possible to the point of creation, whether your public office is running an electronic, paper, or hybrid recordkeeping system (i.e. both paper and electronic). Sentencing can be integrated into the procedures for classifying and titling of records.

Sentencing records near creation means that they can be managed according to their value and retained for no longer than is required. This is particularly important with electronic recordkeeping, where adherence to retention periods can avoid unnecessary migration costs.

It is important to remember that when sentencing current records, it may be necessary to wait until a file is closed in order to apply the correct disposal class. For example, the appropriate class for a personnel file may change if that person receives the New Zealand Order of Merit.

Your recordkeeping programme should include periodic checks that the assigned disposal classes are still applicable.

See section three for step-by-step instructions on how to sentence records.

Electronic Records

The general principles for sentencing all records are the same, no matter what the format. However, electronic records do need a special mention.

An efficient electronic records management system can automate part of the sentencing process. For example, a business system can be instructed to delete a record seven years after it has produced an invoice, or 10 years after it has completed some other transaction. In an electronic recordkeeping system, disposal can be automatically linked to the classification structure. It is important that robust review and quality control mechanisms are in place to ensure that the disposal actions are appropriate.

If electronic records are not sentenced as a routine part of a records management programme, the system can become cluttered with out-dated records, complicating searches and wasting resources.

✂ 2. Planning for Sentencing Projects

Sentencing at the point of creation is ongoing. Otherwise a specific sentencing project may be required to apply disposal categories to current or closed records. This section outlines some tips for planning a sentencing project.

Project Timing

Sentencing projects may vary in length and may be subject to a range of different factors. Before starting a project, it is important to consider these points:

- If faced with an overwhelming volume of records, it could help to divide it into several smaller projects.
- Focus sentencing around your organisational priorities. For example, if the priority is to reduce storage demands, then concentrate on classes of well-organised records.
- Other factors affecting the time a sentencing project will take include:
 - the age, format, and arrangement of the records
 - the experience and organisational knowledge of the sentencer(s)
 - the quality and clarity of the appraisal report, disposal schedule and implementation guide

- > the time required to consult with business units responsible for creating the records
- > the availability of resources.
- > Organisations wanting to transfer records to Archives New Zealand at the end of a sentencing project, should contact the Manager, Arrangement and Description (transfer@archives.govt.nz) or the relevant Archives New Zealand Regional Office. This is particularly important in Wellington, as Archives New Zealand Head Office has a planned transfer programme in place.

Using the Right Disposal Authority

Before any sentencing occurs, gather all relevant disposal authorities, as well as any in-house business procedures, guidelines or policies referring to disposal processes.

General Disposal Authorities (GDAs) are applicable to most public offices. They cover generic classes of records created through common business functions. Public offices may have core functions that differ widely, but the administrative processes supporting functions are far more similar.

- > Please note that records which relate to a public office's core functions, even if they appear to belong to a GDA disposal class, are not covered by that GDA.

Archives New Zealand has four GDAs for classes of records common to all public offices, and one GDA for digitised records:

- > GDA 1: *Human Resources and Personnel Records*
- > GDA 2: *Financial and Accounting Records*
- > GDA 3: *General Housekeeping Records*
- > GDA 4: *Administration and Corporate Services Records*
- > GDA 5: *Digitised Original Source Records*

If you have any queries about coverage of records under the GDAs, please contact the Appraisal section at Archives New Zealand at appraisal@archives.govt.nz.

Disposal schedules are specific to a public office and specify which records should be retained as public archives or destroyed, after they are no longer required by that public office. Examine the disposal schedule or accompanying appraisal report to find out which records are in scope and eligible for sentencing.

Disposal schedules are current for a limited time (usually 10 years). Only current disposal schedules can be used for sentencing, therefore you should check the currency of the schedule before starting a sentencing project.

A list of current disposal authorities for public offices can be obtained from searching online via Archway.

Sentencing Tools

There are several tools to help sentencers use a disposal authority.

All records disposal procedures and policies should be given to the sentencer. This ensures that all disposals are conducted in accordance with any internal rules. For

example, a recordkeeping policy may say that authorisation from the Chief Information Officer or a particular senior manager is required before disposal can occur. Ideally, a centralised records management person or team should be responsible for developing such supporting documents.

Agency specific sentencing guides which match classes of a disposal authority to the relevant component of your recordkeeping system will speed up the sentencing process. If you are planning an appraisal and sentencing project, it may be helpful to map your disposal authority to your classification at the time of appraisal. Please note, classification schemes can change regularly, this means the sentencing guide should also be updated regularly. Any major change in classification, especially those resulting from changes to your organisation's primary duties or responsibilities, may require a new disposal authority. If you have any queries about this, please contact Archives New Zealand at appraisal@archives.govt.nz.

Staffing Requirements

Staff employed to manage the implementation project require:

- a sound understanding of what your organisation does
- the ability to interpret the disposal schedule
- the ability to communicate with business units to discuss any interpretation issues
- access to appropriate levels of your organisation for sign-off of disposal decisions.

Sentencers should have appropriate experience. The more the sentencer knows about the recordkeeping processes and core functions of the organisation, the less risk there is of the project running over time and budget, or incorrect sentencing decisions being made.

If your organisation is employing someone for the sentencing project, then they should be given sufficient time to study the recordkeeping systems and history of the organisation. If sentencing involves legacy records inherited from predecessor agencies, then additional time will be needed to gather background information.

Sources for this information may include:

- Annual Reports and Statements of Intent
- governing legislation
- organisational histories
- recordkeeping policies, rules and processes
- discussion with key staff members.

Facilities and Supplies

If sentencing large quantities of paper records, then ample space will be required for the project. A sentencer will need:

- plenty of desk space to spread out records, in an environment that does not threaten vulnerable records, e.g. not in direct sunlight
- access to the relevant control records, including electronic records management systems and other electronic indexes
- shelving to store records before, during and after sentencing
- computer access to create documentation
- the ability to contact Archives New Zealand
- equipment for moving records around the office, e.g. trolleys
- conservation gloves, if handling fragile legacy records.

Internal Approval

It is important that disposal actions are approved by an appropriate person within the organisation. One staff member should be responsible for approving lists of records to be disposed of (destroyed or transferred). If sentencing recently closed records, it is advisable to have the section head/manager of the department who used the files to sign-off on any disposal action. This ensures that there is no other business need for retaining the records.

Managing Records After Sentencing

Before starting the project, you should plan the management of your records after sentencing. This may involve:

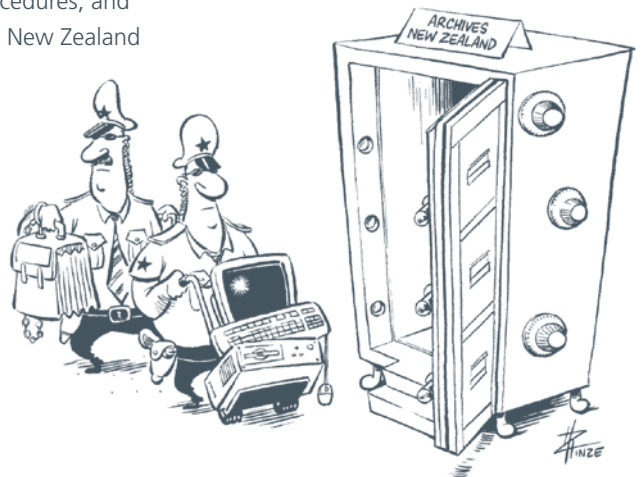
- destroying records (refer to *Fact sheet: Methods of Destruction*)
- transferring records (refer to *Fact sheet: Transfer Process*)
- storing records until transfer or destruction (internal or with a commercial provider)
- determining any access restrictions on records transferred to Archives New Zealand (refer to *Making Access Decisions Under the Public Records Act*)
- creating and managing a precedent register that documents difficulties in sentencing problem records. This will assist with further sentencing projects and ensure continuity of sentencing interpretation. See Appendix C for a precedent register template.

✘ 3. How to Sentence Records

See Appendix A for a flowchart for sentencing records

Steps for Sentencing

1. Determine the appropriate disposal authority for the records being sentenced.
 - > Do the records being sentenced reflect a core function (that is, a primary duty or responsibility) of your public office? If so, then only an authorised disposal authority, not a GDA, can be used to sentence these records. If you do not have one, or are unsure about application, please contact the Appraisal section at Archives New Zealand at appraisal@archives.govt.nz.
2. Identify the relevant disposal class for the records being sentenced.
 - > Use the class description or examples in the disposal authority. Note that any list of examples is not exhaustive, so try to link the records to the activities being described in the disposal authority.
 - > Examine the contents of records, or scope notes for any classification system in which the record was created.
 - > If more than one class is appropriate, choose the one with the longest retention period.
3. Ensure that the files contain metadata on their retention periods, disposal triggers and disposal actions as outlined in the disposal authority.
 - > For electronic records, this can be attached to the appropriate file in an electronically managed system. For paper systems, this can be written on the file cover.
4. Confirm whether the disposal trigger has already taken place, for example, “seven years from date of last action on the file”. If the disposal trigger has not yet taken place (i.e. the file is still being used), then set a review date for the future.
5. Confirm that the prescribed retention period has been met. If the retention period has yet to be reached, then set a review date for the future.
6. If all of the above has been satisfied, then confirm this, obtain internal approval from the appropriate level of management according to your procedures, and implement the disposal action (i.e. destroy or transfer to Archives New Zealand etc.).
7. Update your organisational control records. These may be electronic record management systems, or a disposal register with information that documents what happened to a file, and under what authority it was disposed of. See Appendix D for an example of a disposal register.



When sentencing legacy records, steps 4 and 5 can occur simultaneously. For example, records on property management match a class in a disposal authority; the action is to destroy seven years from closure; the record was closed nine years ago; therefore the record can be destroyed immediately.

General Rules for Sentencing

1. Core records versus administrative records

The GDAs only cover routine administrative records and are not to be used for a public office's core records (i.e. those reflecting primary duties and responsibilities). Sometimes core records can appear to be administrative and vice-versa. If you are unsure about which authority to apply, please contact Archives New Zealand staff at appraisal@archives.govt.nz.

2. Finding a disposal class

If you cannot find a disposal class that fits with the records being sentenced, then put them to one side. Consult with colleagues or the business unit responsible for creating the record to help clarify which class it fits. If you are still unsure, contact Archives New Zealand staff at appraisal@archives.govt.nz.

3. Use the longest retention period

If a record fits into more than one disposal class, always use the class with the longest retention period. For example, where file examination suggests it could fit into a class that says "destroy 7 years after date of last action", or into another class that says "destroy 10 years after date of last action", then retain the whole file for 10 years.

4. Never cull records from a file

Never cull records from a file. Culling records destroys the integrity of the file by breaking the transactional chain of evidence. That is, a record by itself may be of very little value, but in context of the other records in the same file, it holds significant evidence.

5. Files with more than one part

When files have more than one part, you can generally sentence each part as a separate item and destroy or retain them according to the disposal authority. However, it is possible that file parts being sentenced will contain information that the business requires to understand the active file part. Use your own judgement and common sense. For example, an Official Information Act (OIA) request file opened in 1999 has a new part started each year, so parts 1999-2001 files can be destroyed in 2007, if the disposal class authorises destruction after five years.

6. Copies

Make sure you can identify the original file documenting a particular activity of your organisation. For example, copies of a contract may be held with a business unit for reference purposes, but the original signed contracts are retained by the finance department. Copies can be destroyed using classes 1.6 or 1.7 of *GDA3: General Housekeeping Records*.

7. Handle with care

When sentencing records, you may be handling fragile formats. Please ensure your sentencers understand any specific requirements for handling these. Similarly, for older audio-visual or digital material held on portable storage formats, such as microfiche or CD, make sure that you have the correct equipment to view the records. Do not try and force a format to read on unsuitable machines.

8. Sentencing problem records

During the sentencing project, you may come across records that are difficult to fit within a disposal class. Outlined below are some tips.

- > Look at the file cover. The file title and/or number should tell you which series or group the record comes from, or which business unit created it. The cover may also have a date, giving you some idea of the age of the record. Beware that file titles, especially for older records, can be misleading. If unsure, then check the contents of the file.
- > Consult the business unit responsible for creating the record. If it is a recent record, they may be able to tell you why it was created and what aspect of business activity it relates to.
- > Check to see if anyone consulted the file after it was closed. The user may be able to provide guidance for sentencing. This may also indicate that the record contains active reference material and should not be disposed of.
- > If the record could fit into a class recommended for retention as archives and a class recommended for destruction, then choose the archival class.
- > If you come across records which do not fit into any disposal class, it is possible that they have not been appraised. Rather than forcing it into a disposal class, the records should be appraised separately.

If you have any questions about sentencing, then please contact the Archives New Zealand Appraisal section at appraisal@archives.govt.nz.

Records Over 25 Years Old

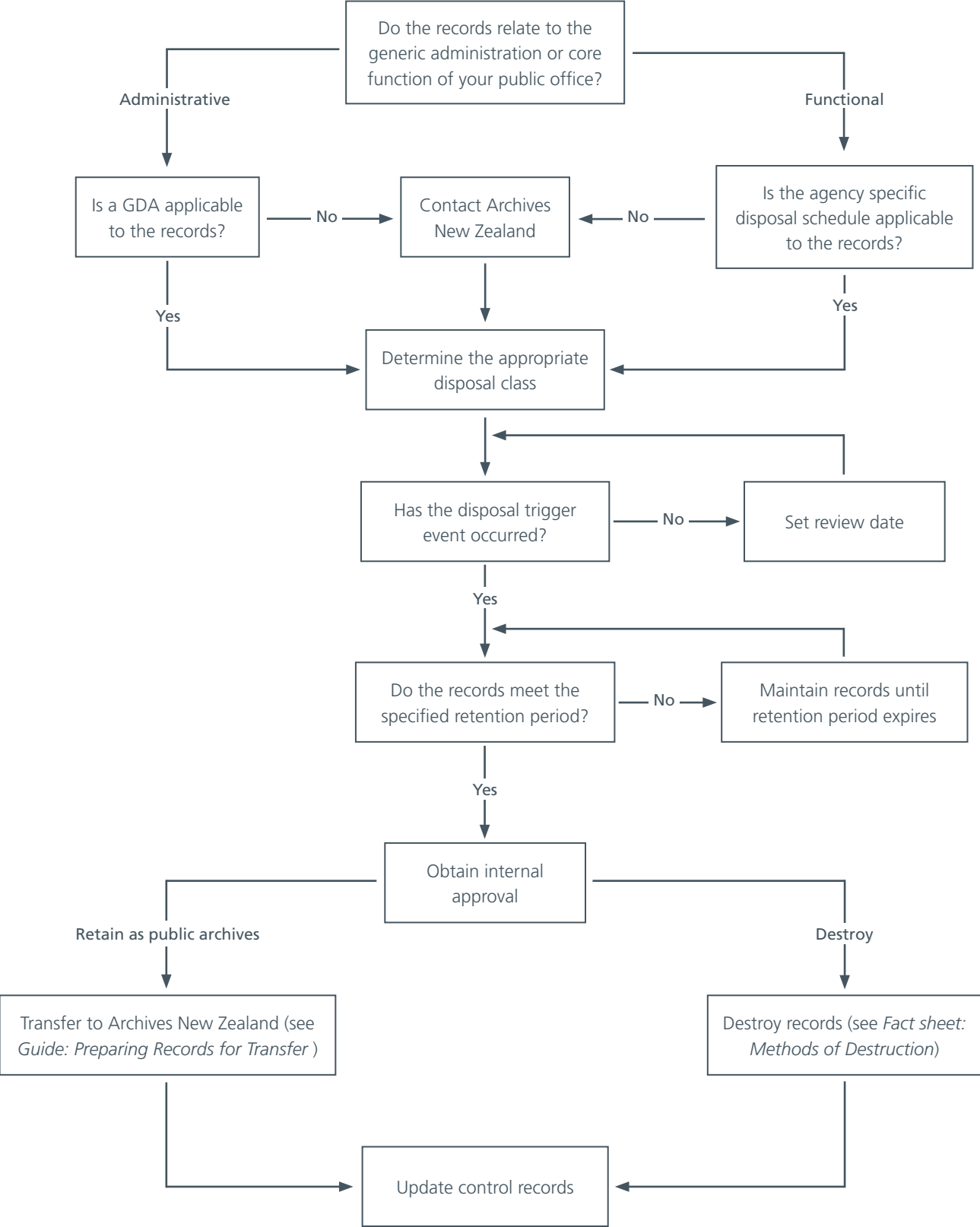
Under s21 of the Public Records Act 2005, every public office must transfer to Archives New Zealand all public records that have been in existence for 25 years that are recommended for transfer under a disposal authority. Practically, this will affect only a small portion of records authorised for retention as public archives.

When sentencing, you may come across records of more than 25 years old and find that they are still required by your organisation for business purposes. In this instance, a deferral of transfer under s22 of the Public Records Act 2005 must be sought. If the records are not required by your organisation, then they should be transferred to Archives New Zealand as part of the normal transfer process.

When sentencing, you may come across records that have a retention period of more than 25 years but are not to be retained as public archives. In this instance, a deferral of transfer is not required.

Please contact Archives New Zealand at transfer@archives.govt.nz if you need more information about deferral of transfer.

Appendix A: Sentencing Flowchart



Appendix B: Checklist for Sentencing

Planning

- You have copies of all relevant and current disposal authorities, including the GDAs
- You have access to all relevant business policies, procedures and guides that relate to the disposal of records
- You have access to the relevant control records
- You have adequate staff resources, with appropriate knowledge of the organisation and its records
- You have the appropriate facilities for the types and quantity of records being sentenced

Implementation

- Ensure you are working with the relevant disposal authority
- Identify the appropriate disposal class
- Identify the disposal trigger event and the date the record can be disposed of
- If the disposal trigger event and retention periods have been met, obtain internal approval
- If the disposal trigger event or retention period has not occurred, set a future review date
- Document disposal action and maintain a precedent register for records that have been difficult to sentence
- Manage disposal: transfer/destroy/deferral of transfer

Appendix C: Precedent Register Template

This is an example of a precedent register your organisation may want as a master record of interpretations regarding the application of a disposal authority. It can be particularly useful for sentencing problem records, as it can guide future sentencing projects and ensure continuity of sentencing interpretation.

CLASS OR RECORD TYPE	ISSUE	RESOLUTION	AUTHORITY	DATE
2/1 Budget Files	Could be sentenced using GDA2 / 3.2 (destroy) or DA 214 class 6.4 (retain)	Decided that these were minor budget planning records and the final budgets are being retained elsewhere. Therefore destroy.	Winston Smith (Chief Information Officer)	10/05/2006
DA 64, classes 5.1 and 5.2	Defining the word "significant" when determining the retention of contract files	Decided that contracts over \$750,000 were significant. Therefore, everything under that can be destroyed under class 5.1 (insignificant), but everything over to be retained under class 5.2 (significant).	Leslie Neilson (Senior Manager, Finance) Checked with Archives New Zealand	28/02/2007

Appendix D: Disposal Register Template

Disposal registers act as a control record to prove that the records created by your organisation no longer exist or are no longer under your control. This template provides a generic example; however your organisation may have its own control documentation. For electronic records, please refer to the Archives New Zealand Electronic Recordkeeping Metadata Standard for guidance on requirements for disposal documentation. See also class 11.5 of *GDA4: Administration and Corporate Services Records* for retention requirements in relation to this record.

RECORDS DESCRIPTION	AUTHORITY	ACTION	DATE	AUTHORISATION	NOTES
Personnel files A-Z 1962-1996	GDA1 / 1.5	Destroy	17/02/2007	Corporate Services Manager	Destroyed by Paper Pulping People Inc.
Senior Management Meeting Minutes 1990-1997	DA41 / 5.2	Transferred to Archives New Zealand	27/08/2007	Group Manager, Policy	Archives New Zealand Accession Number W9987

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