



Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga

ARCHIVES

NEW ZEALAND

# Guide to Preparing an Appraisal Report for a One-off Disposal Authority



 tāhūhū te hanga me te tiaki  
CONTINUUM

RECORDKEEPING GUIDE G12

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# Purpose

This guide is intended to help people to prepare an appraisal report for a one-off authorisation for a specific group of records. The guide is not prescriptive but it sets out the data required and suggests a useful structure. Further sections may be added where necessary.

Before starting an appraisal, public offices should first contact the Appraisal Section at Archives New Zealand for guidance and a preliminary discussion about the project. They should also obtain the Archives New Zealand *Appraisal Standard* which sets out in greater detail appraisal considerations and requirements.

# Legislative Background

All public offices, as part of their recordkeeping regime, need to make decisions about the retention and disposal of records.

Under the provisions of the Public Records Act 2005, no one may dispose of public records without the authorisation of the Chief Archivist. To obtain this authorisation, public offices must appraise their records to determine their value in terms of their ongoing preservation and management, recommending which records should be destroyed and which are worthy of longer-term retention, usually in the form of transfer to Archives New Zealand.

A report of the appraisal must be prepared for submission to Archives New Zealand for review, and placing on our website for public comment in accordance with the Public Records Act requirements, and final authorisation by the Chief Archivist.

# General Disposal Authorities

Records covered by Archives New Zealand's General Disposal Authorities (GDAs) should not be included in any appraisal report or list except in circumstances where those records relate to a core function of the agency, or the agency wishes to change the retention period or disposal recommendation from that given in the GDA.

# Documentation Required for a One-off Disposal Authority

The request for a disposal authorisation from Archives New Zealand must contain all the information needed for the Chief Archivist to make an informed decision. It usually includes:

- an appraisal report describing the circumstances of the appraisal, the nature and context of the records, and demonstrating the reasons for particular disposal recommendations. This information will provide assurance that the value of the records has been assessed in terms of their administrative and recordkeeping contexts, rather than solely on the basis of the information they contain
- a marked list showing **which** records are intended for disposal, with recommended disposal actions for each record
- a covering memorandum containing contact details of the appraiser.

Archives New Zealand will review the documentation. As part of the review process, appraisal reports will be made available for public comment for 30 days on our website ([www.archives.govt.nz](http://www.archives.govt.nz)). Before we do this, Archives New Zealand will remove the contact details, access recommendations, and any discharge or deferral of transfer arrangements.

An appraisal report should therefore:

- not contain references to identifiable persons (other than the contact details)
- be clear and concise: written in a business report style, including important details but excluding extraneous information. The writer should consider whether each detail will help to clarify an issue, give context, provide justification, or provide accountability in decision-making
- convey meaning in a professional way. Information should be given once, not duplicated across the report. You should refer to other sections rather than repeating information, and use appendices for extra comments
- avoid use of jargon, particularly around technical or industry specific processes.

The appraisal report and any supporting documentation should, where feasible, be submitted both electronically (preferably in Word or Excel) and in hard copy. In most cases, once authorised, the report will become available through Archives New Zealand's online finding aid, *Archway* ([www.archway.govt.nz](http://www.archway.govt.nz)).

# Appraisal Report for a One-Off Disposal Authority

**File/Document ID:** the unique identification of this report. [*Archives New Zealand's use.*]

**Date:** the date of the report.

**Name of the public office:**

**Public office contact:** name and contact details. This should be someone with whom any issues relating to the report can be discussed. They may or may not be the report author. [*This section will be removed by Archives New Zealand prior to the public comment process.*]

**Report author:** name and contact details. [*This section will be removed by Archives New Zealand prior to the public comment process.*]

**Disposal Type:** a one-off appraisal of a specific group of records.

**Coverage:** public offices or groups (such as district offices) covered by the report and disposal authority.

**Scope:** name or summary of the specific groups of records covered by the report.

# 1. Executive Summary

This summarises the main points regarding the authority. Information should include:

- > the name of the records-creating and/or controlling public office(s) and name of the public office doing (or contracting for) the appraisal
- > a brief description of the types of records covered
- > the appraisal type and methodology – e.g. ‘a one-off appraisal with large amount of file examination’
- > any unusual elements for the Chief Archivist’s attention.

You should express the disposal quantities as physical quantities where possible, usually in linear or shelf metres, or in units relevant to the material – e.g. film reels, number of plans or photographs, etc. For electronic records, please give an approximation in standard measurements such as megabytes or terrabytes. Precise quantities may not be feasible, so where possible please give a general estimate. This gives Archives New Zealand an overall idea of how much material may be transferred or destroyed.

**Quantity recommended for retention as public archives:**      XX Mb/lm or items  
(XX% of total)

**Quantity recommended for destruction:**                      XX Mb/lm or items  
(XX% of total)

## ✘ 2. Appraisal Circumstances

This section explains why the existing records are being appraised at this point in time, **not** why they were created or are no longer required. (This is covered in section 8, *Description and Evaluation of Records*.)

Give the reasons for the appraisal project – e.g.

- lack of storage space
- public office disestablishment
- a change in legislative or organisational requirements.

Try to:

- be clear and informative. Include information on the location and condition of records
- include information on any difficulties encountered in the appraisal (with the exception of relationship issues) and how they were overcome
- include any special circumstances about the appraisal that do not fit elsewhere in the report.

Try not to include any contract or financial details, or personal information about individuals involved in the appraisal. If it is relevant to the situation, put such information in an accompanying memo.

# ✘ 3. Public Office (Agency) Information

Check *Archway* to see if the agency information there is relevant to this appraisal and adequate to cover the structure of the agency, and the functions and activities of the records being appraised. If not, please supply the following information:

**Name of public office:** name of the records-creating/controlling public office.

**Alternative name/s:** has the public office been known by any other names? If so, what and when?

**Public office's physical location/s:** where was the public office located and when?

**Year established:** the year in which the public office was established and how. This can usually be traced to legislation or regulations which should be noted.

**Year disestablished:** leave blank if the public office is still operating.

**Name of controlling public office(s):** does/did the public office report to another? If so, to whom and when?

**Name of controlled public office(s):** does/did another public office report to it? If so, which one and when?

Then provide a précis of the public office's operating and administrative history, including:

- > major functions and activities
- > major operational or structural areas
- > any re-structuring that may have impacted upon the records
- > names of predecessor or successor offices.

Replicate this where the appraisal covers records from more than one creating/controlling public office.

Try to:

- > give clear details of the office and its functions when appraising records created by a public office other than the current controlling one
- > include relevant copies of documentation from other sources as an appendix (e.g. published histories, pages from annual reports, entries from the *Directory of Official Information*, classification structures, etc).

Try not to:

- > regurgitate details from obviously slanted sources such as annual reports without analysing them first. The details should be an objective statement about a public office's formation and function, not a repetition of material designed mainly to promote its work.

## ✘ 4. Methodology

Give a brief explanation of the reason for choosing the type of disposal authority and the method used.

Try to:

- describe the method used to appraise the records – e.g. ‘file-by-file examination’ (only used where there is no system, little documentation and a small quantity of records); or ‘selective examination of a portion of the records’ and the percentage of records examined.

Try not to:

- describe methods that could have been used but were not, unless this is directly relevant to the outcome – e.g. use of sampling.

## ✘ 5. Consultation

Public offices are required to consult parties who may have an interest in the records. List stakeholders who have been consulted in the development of this report and the disposal recommendations, both internal and external, giving their names, designations or positions and section or organisation.

## ✘ 6. Relevant Precedent

Precedents may provide guidance, but should be used cautiously. Archives New Zealand holds copies of earlier approved authorities, so always check these for relevant appraisal decisions to ensure consistency in the treatment of records across a public office.

Disposal Authorities are available online in *Archway*.

Describe any **relevant** precedents that have informed the appraisal process and support particular recommendations. Important points to consider are:

- is it a relevant precedent? Previous appraisals of the same series are not always relevant – e.g. a central correspondence system where only part of the system was previously appraised, not including the files in the current appraisal. **Briefly** mention such examples as evidence of research into precedent, particularly if no relevant precedent exists
- how old is the precedent? As previous decisions age, their applicability is likely to diminish.

Try to:

- › keep this section concise
- › if you do not think a precedent is useful, do not use it
- › attach copies of any precedents used as appendices.

Try not to:

- › include lists of sources checked and discarded unless they are particularly important or show major changes in decisions over time.

## ✘ 7. Disposal Criteria

See the *Appraisal Standard* for more details. This is the critical part of the appraisal and requires making value judgements on the retention or destruction of records. If you are unsure about any of this, contact the Archives New Zealand Appraisal Section for advice.

You should always:

- › document decisions relating to value so others can see why you considered certain records should be kept and others destroyed
- › check with records-creating units as to whether records have particular uses and need to be kept for specific periods. Remember that just because a record is required for use by its creators for 10 years, this does **not** mean that it must be kept forever
- › Archives New Zealand requires consultation with both internal and external stakeholders when making value judgements
- › note any advice received from consultation, whether it was accepted and acted upon or not.

For accountability consider:

- › the importance of the records as a source of evidence of the legal or civic rights and interests of the public office or individuals.

For evidential value consider:

- › the importance of the creating unit or office within government
- › the reliability of the records as evidence of an activity, transaction, or decision
- › the importance of the function being documented
- › the relationship to other valuable records
- › the extent and purpose of the records' use
- › the fiscal value of the records to the organisation or to government
- › the requirement for ongoing administrative efficiency

- › any risk management issues associated with retention or destruction of the records.

For legal value consider:

- › the operation of any legislation requiring retention of the records
- › the likelihood of any legal action requiring use of these records.

For informational value consider:

- › the informational content of the record, that is, what it contains about people and events
- › the records' value as a historical source for research
- › the records' uniqueness or iconic value
- › the records' credibility as an informational source
- › the records' accessibility and usability.

**NB:** Appraisals must **always** take into account other reasons for records retention such as:

- › factors in the regulatory environment, any specific legislation or other legal requirements, the operation of the Privacy Act 1993, Official Information Act 1984, etc. **Even where Archives New Zealand's authority is given to destroy records, if destruction occurs contrary to legislation requiring retention, then the public office will be held liable.**

## ✂ 8. Description and Evaluation of Records

Accurate assessment of the value of records also requires an understanding of the recordkeeping process which generated the records. For each series covered by the appraisal, check *Archway* to see if the series has been registered. If so, copy and paste into the following fields, updating where necessary. If not, please provide the following information and an assessment of the specific value of the records, judged using the disposal criteria selected for this appraisal (see section 7). There must also be sufficient descriptive and evaluative detail to support the disposal recommendations.

**Title:** a meaningful name for the series.

**Start date:** the year the series was created. Leave blank if unknown.

**End date or ongoing:** the year the series ceased to operate or whether it is ongoing. Leave blank if unknown.

**Legislation:** note any relevant legislation to this recordkeeping process.

**Related records:** note any other series this one has controlled, been controlled by, and/or succeeded/was succeeded by. Also check *Archway* for similar relationships. For example a series of registers may control another series of files and be controlled itself by another series of indexes.

**System of arrangement:** how the records are arranged, such as numerically, alphabetically, colour-coded by business group, etc. Note whether this has changed over time, for example whether the records have been top-numbered, how, and when.

**Format:** this can be a description of the physical nature of the records, such as split pin files, microfiche, mixed format (including flat plans) etc., or the technical description of the software and file formats of a digital system.

**Description:** a description of the records, including their function and purpose, i.e. the reason they were created and used. Summarise the informational content of the series.

**Precedent:** have there been any previous transfers or destructions of other records within the series (see section 6 *Relevant Precedent*)? If so, please include a reference to the relevant disposal authority.

**Access recommendations:** are there any records within this series that may contain commercially sensitive or personal details? Note any specific issues relating to access.

**Value:** an assessment of the specific value of the series, judged using the disposal criteria selected for this appraisal (see section 7). Give specific retention or destruction recommendations, as below.

**Recommended for retention as public archives:** the specific evaluative criteria (taken from section 7) for the recommendation for permanent retention of individual records within this series. Provide specific examples of records to support these.

**Recommended for destruction:** the specific evaluative criteria (taken from section 7) for the recommendation for destruction of individual records within this series. Provide specific examples of records to support these.

**Quantity to retain:** the amount or percentage of records recommended for retention as archives.

**Quantity to destroy:** the amount or percentage of records recommended for destruction.

**Replicate the information above as often as required where the appraisal covers more than one series.**

## ✂ 9. Access Recommendations

Access conditions are usually agreed at the point of transfer or when records reach 25 years old. However, any specific issues relating to access conditions for the records should be identified in the appraisal report. Check *Archway* for any previous access details within the series information or access agreements within the Access Register.

Access recommendations are not binding, but may assist with completion of an Access Agreement when records are to be transferred.

For advice on what issues to consider on making access recommendations, see Archives New Zealand's guide *Making Access Decisions under the Public Records Act* for guidance.

## ✂ 10. Discharge Arrangements

Discharge may occur under one of two sections of the Public Records Act, 25(1) and 25(2):

- 25(1) covers conditions for discharge. The appraisal report should include details of any arrangements in place in the agency to ensure the conditions will be met (e.g. no discharge to a member of that agency)
- 25(2) covers records with personal details, and requires specific conditions to be met before discharge is approved. The appraisal report must include details on the procedures either in place or planned at the controlling public office to ensure the record is discharged only to the person whose record it is.

Please note discharge should only occur for records that will otherwise be destroyed, so any analysis must support a recommendation to destroy.

## ✂ 11. Deferral of Transfer

Mandatory transfer is required for all public records over 25 years old. Although deferral agreements are negotiated separately to the appraisal, it is recommended that public offices indicate any intentions to seek a Deferral of Transfer Agreement within the appraisal report.

## 12. Format and Preservation

This gives any specific details about the format of records or preservation issues. Non-paper formats intended for transfer, such as photographs, plans or electronic formats, should be mentioned.

A note should also be made of any records in poor condition requiring possible preservation attention or special packaging and storage.

### And finally

The statement below is a generic addition to all appraisal reports for one-off authorities, and contains caveats on the operation of the disposal authority. It sets out the specific conditions under which the authority has been approved.

Refer to the annotated list accompanying this report for specific recommendations:

- records recommended for transfer to Archives New Zealand are marked 'A'
- records recommended for destruction are marked 'D'
- records may be destroyed at any point once the minimum retention periods have passed. Records do not have to be destroyed; the agency may keep them for longer if still required.

This authority is valid for a period of five years from date of signing, unless previously agreed with the Chief Archivist.

### Contact Details

If you have any questions about anything in these guidelines, or about appraisal or disposal, contact the Appraisal Section at [appraisal@archives.govt.nz](mailto:appraisal@archives.govt.nz).

# Glossary

Defines some of the more commonly used archival and recordkeeping terms.  
For a complete list see Archives New Zealand's guide *Glossary of Archives and Recordkeeping Terms*.

## *Agency:*

A body, business, organisation or institution that creates or manages its own records in the course of its business or activities. In the case of large organisations or institutions, subordinate parts such as departments, sections, units, regional or branch offices may be regarded as separate agencies.

## *Appraisal:*

The process of evaluating records to determine which are to be retained as archives, which are to be kept for specific periods and which will be destroyed.

## *Disposal:*

1. "The final decision concerning the fate of records, i.e. destruction or transfer to archives. On rare occasions the disposal may be by sale or donation. 2. A programme of activities to facilitate the orderly transfer of intermediate and inactive records from current office space into low-cost or archival storage. It includes surveys, scheduling, and records destruction."

Under the PRA, "disposal, in relation to a public record or local authority record, means: the transfer of control of a record; or the sale, alteration, destruction, or discharge of a record." (PRA, s4).

## *One-off or Ad hoc:*

A non-continuing approval, not intended to set a precedent, which provides a particular disposal action for a specific set of circumstances.

## *Series:*

Those records having the same provenance, which belong together because:

- > they are of similar formats and/or relate to the same function
- > they are part of a discernible filing or classification (alphabetical, numerical, chronological or a combination of these)
- > they have been kept together because they perform or record similar activities.

## *Sub-series:*

A logical sub-grouping of a series.



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