



Tasmanian Audit Office

REPORT OF THE AUDITOR - GENERAL



Special Report No. 37

Archives Office of Tasmania

September 2001

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2001

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

**AUDITOR-GENERAL
SPECIAL REPORT No. 37**

ARCHIVES OFFICE OF TASMANIA

September 2001

*Presented to both Houses of Parliament in accordance with the provisions of Section 57 of the
Financial Management and Audit Act 1990*

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President
Legislative Council
HOBART

Speaker
House of Assembly
HOBART

Dear Mr President
Dear Mr Speaker

**PERFORMANCE AUDIT NO. 37
ARCHIVES OFFICE OF TASMANIA**

This report has been prepared consequent to examinations conducted under section 44 of the Financial Management and Audit Act 1990, for submission to Parliament under the provisions of section 57 of the Act.

Performance audits seek to provide Parliament with assessments of the effectiveness and efficiency of public sector programs and activities, thereby identifying opportunities for improved performance.

The information provided through this approach will, I am sure, assist Parliament in better evaluating agency performance and enhance Parliamentary decision making to the benefit of all Tasmanians.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A J McHugh'.

A J McHugh
AUDITOR-GENERAL

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACA	Australian Council of Archives
AOT	Archives Office of Tasmania
COFSTA	Council of Federal State and Territory Archives
DoE	Department of Education
DPAC	Department of Premier and Cabinet
DPIWE	Department of Primary Industry, Water and Environment
FTE	Full-time equivalent
IMF	Information Management Forum
IT	Information technology
OHS	Occupational Health and Safety
SLT	State Library of Tasmania
TFS	Tasmania Fire Service
Y2K	Year 2000

INTRODUCTION

Under the provisions of section 44(b) of the *Financial Management and Audit Act 1990* the Auditor-General may:

"carry out examinations of the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of Government departments, public bodies or parts of Government departments or public bodies".

The conduct of such audits is often referred to as performance auditing.

This report relates to a performance audit carried out by the Tasmanian Audit Office during the period April to July 2001.

The objectives of this performance audit were:

- To assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the management processes at AOT; and
- To determine if adequate mechanisms were in place to identify and preserve records held and created by government agencies for posterity.

The approach taken in this audit was to conduct field visits to AOT premises and two government departments.

AUDIT OPINION

Report Title	Archives Office of Tasmania (AOT)
Nature of the Audit	The objective of this performance audit was to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the management processes at AOT and to determine if adequate mechanisms were in place to identify and preserve records created and held by government agencies for posterity.
Responsible Party	Under the <i>Archives Act 1983</i> the State Archivist is charged with responsibility to care for the State archives and take whatever actions appear necessary to ensure proper functioning of the Office. Administratively the AOT is part of the Department of Education.
Mandate	<p>This audit has been carried out under the provisions of section 44(b) of the <i>Financial Management and Audit Act 1990</i> which provides that:</p> <p><i>‘The Auditor-General may carry out examinations of the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of Government departments, public bodies or parts of Government department or public bodies.’</i></p>
Applicable Standards	<p>This audit has been performed in accordance with Australian Auditing Standard AUS 806 ‘Performance Auditing’ which states that:</p> <p><i>‘The objective of a performance audit is to enable the auditor to express an opinion whether, in all material respects, all or part of an entity’s activities have been carried out economically, and/or efficiently and/or effectively.’</i></p>
Limitation on Audit Assurance	Audit procedures were confined to a review of policies and procedures at the AOT together with a restricted review of archival practices at the two departments sampled. This provides less evidence than would be available by applying more extensive and comprehensive procedures. The evidence

provided by these means is persuasive rather than conclusive in nature.

Audit Criteria

The performance assessment of AOT and the sampled departments was ascertained under the following criteria:

1. Use of management techniques to assess, monitor, and improve performance;
2. An effective appraisal program exists to safeguard records of value to future generations;
3. An effective transfer process is used to ensure records are correctly recorded and stored;
4. Records are correctly stored to ensure their preservation in good condition;
5. Records can be readily retrieved and access conditions determined; and
6. Effective relationships exist between AOT and its clients.

Opinion and Conclusions*1. Use of management techniques*

A more formalised approach to strategic planning would be of value for measurement of progress, communication of AOT directions to senior departmental management and improved succession planning.

2. Appraisal program

AOT processes work effectively to ensure that records are not destroyed without being subjected to appraisal. We found that the most efficient and effective process is via disposal schedules. Recommendations were made for:

- Development of a functions/records database to enable AOT to take a more pro-active role in initiating and monitoring development of disposal schedules;
- Creation of a streamlined approval process for disposal schedules; and

- Regular review of disposal schedules.

Overall, however, appraisal was carried out to a high standard.

3. Transfer process

The transfer process was found to be working well, apart from the existence of a large backlog of unregistered records estimated to be of the order of seven man-years. It was noted that AOT has adopted thoughtful prioritisation measures and interim procedures that ensure records in the backlog are accessible.

4. Preservation

Conservation and preservation criteria were achieved, although a number of peripheral recommendations have been made in the report. Storage is a major issue at present. AOT expects to run out of storage by December 2002 at current transfer rates. We had some concerns that there had been insufficient research into future storage requirements.

5. Retrieval

Efficient and effective retrieval is the main priority of AOT and is achieved to a high standard. Recent years have seen significant improvements with implementation of the Archives 1 software package, web site development and the use of additional search aids. We found ample evidence of user satisfaction with the services provided. Recommendations were made to achieve greater benefits from use of Archives 1.

6. Effective relationships

Relationships with client agencies were perceived to be extremely good.

7. Other comments

Our overall impression of AOT was favourable. As an organisation it appears to be held in high regard by its clients both inside and outside the public sector. The senior staff have considerable length of service and a commensurate amount of knowledge and experience that contribute to the service that

AOT delivers.

Our report does contain a number of recommendations but they do not reflect major problems. Nevertheless, we believe that if they are implemented they will help to achieve incremental improvements in AOT's effectiveness and efficiency.

It is likely that some present day problems (e.g. management of storage space) may be ameliorated by electronic records but the technology to achieve this is at an embryonic stage.

AUDIT OBJECTIVES, APPROACH AND COST

Audit Objective

The objective of this performance audit was to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the processes involved in appraisal, transfer, storage and retrieval of records at AOT. The audit also sought to determine if adequate mechanisms are in place to identify, store, protect and maintain records created and held by government agencies for posterity.

Scope of the Audit

The scope included holdings of agencies at the AOT and was restricted to registration, storage and retrieval processes and management of those processes. The audit focussed principally on operations at AOT but also included a limited review of archival practices in a sample of government departments. Also, the audit reviewed the relationship between the AOT and government departments and external users.

Audit Criteria

The following criteria were used in our performance assessment of AOT and the sampled departments:

- Use of management techniques to assess, monitor, and improve performance;
- An effective appraisal program exists to safeguard records of value to future generations;
- An effective transfer process is used to ensure records are correctly recorded and stored;
- Records are correctly stored to ensure their preservation in good condition;
- Records can be readily retrieved and access conditions determined; and
- Effective relationships exist between AOT and its clients.

Audit Advisory Committee

In line with the Audit Office's established practice for the conduct of performance audits, an advisory committee was convened to reflect stakeholder views. The committee provided input to the audit's methodology and reviewed the draft report upon its completion. The Auditor-General chaired the committee and its members were drawn from the following areas:

- Archives Office of Tasmania;
- Department of Premier and Cabinet;
- Department of Primary Industry, Water and Environment;
- Department of Education;
- University of Tasmania; and
- Tasmanian Audit Office.

Audit Methodology

Data was gathered through visits to the AOT and each of the agencies audited. Documents relating to policies and procedures in relation to archival practice were examined at each of the locations.

Audit Resources and Timing

Planning for the performance audit commenced in March 2001. Field-testing commenced in April and was completed in June with the report being finalised in July 2001.

The total cost of the audit excluding report production costs is estimated at \$44 230.

BACKGROUND

Legislation

The Archives Office of Tasmania (AOT) was established in 1949 and administers the *Archives Act 1983*. It is the repository for all State and local government records that are no longer of immediate administrative use, but that are considered worthy of permanent or long-term preservation. AOT is administratively linked to the Department of Education.

Records defined ...

The Act 1983 stipulates that no State or local government agency may dispose of any records without the approval of the Archives Office. The statutory definition of 'records' is extremely wide, covering, for example, letters, minutes, reports, financial records, maps and plans as well as a variety of formats; such as paper, photographs, microfilm, sound recordings, film, video and computer-based records.

... public and private

Archival holdings, which date from about 1820, include government documents and records, private historical manuscripts and papers, maps and plans, photographs, sound and videotapes, film and newspapers. The AOT's legislation is unique in the Commonwealth in that it prescribes powers to handle private records. Owners can lodge such records with the AOT as an outright gift or indefinite loan. Records of this type held by the AOT include those of commercial institutions, churches and community organisations and associations and those of individuals that relate to Tasmania. The donors of private records determine conditions of access to their records.

AOT's facilities

The AOT operates out of two premises in the south of the State. One is the Berriedale Repository, a large facility that holds the lion's share of the State's archived records. Transfers of records are processed at Berriedale and it also houses the film archive. The AOT's other site is in Murray Street in the centre of Hobart. This houses the search room, administration offices, conservation laboratory, microfilming facilities as well as further storage for archived materials. The Murray Street facility includes shared space under the control of the State Library of Tasmania (SLT). The AOT's combined total of shelving storage is approximately 17 000 linear metres.

What should be kept?

The functions that government agencies undertake necessitate the creation and maintenance of records. Ultimately, these records are appraised by the AOT staff (often in conjunction with staff of that agency) and an appropriate period for their retention is established. This may be only a fairly short time or at the other end of the scale, their continuing value may be such that they will be transferred to the custody of the AOT to be preserved for on-going use by the government and the public.

In general, records are preserved for the following reasons:

- They provide the information and precedent which forms part of the basis for future government administrative action;
- They provide evidence of business transacted between government agencies and between these agencies and the public;
- They document the activities of government and provide a mechanism for government accountability; and
- They are important culturally for what can be broadly defined as historical research.

Once records have been transferred to the AOT they are sorted, listed and incorporated into overall control systems to ensure the effective retrieval of specific items. The AOT has a range of finding to help users obtain information from records.

Access to records

Conditions of access to government records are decided by the creating agency but most records over 25 years old are freely available for public use, although some records dealing specifically with individuals are restricted for 75 years. Some government records less than 25 years old are also open to the public and others within this period may be made available at the discretion of the State Archivist or on application to the creating agency.

The donors of private records determine conditions of access to their records held by the AOT.

In the year 2000 – 2001 AOT had a budget of \$1.441m and a staff disposition of 24.8 FTEs.

Reviews and Audits in other Jurisdictions

In October 1996 the Auditor-General of Western Australia published a report titled '*For The Public Record - Managing the Public Sector's Records*'. This audit focused on the role of originating departments and found that an appropriate across government legislative and regulatory framework in relation to record keeping was lacking. As a result, incomplete solutions to managing public records had been implemented.

In the Western Australian report it was recommended that the government appoint custodians for its critical records and update legislation governing public sector records management. Further, agencies were urged to identify and better manage their core business records.

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section of the report deals with our findings, conclusions and recommendations made in relation to the audit criteria.

Performance Against Audit Criteria

1 MANAGEMENT

Effective management

There is clear evidence at AOT of effective, industry-leading management as demonstrated by the following examples:

- The State Archivist's chairmanship of the Council of Federal State and Territory Archives (COFSTA);
- Highly motivated staff;
- Good relationships with client agencies;
- Constant improvement in accessibility of records; and
- A state-of-the-art web site.

But ...

Nonetheless, the issues raised in this report are significant and have the potential to lead to short and long term gains in the efficiency and effectiveness of the Archives Office.

In the audit we were looking for formal goals, targets/benchmarks and strategies that would achieve AOT's targets together with performance indicators to measure actual performance. This expectation is consistent with Department of Treasury and Finance (Treasury) guidelines and the recommendations of the 1994 review by Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu.

...formal strategic planning would be valuable

We consider that there is a need for formal strategic planning including goals, measurable targets/benchmarks, strategies to achieve the targets and performance indicators to measure performance against the targets.

The advantages of such a strategy are that:

- Senior departmental management are informed about strategic directions and can objectively assess the performance of AOT;
- What gets measured generally gets done;

- Success needs to be recognised before it can be rewarded;
- Failure needs to be recognised before it can be corrected;
- Public support can be gained by demonstrating results; and
- Continuity planning is enhanced. AOT has a very experienced management team but the lack of a formal strategic plan could make it difficult for a new management in the event of a spate of retirements.

Problems with current plan

1.1 Objectives and standards

We found that AOT does have a strategic plan but that it had a number of deficiencies, namely:

- It was not used for internal management purposes. Rather, it was created as a component of the Department of Education (DoE) strategic plan; and
- Goals were set at too high a level. An example is the first goal – ‘The preservation, as State archives, of State and local government records (and available non-government records) which have continuing value to the community’.

This goal merely restates a basic principle and fundamental requirement of the *Archives Act 1983*. Goals should be objective, measurable, within the power of the goal setter and as specific as possible.

We saw no other evidence that goals had been formally set.

Recommendation

Strategic planning should be revised to deliver goals, targets, strategies and performance indicators that are defined at a useful, realistic level to improve management decision-making and achievement of the AOT mission.

Appendix 1 includes some strategic planning examples that may be a useful guide.

Management response

It is accepted that there may be scope for more specific goals and strategy documentation although the existing plans were developed within the

context and constraints of the Department of Education's planning documentation.

It is also contended however that the perceived level, time-frame, or specificity of goals and strategy statements is an area of possible on-going debate. It is arguable for example, that the statement in 1.3 below is a broad strategy for achieving a goal such as 'the provision of continuing community access to its government's records'. The implicit suggestion that the Archives Office's performance is not monitored is disputed. To use an example cited by the auditors in Section 1.2 - the answering of research enquiries in four weeks - is actually monitored daily and the Archives Office would suggest that checking the date of reply is far from informal and is in fact the only way to do this.

While many of the Office's work processes may appear superficially to be instances of the same thing, experience shows that each of these are highly variable in complexity and scope and only really allow for performance monitoring within each, rather than across, the range of variation. This necessitates constant monitoring against a case-by-case assessment and the consequent revising of priorities against available resources. This is perhaps hinted at by the auditor's recommendations which while covering most of the Office's activities suggest that they all receive priority.

1.2 Benchmarking

Limited use of benchmarking

Annual comparative national statistics are produced by Council of Federal State and Territory Archives (COFSTA) which took over this role from the now disbanded Australian Council of Archives (ACA). However, Audit was advised that targets and benchmarks had not been set.

We did however note that the AOT web site incorporates a Customer Service Charter which includes *inter alia* the following standards:-

- Facilities in the search room will be sufficient to enable the provision of an appropriate service;
- Records requested which are located at Murray Street will be retrieved within 20 minutes;
- All telephone calls will be answered before they ring out;
- Calls will be returned as soon as possible, always within 24 hours;

and

- All correspondence requesting research will be answered within 4 weeks.

There is no formal monitoring that the standards are achieved, however information is obtained from a suggestion book in the search room, staff working in the search room and noting the date on correspondence when responding.

1.3 Strategies

Current strategies
at too high a level

Strategies were outlined for each of AOT's goals but these also were generally set at too high a level for management purposes. Strategies should be specific, achievable courses of action intended to achieve specific goals and targets. As an example, strategy 1.1 states:

'Regulate the destruction and retention of government records as appropriate to their levels of continuing value'

This is a high-level goal rather than a strategy for achieving that goal. Appendix 1 provides examples of lower-level strategies.

1.4 Performance measures

Performance
indicators not used

Performance indicators had not been created. As mentioned above in section 1.2, comparative statistics are published by COFSTA. However, they were not used for strategic planning and appeared to be unsuitable for that purpose since they were generally measures of inputs rather than outputs (e.g. number of employees) and of work activity rather than performance (e.g. public usage of the search room).

2 APPRAISAL PROGRAM

Under this criterion we examined the processes that underlie AOT's appraisal of records to determine how State records are identified for retention. Specifically, we were concerned with disposal schedules, how they are created, applied and reviewed.

2.1 Guidelines

Existing standards

Guidelines for the appraisal process include:

- The Archives Act 1983;
- Australian Standard AS4390: 1996 ('Records Management'); and
- AOT's guideline no. 5 – 'Guidelines For Developing an Agency Disposal Schedule'.

Section 6 of the *Archives Act 1983* requires the State Archivist to deposit and preserve such State records as 'are considered by him to be worthy of preservation', a process referred to within the profession as 'appraisal'.

Australian Standard AS4390: 1996 ('Records Management') is the voluntary code of practice that has been established to help organisations meet their business, legal and fiscal obligations and part 5 deals with appraisal that is described as a three-step process comprising analysis, determination of which records should be captured and how long they should be held.

Criteria for retention

AOT's guideline no. 5 largely reflects AS4390 but provides detailed guidance on assessing the length of time that records should be retained based on the following values:

- Administrative;
- Legal/evidential;
- Financial/audit; and
- Historical/research.

AOT holds training courses to communicate the four values to client agencies backed up by examples of records that reflect the values. Administrative, legal/evidential and financial/audit values tend to be

Guidelines are thorough, practical and accessible

readily definable while the last is not as easy to pinpoint.

The guidelines were found to be thorough and practical, however, they are not sufficient in themselves to determine the value of records to future researchers or historians. The appraisal process necessarily requires the involvement, experience and insight of experienced archivists. Typically, this involves an assessment of the number of researchers who may need the records as well as an understanding of the ease or difficulty of accessing data contained in the records.

An example of the practical problems of ascertaining historical/research value of records is the case of hospital patient records. There are medical practitioners who advocate that all items in a patient's medical history should be retained. On the other hand, there is the view that through total retention the sheer volume of the records would make future research too formidable a task.

2.2 Appraisal processes

General Process

Record destruction is authorised by disposal schedules and destruction authorities

Disposal of records includes their destruction, their removal from the custody of the creating agency, or their transfer to the Archives Office. Under the *Archives Act 1983* records cannot be destroyed nor custody transferred without the authorisation of the State Archivist. Preferably, this is by means of a disposal schedule, which allows for consistent treatment of records over time, a more rigorous review process and documentation of the rationale for decisions made. Where records are not covered by a disposal schedule written authorisation must first be obtained from the State Archivist before disposal can proceed.

At present there are 41 disposal schedules (refer to Appendix 2) that apply to records created in government organisations, however, *Disposal Schedule N°1 for General Administrative Records for State Government Agencies and Authorities* (DS1) has wide application. It covers many administrative, financial and human resource records which are common to all agencies (what might be called 'house-keeping records'). AOT estimates that the general disposal schedule covers approximately 60% of records created in agencies.

To help agencies in the development of disposal schedules AOT has promoted the use of functional analysis, a technique that pivots on the

concept that functions connect records to business activities. Through the development of functionally based business classification schemes and the design of record keeping systems that use such schemes, a clear link is established between an organisation's functions and the associated activities that generate records. Defining the business context of record keeping is a key prerequisite for making and capturing full and accurate records.

Production of
disposal schedules

...

The production of agency-specific disposal schedules is a cyclic process that has occupied considerable AOT resources. The process operates in the following way:

1 Preliminary discussions take place between agency staff and the AOT officer for this project. A draft disposal schedule is prepared and sent to AOT for review. As well as analysing the content the process often involves identifying overlaps with DS1 together with structural and formatting problems.

2 Feedback is given to the agency that re-drafts the disposal schedule for re-submission at which time it is checked by a number of archivists.

3 After further changes the next draft is sent to the State Archivist for approval or suggested revision.

... is effective, but
may be amenable
to streamlining

Audit considers the process to be highly effective in terms of ensuring sound decisions are made, but has some concerns that the number of review processes may be excessive and might deter some agencies from entering into the process. During the audit some AOT staff and some departmental record managers expressed similar opinions.

Recommendation

Consideration should be given to streamlining the development of disposal schedules with emphasis on reducing the number of draft submissions that agencies need to make.

Management response

The process of developing disposal schedules is being constantly reviewed and enhanced by the Archives Office to achieve maximum effectiveness and efficiency. This recommendation is perhaps an indication of an

inaccurate perception of the focus of the legislative framework governing the disposal of government records which is counter to the legal situation. The Act requires agencies to keep all their records until the State Archivist has approved their disposal. This can happen either after receipt of a request from the agency or by a disposal schedule which reduces the number of separate applications to the State Archivist. Both of these processes involve the clear identification of the records involved and the descriptive documentation is generally drafted jointly by agency and Archives Office staff prior to the formal reviewing process of record identification and disposal actions. As all records are unique and once destroyed are gone forever, these disposal authorisations are at the heart of the provisions of the Archives Act and it is considered that they should be dealt with in this light. It is considered by the Archives Office that the model implicit in this recommendation, i.e. allocating a specific amount of time for its completion, is not one that is appropriate for disposal schedule development where the outcome may result in the irreversible destruction of unique records. While there will always be some element of risk management in this process it is considered that this should be minimised as much as possible and that given that the State Archivist issues these “on behalf of the community” it is more important that they are clear and responsible than it is to completely conform to an agency’s timeframe for this development.

Disposal Schedule Coverage

To gauge the extent to which existing disposal schedules cover the entire ambit of government records an informal survey was made of all agencies, see Table 1 below. Generally, responses indicated that there were gaps between the range of functions undertaken by agencies compared to those that were covered by disposal schedules. No agency had complete coverage although almost all did have at least some of their specific activities incorporated in disposal schedules. For example, all agencies were still engaged on functional analysis while others have submitted draft disposal schedules to AOT for consideration.

Table 1: Agency Progress on development of disposal schedules

Agency	Agency would like an update to DS1?	Some agency-specific functions already covered by DS?	Working on functional analysis?	Draft DS currently submitted to AOT?
DoE	✘	✓	✓	✘
DHHS	✓	✓	✓	✘
DIER	✓	✓	✓	✘
DJIR	✘	✓	✓	✓
DPPS	✘	✘	✓	✓
DPAC	✘	✓	✓	✘
DPIWE	✘	✓	✓	✘
DSD	✘	✓	✓	✘
DoTaF	✘	✓	✓	✘

The current level of activity amongst agencies in developing disposal schedules is explained by the following factors:

- Down sizing of agencies creating a dilemma in dealing with the accumulation of records in an environment that had less space for them;
- Freedom of information legislation necessitating improved record keeping practices;
- Publication of AS4390 on record keeping; and
- AOT focusing on preparation of disposal schedules rather than issue of one-off destruction authorities.

Level of coverage is encouraging

Overall, the level of coverage of existing disposal schedules and the number of disposal schedules under development is encouraging.

Centralised Records Database

Audit believes there is a case for the establishment of a centralised records database covering all departmental records. The database would list every function derived from functional analyses at government departments and would provide information on whether the records related to those functions are covered by disposal schedules, where they are held, age of records and whether or not they are covered by a current disposal schedule. The reasons for keeping this database are:

Reasons for establishing a records database

- One important function of a centralised archives office is preservation of records of enduring value. Under the Act records cannot be destroyed without the authorisation of the State Archivist. Preferably, this is by means of a disposal schedule as the disposal schedule approval process has considerable safeguards including separate reviews within AOT. Once approved, the schedule is placed on the AOT web site and available for perusal and comment by the public. Where records are not scheduled, one-off disposal authorities must be obtained from the State Archivist before destruction can proceed.
- Department record managers advised Audit that there are significant volumes of records not covered by disposal schedules. A centrally maintained records database at an appropriately high level would provide a basis for AOT to take a pro-active role in attempting to bring all records under the disposal schedule ‘umbrella’;
- Audit considers that the volume of records in agencies that will eventually be transferred to AOT for long-term/permanent storage is an important factor in making decision about future storage.
- Currently senior AOT staff have most of this knowledge but it is not recorded. A records database would reduce the dependence on senior staff.

Recommendations

Priority should be given to encouraging and assisting departments to perform/complete functional analyses.

Following on from that process, a centralised records database should be established by AOT.

Management response

The Archives Office strongly encourages agencies to allocate resources to this process. In addition, the Office provides assistance and training for this purpose.

The development of such a database is not considered to be an effective use of the resources of agencies or the Archives Office. The process is in fact the same as that undertaken in developing a disposal schedule. It is considered that resources would be better concentrated on developing schedules which will enhance record keeping in agencies, and fulfil legislative obligations. This would not be the case with a centralised records database. The records described in existing schedules already is a source of this information.

2.3 Review of disposal schedules

Reasons for review

Revision of disposal schedules may be necessary because of changes in:

- Functions of the agency;
- Status of information;
- Administrative, legal or audit requirements;
- Agency structure; and
- Records management technology.

An extract from a typical disposal schedule (No 31 issued 30 June 1997) illustrates AOT's policy on reviewing disposal schedules:

‘If the description in the Schedule no longer accurately reflects the nature and function of the records these procedures should not be used. The State Archivist should be informed of the need to revise the Schedule.’

AOT have tended to take on this review function only when the impact of the changes is widespread. For example, Disposal Schedule 11 (‘Municipal Councils Records’) was reviewed and re-issued in response to amendments to the *Local Government Act 1993* that affected all local councils.

Onus on agencies

We accept that the onus is on the owning agency to monitor the appropriateness of disposal schedules because of the greater likelihood that the agency would be aware of relevant changes.

Recommendation

Agencies should implement a regular review of disposal schedules to ensure that the schedules remain current.

Management response

The Archives Office strongly encourages this and believes that most agencies are actively engaged in this process.

2.4 Enter and inspect

Although section 10 of the Act empowers the State Archivist to:

‘...enter and inspect any place under the control of an authority or any place at which he believes on reasonable grounds that any [State] records are being kept’

Hasn't been necessary

this had not been necessary. One of the main reasons cited was that since the 1983 Act came into effect there is a maximum 25-year period stipulated for agencies to retain records at their premises. After 25 years records are to be transferred to AOT. Effectively, this mandatory provision reduced the need for AOT to enter and inspect. Further, the emphasis that the organisation has placed on training has helped to raise the profile of record keeping and the State Archivist believed that agencies are now more diligent with respect to their obligations. This is reflected in agencies maintaining their own record storage facilities in good condition (refer to section 6.3).

2.5 E-mail policies

Email messages are records in fact and law

Electronic messages are records in fact and in law being subject to legislation such as the *Freedom of Information Act 1991* as well as to legal processes such as discovery and subpoenas. In addition to the legislative definition e-mail communications are also covered by AS4390.1 'Records communicated and maintained by means of electronic equipment'.

AOT issued guideline number 10 in November 1999 ('Policy for the Management and Capture of Electronic Messages'). The limitation of the policy is that it lacks detail on specifics that would guide agencies in attending to management of electronic records.

Model guideline ...

A model guideline that would assist agencies was produced by the Information Management Forum (IMF). This body provides an arena for public sector information specialists to discuss broad issues concerning the management of information. Its members are drawn from agencies

and government business enterprises and its activities encompass issues such as library services, records management, archives and the utilisation of technology and telecommunications services.

E-mail policies and procedures were raised at the IMF during 1999 with a sub-committee formed to develop a draft guideline to support AOT's policy on archival requirements in relation to e-mail. It was intended that the guideline would be ultimately issued with whole of government status by the eServices Group in the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC).

... waiting on endorsement

Having been drafted, revised and re-drafted the guidelines, which were based on people's collective experiences and reflected best practice, were sent to DPAC where it was envisaged that they would be endorsed for a whole of government approach and dovetail with AOT's policy on e-mail. To date this has not occurred. Although the guideline lacks the status of a formal whole-of-government-sanctioned document some agencies that were involved in its creation have adopted it as a best practice model.

Recommendation

The Archives Office of Tasmania should follow up the Information Management Forum guideline with the Department of Premier and Cabinet to ensure that it is issued as soon as possible.

Management response

The Archives Office encouraged and facilitated the IMF in the development of this practical guideline to complement the Office's more general email policy statement and endorses this recommendation.

3 TRANSFER PROCESS

This part of the audit was centred on the transfer process, i.e. how records are moved between the creating/owning agencies and AOT.

3.1 Documented transfer processes

Satisfactory policies and documentation

AOT's policies and procedures on transfers are posted on the web site where it is advised that:

‘Records which have been appraised and designated as having PERMANENT value should be transferred to the Archives Office unless otherwise specified in an authorised Disposal Schedule, or an exemption to transfer has been issued by the State Archivist.’

When an agency is ready to dispose of records an application form ('Application to Dispose of State Records' - AOT48), that is available from the web site, must be completed first. The form defines the information, including consignment lists and access restrictions, that must be supplied for the transfer to be accepted.

After receipt of the application, AOT makes an assessment of the records listed. If there are unscheduled records this may involve a more detailed appraisal of the listed records and further consultation with the agency. Following this assessment the agency is contacted to arrange for the physical transfer of the records.

The documentation and processes were found to be thorough and effective.

3.2 Descriptive standards

Descriptive process

When agencies apply to transfer records, AOT identifies whether the material concerned is a continuation of a pre-existing series in their system. If this is so, it will then be treated as the next consignment of that series, if not it will be the first consignment of a new series. Analysis of this kind can occasionally be both complex and time-consuming with accuracy depending on the skills of the archivist, their understanding of archival theory and practice combined with a local knowledge of the relevant agency's functions and holdings. As a quality control process transfer documentation may be checked by either of the

senior archivists or the State Archivist.

Prioritised
processing

While AOT often processes material as a matter of urgency, especially if it is likely to include a significant amount of records which could be destroyed immediately, the overall priority of processing is determined according to broad categories relating to their value and potential use. The applicable criteria are shown below in Table 2.

Table 2: Priority for sorting

<i>Urgent</i>	Processing has to commence immediately for conservation or administrative reasons.
<i>High</i>	There is likely to be immediate demand for access by the agency or public and the existing listings are inadequate for interim retrieval.
<i>Medium</i>	There is likely to be immediate demand for access by the agency or public but the existing listings are adequate for interim retrieval
<i>Low</i>	Unlikely to be of interest to agencies or the public in the short-term.

We found the descriptive process to be efficient and effective.

3.3 Backlog

Reasons for
backlog

AOT cannot control the frequency or volume of records that must be considered for transfer. External factors such as agency closures, amalgamations and restructuring can influence the demands for their services. Consequently, AOT frequently accepts records in the knowledge that it may well be a long time before detailed sorting and descriptive procedures can be completed.

In such cases the transferring agency or private depositor is advised that it will be sometime before the records are included in the finding aids available to the public and that interim access will only be possible through the listings provided at the time of transfer by the agency or owner.

Processing of the accessions and deposits received by AOT is ordered according to the following priorities:

- State records which are likely to be required by the agency for administrative purposes;
- State records of high research value that are on open access;
- Non-state records which have high research interest;
- Other State records; and
- Other non-State records.

Unprocessed records

The informal performance indicator used at the Berriedale Repository to gauge the backlog of unprocessed records is the amount of shelf space that they occupy. While AOT's annual statistics give the numbers and volume of transfers received and the number of transfers processed the amount of unprocessed material at any given time is not normally measured as the situation is fluid. Moreover, assessing the amount of work involved can be problematical. By way of illustration, a transfer of 300 boxes that is a continuation of an existing series and is well listed can be loaded into the system very quickly. One small transfer of especially interesting and valuable records that are not described will take up virtually no space but may involve days of descriptive, conservation and processing work. In addition, work may emerge in the course of processing that was not apparent prior to commencement.

Size of backlog

As at 31 May 2001 there were 491 transfers that had not been fully documented and entered into Archives 1 (AOT's archival management database – see section 5.2 below) and these were taking up 1 792 shelf metres. The backlog represents approximately:

- 4 years of potential storage space at the current growth rate;
- 10% of total holdings at Berriedale; and
- 7 years work for one person working exclusively on clearing the backlog.

We consider that more effort needs to be made to reduce the backlog because of the possibility of reclaiming some storage space and the improved accessibility to the public from having the records entered into Archives 1.

Recommendation

The Archives Office of Tasmania should give priority to reducing the backlog of records awaiting registration.

Management response

Within available resources priority is given to the 'processing' of records which have been taken into the custody of the Office earlier than the legislatively mandated time-frame of 25 years. This may have been done for a variety of reasons such as preservation, agency re-locations or convenience. The only difference in their status from records still in agency custody is that they are physically in the Archives Office. They are not a backlog in the context of the Office's overall role and mandate.

4 STORE, CONSERVE, PRESERVE

Once records are transferred to AOT they have to be stored in appropriate conditions to ensure their long-term viability.

4.1 Storage Requirements

Impending shortage
of storage

Currently, AOT has some records at its Murray Street headquarters but stores the majority at the Berriedale Repository. At 31 May 2001, AOT had by its own reckoning approximately 1 000 linear metres of shelving available out of a total capacity of 17 000 metres. At current transfer rates there will be no available shelving by 31 December 2002.

We considered that given the rapidly declining availability of shelf space for new records that the AOT should be:

- Ensuring it is informed on short-term and long-term storage requirements;
- Developing and prioritising alternative storage strategies, and following formal departmental planning processes to ensure that adequate storage is available as required; and
- Engaging in activities to optimise current storage space.

Need for better
information

At present, AOT has only an approximate idea of the volume of records that may be transferred in the future. The State Archivist argued that his staff do have a reasonable idea of material yet to be transferred based on the regular flow of records and their improving disposal schedule coverage. However, he conceded that there may still be 'a few surprises out there'. When the existing storage was constructed at Berriedale there was an immediate increase in the transfer of records that resulted in the storage being half full within a short period of time. This situation highlights the importance of AOT knowing what records are 'out there' likely to be transferred.

Little evidence of
planning

The only evidence of planning sighted was consideration of a proposal from the National Archives of Australia for co-location with AOT – a scenario that would involve redevelopment of existing storage and building of additional storage at Berriedale. However, this proposal will not now proceed.

Low priority to activities to free up storage space

Activities that could free up additional storage space do not appear to have been given priority. The destruction of records already sentenced, re-sentencing of old records (where current values would indicate excessive records have been retained) and reducing the backlog of records awaiting registration would generate extra shelving capacity.

Recommendation

AOT should give priority to:

- **Obtaining better information on short-term and long-term storage requirements;**
- **Planning for future storage of records; and**
- **Optimising current storage space.**

Management response

The Archives Office no longer has an interest in short-term storage within its own repositories. Agencies are advised on standards for their own use of short-term storage.

Monitoring and assessment of available repository space for long-term storage is a constant process and growth estimates in relation to previous repository expansions have proved reasonably accurate, despite the inherent and inevitable uncertainty in the rate of government record creation in the future. These predictions of space requirements for the planning of previous repository modules have been based on past growth rates. For at least the next ten years these rates are unlikely to vary greatly although towards the end of this period the use of electronic records will begin to impact on space requirements. It is the essence of an archival program that it will require increased storage space over time. While there is some potential for storage space to be released by re-appraisal of records already held this is considered to be minimal and is unlikely to have any significant impact on space availability.

4.2 Appropriate storage

Satisfactory

When transferred records are received at Berriedale one of the archivists' duties is to assess their physical condition. If items are found to be in a damaged state (e.g. wet, ripped, torn, eaten, mouldy, scorched etc) they

are segregated for repair. Minor routine repairs are done at the Repository while those necessitating more elaborate or specialised techniques are forwarded to the conservation laboratory. Similarly, if valuable or unique items are included they are identified for expert conservation treatment.

It is also at this stage that decisions are made as to the best options for long-term storage of the newly arrived records. These decisions are usually made between the two senior archivists and pivot on perceptions of future usage (either by researchers or the originating department) and whether the records are going to be microfilmed.

Paper records are stored in archival boxes in buildings with regulated temperature and humidity levels. Cool storage facilities are available at Berriedale for film media either on reels or in video format. Master microfilms are also stored in similar conditions.

We found that records are held in appropriate conditions.

4.3 Preservation

Detailed
preservation plan
exists

Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu's review in 1994 recommended preparation of a strategic preservation plan as an immediate priority. The Department accepted this recommendation and in September 1995 a preservation plan was produced. It deals with the range of processes involved with preservation from the time that records are received at Berriedale. It prescribes in detail many of the actions that are a part of AOT's routine operations in relation to accessioning and storing records. It also provides the framework for other activities including preparation of a disaster recovery plan.

4.4 Monitoring

Environmental
conditions are
constantly
monitored

Throughout the Berriedale and the State Library facilities thermo-hydrographs are used to monitor temperatures and levels of humidity. Paper traces with one week's worth of data at a time are sent to the conservator who reviews the data for irregularities. Key values are logged and assessed progressively. To ensure their ongoing reliability the thermo-hydrographs are re-calibrated twice yearly.

Monitoring of data collected from thermo-hydrographs in the State Library building has been carried out for several years and has shown

itself to be valuable. On the basis of this information AOT identified unacceptable swings in recorded values of temperature and humidity and was able to successfully argue for a change in the operation of building services.

4.5 Stocktaking

Need for stocktaking

Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu's 1994 review also recommended that cyclic stocktaking be performed to ensure that recording and storage procedures are working correctly, that the material is on hand and is appropriate for retention and is not in urgent need of conservation.

No stock take since 1990

Audit noted that the last stock-take at AOT was undertaken in 1990 and had revealed some losses, possibly due to theft.

The State Archivist had some fundamental concerns with the perceived value of stocktaking in an archives environment and argued that:

- Materials held by AOT are unique and, unless they are copies made in-house (e.g. microfilms), irreplaceable;
- The items do not have an economic value nor are they subject to annual or intermittent re-valuations so stocktaking has no purpose from a normal 'warehousing' viewpoint;
- Retrieval of records for agency and public use is itself a mechanism that constitutes a sample stock-take across the entire holdings; and
- A full stock-take would require a substantial commitment of human resources and to date it had not been considered that this effort would return benefits commensurate with the heavy costs incurred.

We considered that a risk-based stocktaking process need not be particularly disruptive and would provide useful information on security and condition of records.

Recommendation

Targeted records held by the Archives Office of Tasmania should be subjected to an annual stock-take.

Management response

The Archives Office agrees with this recommendation.

4.6 Emergency management planning

Risk of fire

One of the main risks to archived collections is the risk of fire and AOT has implemented strong measures against fire at Murray Street and the Berriedale facility.

The defence against fire at Berriedale is built around sensors connected to the Tasmania Fire Service (TFS) network. In the event of an alarm the Claremont Fire Station (less than 1 km distant) will respond and to date tests have shown that the response is very swift. Officers from that fire station make visits to the Repository and are well aware of the nature of the site and the techniques that they would need to use to extinguish a blaze while minimising damage to records.

In the case of the Murray Street building AOT is under the control of the SLT and the TFS. Smoke and heat detectors are installed throughout the facility and checked annually. Sprinklers are not used because of the collateral damage that water would cause to records.

Microfilm is also used as part of a disaster recovery strategy with originals and copies stored in separate locations. The criteria used for determining the priority of documents for microfilming include level of use and historical value.

Significant risk but all reasonable measures have been adopted

Overall, there is a significant risk but Audit is satisfied that all reasonable measures have been adopted to manage it.

4.7 Security

Satisfactory

AOT has measures aimed at ensuring the security of its holdings but there is no formal security policy. During our audit we reviewed these measures at Murray Street and Berriedale and found them to be satisfactory.

4.8 Electronic records

Usage on the rise

Electronic records have become a routine part of the business world extending into many aspects of everyday life with increasing reliance on

creating, sharing and accessing electronic information. The rise in the number of electronic records is accompanied by the problem of how to manage them.

Despite their new form electronic records, like their paper equivalents, must be kept for varying periods of time with some records warranting permanent retention. Electronic records are less robust than those on paper, they are ethereal and can disappear from computer systems without anyone being aware of their loss. Currently, it is possible to change an electronic record and leave no trace of that change.

Evidentiary standards

It must be possible to have confidence in the evidentiary status of electronic records if they are to support and eventually replace paper records. There is also the problem of access. How does someone read an electronic document when the computer system used to create it no longer exists?

Global problem

The problems are global and record managers and archival professional groups around the world have attempted to solve the problem but to date none have succeeded in finding a suitable solution. These separate groups have come to the same conclusion: technology has not advanced far enough to produce an answer. They have decided that to provide ongoing access to electronic records over a long period of time, one must either print them to paper or keep forever the computer system which created them or migrate them applications across systems changes and content across application changes.

AOT maintaining a watching brief

Presented with these as yet unresolved difficulties, AOT has adopted a 'post-custodial approach' with agencies as an interim measure. Since AOT does not have the resources to acquire or maintain the computer systems used by its clients it places the onus to continue to maintain access to electronic records on agencies. The requirement is contained in disposal schedules approved by the State Archivist. As this problem is common to other jurisdictions AOT is maintaining a watching brief through professional associations and the COFSTA, the peak body that meets twice a year.

Recommendation

AOT should continue to monitor external developments and press for the issue of electronic records to receive priority with national archives groups.

Management response

The Archives Office agrees with this recommendation.

5 RETRIEVAL

This part of audit testing examined the mechanisms that allow users to find information from the records stored at AOT. Testing also encompassed the accessibility of records that had been transferred to AOT but that had not yet been incorporated into the archives.

5.1 Effectiveness of retrieval process

Considered in two parts

In examining retrieval we split the process into two stages; interpretation of the user's need and subsequent ability to locate the desired records.

Identification of desired records

Interpreting users' needs

A point frequently made by archivists is that AOT is not a library and the materials it holds are not organised as they would be in library, a fact that makes the majority of users more dependant on the assistance of staff than would be the case where people want to access information in a library collection. Professional abilities of archive officers and archivists, combined with their expert knowledge of what is held and how it may be relevant to the needs of the visitor, are crucial factors in successfully retrieving records.

Most users are non-expert but ...

According to AOT estimates, between 80% to 85% of users in the search room are amateurs and most often people who are interested in researching their family's history. For this group interpretation is essential because they often have limited knowledge of what AOT holds and how this relates to their need let alone how it is arranged or indexed. The remaining 15% to 20% of search room enquiries come from students, historians and academics who are well versed in research methodologies and archival practices. As a group, they are much less dependent on staff interpreting their needs and retrieval normally just involves the physical processes mentioned above.

Although surveys have not been performed in recent years to assess user satisfaction, it was noted that written complaints are almost unknown, that the suggestion/complaints book includes very few complaints, that AOT provides at least two members of staff in the search room to assist with queries and that the search aids provided (e.g. lists, card indexes,

CD-ROMs) has grown substantially in recent years.

... service is excellent

Similarly, all indications are that fee-paying users making written requests for research by archivists are receiving excellent service.

Locating requested records

This aspect of retrieval applies to all classes of users who wish to access State records. For requests originating from the search room, this retrieval activity is linked to the use of request slips that permit the monitoring of items removed from storage as well as generating a record of their location and the user's identity.

Standards well met

The Service Charter on the AOT web site sets a target that requested records will be available within 20 minutes where held at Murray Street and within 24 hours where the records are held at Berriedale. While statistics are not collected, anecdotal evidence from archivists and perusal of the suggestion/complaints book indicate that the targets are met consistently.

Retrieval by originating agencies

Where agencies have a need to retrieve records that they have previously dispatched to AOT the process is uncomplicated requiring no interpretation. By submitting precise details from accession lists records can be efficiently located and returned.

Satisfactory process

At the agencies reviewed details of records forwarded to AOT were evident. AOT had returned accession lists that the records managers were able to use to update list departmental record keeping systems. However, the process of inputting accession data to departmental records systems was not viewed as a high priority and tended to be something that was done after day-to-day work was completed. Ultimately, having the information available in the departmental records management system would allow easy identification of all records, including those that had been sent to AOT. However, in the meantime hard copy accession lists are available and quite adequate.

5.2 Use of information technology (IT)

New archives software recently purchased

For many years AOT had used software developed by the DoE to progressively index the archival collection. In the mid 1990s DoE implemented a policy of outsourcing IT development and maintenance.

In 1999 when the department was undertaking Year 2000 (Y2K) testing it was determined that the Archives software was not Y2K compliant. This situation was compounded by the fact that the in-house IT system was also no longer 'state of the art' so rather than attempting to upgrade the existing software AOT decided that new a software package would be purchased if possible. At that time, there was no suitable product, but shortly thereafter the Queensland Archives Office contracted for the local company 'Technology One' to develop dedicated archives software - Archives 1.

An AOT team reviewed Archives 1 initially and determined that it would meet their needs with only minor modification. DoE agreed to provide the funds, Treasury agreed to dispense with the tendering process on the grounds that there was no other suitable software and that AOT could not afford to have software custom built.

Offers key word
searching

Archives 1 handles job tracking, transfers, consignments and series but the main advantage of the system lies in its search facilities which include key word search within a series and key word search for the database plus it has flexible reporting using Crystal Report Writer.

AOT not yet gaining
full benefits

At the time of our audit, AOT were not yet gaining full benefits from Archives 1.

- The keyword search facility, which offers the greatest advantage, will require considerable additional work from AOT staff in order to realise the full benefit. Currently, many accession lists only exist as hard copy. To be accessible by the search system those lists need to be loaded electronically. Unfortunately, in many cases the type of information in the lists is not suitable for keyword searching so that AOT will need to decide whether it is worth recreating accession lists in a format suitable for Archives 1.
- Archives 1 is not being fully used in the search room. At present, search room staff use an Intranet facility to find the location of records of known series and item numbers. The intention is for Archives 1 to supersede this facility and consequently the information on which the Intranet facility draws is no longer being updated. Take up of Archives 1 has

been delayed in part because the 'ergonomics' of the enquiry counter in the search room are not adequate for use of such a complex system.

- Search facilities are not yet available to the public. AOT plan to provide a web site front end that will provide a simplified search facility using an Archives 1 public access module.
- There is a need for modification of reports and additional reports. These can be created using Crystal reports but staff were awaiting training in the use of this software.

Recommendation

AOT has invested heavily in Archives 1 and it should be given priority to ensure that maximum benefits are derived.

Management response

This has been the Archives Office's highest priority over the last 18 months and will continue to be so for some time yet. The Office therefore agrees with this recommendation.

6 EFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Our final audit criterion dealt with the way in which AOT interacts with its clients, whether governmental or external.

6.1 Proactive

Meeting agency
training needs

The regular contact that exists between AOT and records managers in agencies allows AOT to identify training needs. Course material varies according to need and there is a range of courses, some of which are sequential requiring that prerequisite courses are completed before attending more advanced units. Amongst courses on offer are those dealing with functional analysis, thesauri and development of agency-specific disposal schedules.

Measures of the perceived success of training exist and evaluation sheets are requested from attendees with data sought from open-ended input rather than the frequently encountered ticking of boxes or selecting numbers on a Likert scale. Informal indications of the impact of training on departments have been noted; for example course nominations often exceed places available; attendees come not just from major agencies but also from smaller organisations; the improving quality of transfers. Another enduring benefit of training is that it builds better relationships with clients. AOT confirmed that record keeping staff from all agencies had attended training courses.

To help people in the community investigate local history or research their family trees AOT has regularly offered an Adult Education course ('How to Use Your State Archives') that is conducted outside of work hours.

6.2 Endorsement by management

Evidence of
management
endorsement

In the two agencies reviewed (i.e. DPAC and DPIWE) the record keeping function appeared to be actively supported by management. Resources had been committed to functional analysis, an undertaking that requires a considerable amount of effort irrespective of the actual method employed. Progress towards development of agency-wide disposal schedules was being made in the two departments.

Satisfactory storage conditions at agencies

6.3 Client record keeping standard

To form an opinion in regard to this matter we undertook a review of long-term record storage facilities used by DPIWE and DPAC and Table 3 details the results. Each of the facilities visited were regularly accessed by record keeping staff that either added new items or needed to retrieve files in line with work activities undertaken by various branches of their agencies.

Table 3: Long-term record storage at agencies

Item	DPIWE	DPIWE	DPAC
<i>Date of inspection</i>	21 May 2001	22 May 2001	21 May 2001
<i>Location</i>	134 Macquarie St	St Johns Park Newtown	Treasury Buildings Macquarie St
<i>Adequate security?</i>	✓	✓	✓
<i>Spare space?</i>	Almost full	Ample space available	Ample space available
<i>Dedicated use?</i>	✓	No – but security not compromised	No – but security not compromised
<i>Suitable physical environment?</i>	✓	✓	✓
<i>Temperature or humidity sensing equipment?</i>	No – but stable environment	No – but stable environment	No – but stable environment
<i>Well ordered for retrieval?</i>	✓	✓	✓
<i>Oldest item</i>	1973	1980s	After 1990
<i>Items safe from flooding?</i>	✓	✓	✓
<i>Fire detection or fighting equipment?</i>	✓	✓	✓
<i>Evacuation plan?</i>	No, due to OHS considerations	No, due to OHS considerations	No, due to OHS considerations

Our limited review of departmental record keeping practices indicated that records were stored in suitable conditions.

6.4 Relationship with non-agency users

A meeting was held with Dr Stefan Petrow from the University of Tasmania's School of History and Classics who has conducted research at AOT over a period of years. He raised concerns about priority setting by AOT and considered that it should have a stronger strategic focus. If it had a more clearly enunciated long-term outlook he believed that AOT would be active in encouraging agencies to create disposal schedules to cover all aspects of their activities.

Suggestions from a university researcher

A number of issues were discussed and some of these overlap with areas already reviewed in other parts of this report. However, a number of suggestions remained:

- To elevate the status of the archival function in particular and record keeping in general he further suggested that the State Archivist should have regular meetings with senior staff at agencies and questioned whether this was an established part of AOT's management strategy.
- It was observed that AOT's management team collectively have a huge experience in archives and represent a very significant component of corporate memory. Mentoring should be part of AOT's long-term focus to ensure that their accumulated knowledge and experience are passed on within the organisation.
- Another problem around the search room concerned noise levels. As an area that is attracting increased patronage, the level of background sound is sometimes a difficulty for researchers who are obliged to work there for lengthy periods. The alternative of booths or discrete quiet areas was discussed.
- The State Archivist noted that the Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu review had also recommended a separate place for researchers. This recommendation was not accepted then and the passing of time has not changed the opinion of the State Archivist who put forward a number of arguments against the proposition based on

efficiency, equity and the difficulty of providing adequate security and supervision across the separate areas.

- User groups could be established so that an exchange of ideas and opinions between them and AOT became regularised thus becoming a forum for community input.

Management response

Some of the Archives Office's comments on the matters mentioned by Dr Petrow are included above.

Dr Petrow questions whether meetings are regularly held with other agency senior staff. The Office's strategy is to meet when appropriate with senior and other staff to discuss archival and record keeping issues and actively encourages the involvement of senior management in these areas.

The Office undertakes an informal mentoring program.

The Office takes all measures within the constraints of effective service delivery in the search room to minimise noise levels.

There is already a considerable degree of informal contact with individuals and groups who use the Archives Office and there has previously been consideration of the setting up of a more formal public user group. The Archives Office will investigate appropriate structures and role for such a forum and the feasibility of its establishment.

CONCLUSION

Management	We considered that a more formalised approach to strategic planning would be of value for measurement of progress, communication of AOT directions to senior departmental management and improved succession planning.
Appraisal	<p>AOT's appraisal processes work effectively to ensure that records are not destroyed without being subjected to appraisal. We found that the most efficient and effective process is via disposal schedules. Recommendations were made for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a functions/records database to enable AOT to take a more pro-active role in initiating and monitoring development of disposal schedules; • Creation of a streamlined approval process for disposal schedules; and • Regular review of disposal schedules. <p>Overall, however, appraisal was carried out to a high standard.</p>
Transfer process	The transfer process was found to be working well, apart from the existence of a large backlog of unregistered records estimated to be of the order of seven man-years. It was noted that AOT has adopted thoughtful prioritisation measures and interim procedures that ensure records in the backlog are accessible.
Store, conserve, preserve	Conservation and preservation criteria were achieved, although a number of peripheral recommendations have been made in the report. Storage is a major issue at present. AOT expects to run out of storage by December 2002 at current transfer rates. We had some concerns that there had been insufficient research into future storage requirements.
Retrieval	Efficient and effective retrieval is the main priority of AOT and is achieved to a high standard. Recent years have seen significant improvements with implementation of Archives 1, web site development and the use of additional search aids. We found ample evidence of user satisfaction with the services provided. Recommendations were made to achieve greater benefits from use of the Archives 1 software package.

Effective relationships

Relationships with client agencies were perceived to be extremely good.

Other comments

Our overall impression of AOT was favourable. As an organisation, it appears to be held in high regard by its clients both inside and outside the public sector. The senior staff have considerable length of service and a commensurate amount of knowledge and experience that contribute to the service that AOT delivers.

Our report does contain a number of recommendations but they do not reflect major problems. Nevertheless, we believe that if they are implemented they will help to achieve incremental improvements in AOT's effectiveness and efficiency.

It is likely that some present day problems (e.g. management of storage space) may be ameliorated by electronic records but the technology to achieve this is at an embryonic stage.

APPENDIX 1 Strategic Planning Example

The following goals, targets, strategies and performance indicators are intended to provide an indication of the nature of the strategic planning that we believe would be helpful for internal management of the Archives Office of Tasmania. It is not intended to be a recommended strategic plan and our intention is that AOT should define its own goals, strategies and plans.

In preparing this reference has been made to the Department of Treasury and Finance's publication, *Performance Information For Management And Accountability Purposes - An Introductory Guide For Tasmanian Inner-Budget Agencies* - October 1997. Examples have also been taken from existing AOT planning and service delivery documentation and practices, as well as from observations made by Audit.

Examples of performance indicators – Archives Office of Tasmania

Goal:

- Ensure that disposal schedules exist for all state and local government records

Target (31/12/2001):

- 90% of functional areas covered by disposal schedules

Strategies:

- Encourage agencies to complete functional analyses
- Develop disposal schedule database
- Encourage agencies to develop disposal schedules through meetings with senior management, newsletters and training

Performance indicator:

- Percentage of records/functional areas covered by disposal schedules
-

Goal:

- Ensure that all disposal schedules take account of continuing value to the community and, in particular, the interests of researchers

Target (31/12/2001):

- Two disposal schedules reviewed by owning authority/AOT each year
-

- Two disposal schedules endorsed by representative users group each year

Strategies:

- Review sample of disposal schedules by owning authority and AOT
- Seek views of representative sample of researchers and other users on specific disposal schedules

Performance indicators:

- Number of disposal schedules reviewed by owning authority/AOT
- Number of disposal schedules endorsed by representative users group

Goal: Develop management and information systems that enable effective retrieval of all records and information.

Target (31/12/2001):

- Key word access in Archives 1 available for 90% of the hard-copy lists available in the search room
- Provide an internet search facility using Archive's keyword searching
- Reduce backlog of unregistered records to 50% of current levels

Strategies:

- Provide staff with Crystal report skills
- Provide an internet search facility
- Identify records for which listings not currently suitable for Archives 1 and develop suitable accession lists for input
- Give priority to ensuring the registration function is resourced at all times

Performance indicators:

- Percentage of hard-copy lists available to key word searching in Archives 1
 - Provision of an internet search facility using Archives 1's keyword searching
 - Volume of shelving used for backlog of records
-

Goal:

- Provide fast and effective services to users of archived materials

Target (31/12/2001) as per Customer Service Charter:

- Records requested which are located at Murray St will be retrieved within 20 minutes, others within 24 hours
- Calls will be returned as soon as possible and always within 24 hours
- All correspondence requesting research will be answered within 4 weeks
- Less than 1 adverse comment (suggestion book, letters, phone calls) relating to service, per month, on average

Strategies:

- Produce microfiche copies of high-demand records
- Ensure search room is staffed by qualified archivists
- Provide self-help tools including internet search facilities
- Publicise the service charter in the search room

Performance indicator:

- Number of adverse comments on service in the suggestion book, by letter and by telephone

APPENDIX 2 DISPOSAL SCHEDULES ISSUED TO DATE

No.	Title	Applicable to
1	General Administrative Records	All departments and local government
2	School & College Records	Department of Education
4 ¹	Functional Records Office of Consumer Affairs	Department of Justice and Industrial Relations
5	Records of the Commissioner for Review	Department of Justice and Industrial Relations
6	Records of the Corrective Services Division	Department of Justice and Industrial Relations
8 ¹	Functional Records Tasmanian Building & Construction Industry Training Board	Tasmanian Building & Construction Industry Training Board
9	Functional Records Navigation & Survey Authority of Tasmania	Marine and Safety Authority
10	Property & Valuation Records	Department of Primary Industry, Water and Environment
11	Council Records	Local government councils.
12	Functional Records of the Tasmanian Public Finance Corporation	Department of Treasury and Finance
13	Functional Records of the Training (Planning) Division - Office of Vocational Education and Training	Department of Education
14	Functional Records of the Office of the Crown Solicitor	Department of Justice and Industrial Relations
15	Functional Records of Pharmaceutical Services	Department of Health and Human Services
16	Litigation Records of the Crown Law Office	Department of Justice and Industrial Relations
18 ¹	Functional Records of the Business Affairs Office	Department of Justice and Industrial Relations

19	Records of Financial Assistance provided under the TDA Act	Department of State Development
20	Patient and Medical Records	Department of Health and Human Services
21	Records of the Port of Launceston Authority	Launceston Port Corporation
22	Records of the Housing Services Program	Department of Health and Human Services
23	Records of Sexual Health Program incorporating HIV/Aids Unit	Department of Health and Human Services
24	Records of Tasmanian Certificate of Education Assessment - Tasmanian Secondary Assessment Board	Department of Education
25	Family and Child Health Records	Department of Health and Human Services
26	Workers Compensation Records - Workplace Standards Authority	Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources
27	Functional Records of the Tasmanian Ambulance Service	Department of Health and Human Services
28	Records of the Ombudsman	Department of Justice and Industrial Relations
29	Freedom of Information Requests FOI Unit	Department of Police and Public Safety
30	Records relating to the Development and Management of Tasmanian Rural and Marine Industries and Resources	Department of Primary Industry, Water and Environment
31	Functional Records of the Nursing Board of Tasmania	Department of Health and Human Services
32	Student Administration Records	University of Tasmania
33	Records relating to Employment Programs	Department of State Development
34	Travel Centre Records	Devonport City Council
35	Records relating to the Spectacles & Intra Ocular Assistance Scheme	Department of Health and Human Services
36	Dental Health Records	Department of Health and Human Services
37	Functional Records of Arts Tasmania	Department of State Development

38	Records of Ministers of the Crown	Ministerial Offices
39	Functional Records of the Public Trust Office	Department of Justice and Industrial Relations
40	Records of Magistrates Courts	Department of Justice and Industrial Relations
41	Records of resource management appeal hearings - Resource Management and Planning Appeal Tribunal	Department of Primary Industry, Water and Environment
42	Records of hearings for resource planning approvals - Resource Planning and Development Commission	Department of Primary Industry, Water and Environment
43	Records of the regulation and management of Transport Infrastructure and Services -	Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources
44	Records of the Department of Treasury and Finance	Department of Treasury and Finance

¹**Note:** Gaps in number sequence have been caused by changes to departmental functions and amalgamations

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Parliament of Tasmania

The Office of the Governor
House of Assembly
Legislative Council
Legislature-General

Ministerial Portfolio and Government Departments

Department of Education
Department of Health and Human Services
Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources
Department of Justice and Industrial Relations
Department of Police and Public Safety
Department of Premier and Cabinet
Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment
Department of State Development
Department of Treasury and Finance

Government Business Enterprises

Civil Construction Services Corporation
Egg Marketing Board
Forestry Tasmania
Hydro Tasmania
Motor Accidents Insurance Board
Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority
Printing Authority of Tasmania
Rivers and Water Supply Commission
Southern Regional Cemetery Trust
Stanley Cool Stores Board
Tasmanian Dairy Industry Authority
Tasmanian Grain Elevators Board
Tasmanian International Velodrome Management Authority
Tasmanian Public Finance Corporation
The Public Trustee
Tote Tasmania

State Owned Companies

Aurora Energy Pty Ltd
Burnie Port Corporation Pty Ltd
Hobart Ports Corporation Pty Ltd
Metro Tasmania Pty Ltd
Port of Devonport Corporation Pty Ltd
Port of Launceston Pty Ltd
Transend Networks Pty Ltd
TT Line Company Pty Ltd

Statutory Authorities

Private Forests Tasmania
Retirement Benefits Fund Board
State Fire Commission

Local Government

Break O'Day Council
Brighton Council
Burnie City Council
Central Coast Council
Central Highlands Council
Groular Head Council
Clarence City Council
Derwent Valley Council

Devonport City Council
Dorset Council
Flinders Council
George Town Council
Glamorgan/Spring Bay Council
Glenorchy City Council
Hobart City Council
Huon Valley Council
Kentish Council
King Island Council
Kingborough Council
Lalorbe Council
Launceston City Council
Meander Valley Council
Northern Midlands Council
Sorell Council
Southern Midlands Council
Tasman Council
Waratah/Wynyard Council
West Coast Council
West Tamar Council

Duivenon Regional Waste Management Authority
Esk Water Authority
Hobart Regional Water Authority
Lalorbe/Kentish Joint Authority
North West Water Authority
West Coast Hospital and Community Service Pty Ltd
West/North West Councils Joint Authority

Public Bodies

Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania
ANZAC Day Trust
Ben Lomond Skifield Management Authority
Clyde Water Trust
Council of Law Reporting
Office of the Electricity Regulator
Fruit Crop Insurance Board
Government Prices Oversight Commission
Inland Fisheries Commission
Inveresk Railyards Management Authority
Legal Aid Commission
Launceston Sailors Home Trust
Local Government Association of Tasmania
Marine and Safety Authority Tasmania
Nature Heritage Trust
Parliamentary Superannuation Fund
Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens
St Giles Society
TAFE Tasmania
Tasmanian Beef Industry Research
Tasmanian Building and Construction
Industry Training Board
Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery
Tasmanian State Service Workers Compensation Scheme
Tasmanian Wilderness Heritage Trust
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Tsuneichi Fuji Trust
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Wellington Park Management Trust



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