

About the Government Records Repository






The Government Records Repository (GRR) is the business unit of State Records NSW (State Records), the agency responsible for ensuring best practice in all aspects of official recordkeeping throughout the NSW Government. The GRR operates a world-class storage facility in State Records' Western Sydney Records Centre (WSRC) in Kingswood, NSW. The GRR was established in 1955 and began operating from the Kingswood site in 1974.

All State records must be stored in accordance with the provisions of State Records' Standard on the Physical Storage of State Records, and the GRR provides storage and retrieval services which conform fully to this Standard and to the Australian & International Standard on Records Management AS ISO 15489-2004. A member of GRR's staff was on the committee which developed former Australian Standard AS 4390.6-1996 (Records Storage), the basis of the current International Standard.

The GRR observes world's best practice in all aspects of its services and operations, including its environmental controls, fire protection mechanisms, security systems, and disaster & recovery plans. Our greatest asset is our staff: a long-serving, experienced and dedicated work force committed to providing efficient, friendly and timely services to our clients.

1. Environmental controls

The Government Records Repository (GRR) has three storage levels for its valued clients in the NSW public sector:

-  **Short-term** – for records with a retention period of 7 years or less and low retrieval.
-  **Prime** – for records with a retention period of 8 years or more, or with high retrieval.
-  **Special** – vault storage for special media formats such as magnetic tape and film.

Our buildings are purpose-built and of concrete construction; all internal infrastructure, including electrical equipment, pipes, shelving and racking, is checked regularly to ensure it is safe and in good condition. A team of full-time cleaners ensures the cleanliness of storage areas, and pest control programmes are undertaken regularly and frequently.

The WSRC employs a full-time Facilities Manager who is responsible for ensuring all maintenance issues are resolved speedily and effectively.

1.1 Short-term storage

The records of clients who choose our **Short-term** level of storage are kept in a stable environment within the range of 15° to 27° C and 30% to 60% relative humidity as recommended in the Standard on the Physical Storage of State Records. In accordance with this Standard, all records storage areas exclude all direct sunlight, and the air in records storage areas circulates freely. As we occupy our own site, and are not part of an industrial area, air quality is good.

1.2 Prime storage

Clients who choose the GRR's **Prime** storage for their medium – and long-term or high-use records are selecting environmental conditions maintained to world standards for the preservation of paper records. The GRR specialises in the storage of long-term and vital Government records and, unlike most private sector companies, the majority of our storage areas are **Prime** storage.

These areas are fully air-conditioned and dehumidified, and are constantly monitored at the specified optimal conditions for the storage of paper records. Temperatures are maintained at 20° C ± 2° and relative humidity at 55% ± 5%, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. The GRR utilises the professional conservation staff of State Records NSW and the latest in BMS technology to monitor and maintain these conditions.

In our **Prime** storage areas the air is filtered to exclude dust and other particles, as well as acidic and oxidising gases; and all areas are well ventilated. Excess light can damage records, so in addition to excluding sunlight these storage areas are equipped with UV filtered fluorescent lighting and timer controlled switches.



1.3 Special storage

The GRR operates two **Special** storage vaults for magnetic media and film. These vaults have all the features of our Prime storage, but are run at $18^{\circ}\text{C} \pm 2^{\circ}$ and $35\% \text{RH} \pm 5\%$. Their plant, and security and fire systems, operate separately to our paper storage areas to ensure maximum protection of special-format media.

1.4 Energy-saving initiatives

It is a primary requirement that the GRR maintain optimal indoor temperature and humidity conditions – but we are conscious of our responsibilities regarding water and energy consumption. That is why our latest storage building, the award-winning Stage 6 of the WSRC, employs a state-of-the-art geothermal air-conditioning system.

This system utilises geo-exchange technology to use the earth as a heat sink and heat source, eliminating the need for more conventional equipment like a cooling tower or a boiler. Because the earth's temperature below 6 metres remains constant between $17\text{--}19^{\circ}\text{C}$ throughout the year, this provides an opportunity to exchange heat energy. The GRR's geo-exchange system circulates

water through a series of 70 bores, each 100 metres deep, coupled to reverse-cycle air-conditioning units. The Stage 6 building of WSRC is the largest floor space conditioned by a geo-exchange system in Australia.

Not only does the GRR receive great benefits in energy and water savings, and eliminate the potential risk of Legionella, but we achieve lower maintenance costs. This means we can provide our world-class **Prime** level of storage at a cheaper cost to our clients.

2. Fire protection

According to the provisions of State Records' Standard on the Physical Storage of State Records, all State records must be stored in areas with appropriate fire protection systems such as heat/smoke detection, fire alarms, sprinkler systems and extinguishers.

All the GRR's storage areas, **Short-term, Prime** and **Special** storage, have sophisticated fire detection and prevention systems. The WSRC complex is connected by land-line to two local Fire Stations; average response time, tested regularly, is 7–8 minutes.

2.1 Early detection sprinkler systems

The majority of GRR storage areas use VESDA (Very Early Warning Smoke Detection) fire detection systems, one of the most sensitive detection systems available. VESDAs detect a fire before visible smoke or flame is apparent. By means of highly sensitive air sampling technology, VESDAs alert in-house personnel to conduct an inspection of affected areas even before the automatic generation of a fire alarm. VESDAs utilise aspiration-type air sampling systems which achieve levels of sensitivity and performance as much as 1,000 times greater than conventional, spot-type detectors. Aspiration is particularly suited to records storage areas as it is capable of effectively monitoring large areas, up to 8,000 square metres per unit.

The GRR's VESDA systems are coupled with a rigorously maintained water sprinkler system designed to meet the requirements of the Building Code of Australia.

2.2 State-of-the-art gaseous fire suppression systems

While its fire detection and sprinkler systems are world-class in all storage areas, the GRR has gone one step further in its latest building, the award-winning Stage 6 of the WSRC. In this building, one of the world's largest Total Flooding Gaseous Systems has been installed.

This solution couples a sophisticated detection system, comprising latest technology in the form of laser point detectors, utilised to detect fire at an incipient stage, with Argonite gas distributed and discharged through a network of pipework to the fire affected area. The Argonite gas is environmentally friendly as well as a safe gas for occupied areas.

Additionally, the GRR's special purpose vaults are both equipped with gaseous fire suppression systems using FM200 gas.



3. Security

The GRR prides itself on its advanced security features and procedures. In accordance with the provisions of State Records' Standard on the Physical Storage of State Records, all records in the GRR are stored in areas with 24-hour physical and/or electronic surveillance, alarm systems and strictly controlled access.

All access points to the storage complex are locked at all times and entry is via monitored proximity cards. The GRR also has a restricted master key system which is strictly regulated and monitored. Only GRR staff members are allowed to access records in storage areas, although tours and inspections are allowed under the strict supervision of GRR personnel. External and some key internal access points and loading docks are monitored by CCTV.

The WSRC has a dedicated 24-hour link to a reputable security provider, all internal areas are fitted with a comprehensive system of infra-red motion detectors, and all external windows and access points are fitted with reed switches. The alarms in all buildings are activated at the close of business each day, and after-hours entry to the building is possible only

by authorised personnel with the appropriate security code. Only senior, long-serving GRR personnel are allocated a security code.

All GRR staff are subject to police checks and sign confidentiality declarations prior to employment.

3.1 On-site security staff

In addition to our comprehensive security alarm system and the dedicated link to our specialist security providers, the WSRC has on-site security personnel. The site is fully enclosed with perimeter security fencing, and the only access is via a purpose-built guard house which is manned by a security officer between the hours of 7:00am to 7:00 pm. All visitors to the GRR must sign in with the security guard and wear a security authentication tag. The guard house is also equipped with monitors connected to internal and external CCTV.

Importantly, the WSRC has a 24-hour on-site residential caretaker.

4. Disaster management

The GRR recognises that Disaster Management is an integral part of good management practice in public offices. In accordance with the provisions of State Records' Standard on the Physical Storage of State Records, the GRR has prepared and maintains a Business Recovery Plan (BRP). This plan identifies our initial responses to disaster, provides for business continuity and provides a template for quick recovery.

An integral part of the GRR's business continuity plan is its Business Area Recovery (BAR) Plan. The BAR Plan is activated when an incident occurs which may cause, or lead to, prolonged loss of access to its information retrieval services. This plan is tested regularly. Moreover, the GRR's BAR Plan is classed as an essential State Government service. The GRR's BAR plan is submitted to, and approved by, State Cabinet as part of an over-arching state-wide NSW Business Continuity Plan (BCP).

The GRR's electronic business recovery procedures were recently independently audited and no inconsistencies or failures were noted.

5. Sophisticated business systems

As befits our status as a world-class supplier of quality records storage and services, the GRR employs the latest technology and systems in our business operations.

5.1 Repository management system

The GRR utilises O'Neil Software's RS-SQL to manage all aspects of our operations. Used in over 850 facilities throughout 60 countries, more of the world's records are managed off-site on RS-SQL than any other software package. This sophisticated software allows the GRR and our clients immediate access to a wide variety of data about all aspects of their holdings.



Features include:

- **Barcoding:** the GRR uses barcoding technology to assign unique identifiers to boxes, files and tapes. All our barcode labels are produced on-site at the GRR, and distributed as necessary, to ensure utmost accuracy, reliability and usability. The GRR provides all barcode labels to clients free of charge. Code 39 symbology is used as a standard, though our equipment and systems can recognise a variety of barcode formats.
- **Point-to-point tracking:** because every item has a unique code, the GRR can track any box, file or any other item in storage, to and from the shelf, to the van, to the customer's site and back again. We know the date and time each action occurred every step of the way, and have the ability to determine who completed the work.
- **Client data and reports:** the GRR can provide raw data or customised reports to our clients at the press of a button. For example, we can list all boxes and files that have been retrieved from the Repository, showing the date retrieved and the number of days out of storage. This allows the client to determine which boxes or files are not being returned to storage and are able to be


removed from the account, thereby avoiding the storage charges. We can provide reports that track the movement of individual boxes or files, and data which show total activity levels for individual accounts or groups of items.

5.2 GRRWeb

GRRWeb, our web interface software, allows our clients fast and flexible real-time access and control of their records via the Internet.

Features include:

- **Real-time search:** our clients can utilise our system's advanced search capabilities, we can pre-define searches for seamless and easy use. Clients can even create their own searches by using our advanced search tool, and work dynamically with the results.
- **Simple ordering:** ordering services on-line is exceptionally easy using a simple 'shopping cart' system. Requests can be printed, removed or placed on an order. Orders are not limited to pick up and delivery requests – supplies and services can also be ordered.
- **Current holdings data:** clients can edit, amend or index box and file metadata directly on the system, and look up transfer and status



information about their boxes at any time. Clients can run their own reports to produce an up-to-date summary of off-site holdings.

5.3 Ancillary systems

As the major supplier of storage to NSW Government agencies, the GRR is very aware of the importance of establishing and retaining information of the provenance, or prior ownership, of State records. The GRR has developed its own sophisticated information system to track and record the ownership history and other important transfer details relating to its holdings.

We also retain comprehensive data on those boxes of records formerly stored in the GRR and subsequently removed, destroyed or transferred as State archives.

5.4 Customised software

The GRR employs its own application developers, who are expert in our requirements and those of our clients. Accordingly, the GRR can provide customised database software for data entry, scanning and boxing, location tracking and other records-related services.

6. Disposal of records

A core function of the GRR is to ensure that all legal requirements are met concerning the disposal of State records, whether they be ultimately destroyed or transferred as State archives.

6.1 Destruction safeguards

The *State Records Act 1998* prescribes penalties for the illegal or unauthorised destruction of any State record. Accordingly, the GRR has rigorous systems in place to ensure that all records destructions have appropriate client approval, are thoroughly documented and accurate, and are legal under the terms and provisions of the relevant Disposal Authorities and Guidelines issued by State Records NSW.

We require written Disposal Authorisations signed by a senior officer of the responsible agency with specific reference to the instrument under which the records are being destroyed. These Authorisations are checked against our control systems by a member of our professional staff and any anomalies are immediately followed up with the agency's records staff. The GRR's professional staff are expert in the provisions and implementation of Records Disposal Authorities.

All paper records are pulped under our supervision and all resulting waste is recycled. Magnetic media and other formats are destroyed by incineration in a suitable third-party facility. Destruction certificates are provided on request.

6.2 Transfer as State archives

The GRR can provide a seamless transfer of records required as State archives. The GRR has a number of experienced archivists on staff who are fully trained in the listing and documentation requirements of State Records NSW. The GRR can provide a wide range of archival processing services, including preparation of applications for archival transfers and ancillary documentation, and compilation of consignment lists.

7. The GRR Workforce


While the GRR is justifiably proud of its world-class facilities, we believe our greatest asset is our staff: a mature, stable workforce with an average length of employment with the GRR of over 7 years. Our staff are Government employees who recognise the responsibilities inherent in the handling, protection, preservation and storage of State records.

State Records NSW has a published Code of Conduct which all GRR staff must sign. All staff attend training in ethics and the Code of Conduct, and the responsibilities of Government employees. In addition, GRR staff must sign a customised confidentiality declaration.

All GRR personnel have a good knowledge and understanding of their responsibilities under the *State Records Act 1998*.

7.1 Professional staff

We have a dedicated team of professional staff who oversee our value-added services such as appraisal, culling, sentencing and data entry. These staff are experienced graduates, with post-tertiary qualifications in information management, archives administration and computing.



All our professional staff have an in-depth knowledge of the *State Records Act 1998*. They have a wide range of experience in both compiling and implementing the general and functional disposal authorities issued by State Records NSW. Functional Disposal Authorities that the GRR has written include those for the Department of Education & Training, the Office of Fair Trading and numerous smaller NSW government agencies. The GRR compiled a functional disposal authority for the former Northern Sydney Area Health Service upon which the current GDA 21 was based.

All professional staff have attended formal training relating to relevant NSW privacy legislation, including the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* and the *Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002*.

Our professional staff have decades of combined experience in the sentencing, appraisal and culling of records. Our expertise has been developed through the wide variety of clients that we service, having carried out appraisal projects for Hospitals, Community Health Centres, local Government, central

agencies, the Courts, specialist technical organisations and small, medium and large State and Federal Government bodies.

7.2 Courier services and personnel

The GRR utilises a dedicated team of specialised couriers for pickups and deliveries within the Sydney metropolitan and Illawarra regions. GRR couriers are GRR employees, not subcontractors. Like our office and warehouse staff, all GRR couriers are subject to police checks and sign security declarations.

GRR couriers have security-alarmed, air-conditioned vehicles with purpose-designed features to ensure the preservation and safety of State records. Each courier generally has a set delivery run or area, which increases efficiency through familiarity with drop-off locations and authorised customer personnel.

Whilst unattended all courier vehicles are locked and security alarms activated.





The **Government Records Repository** is the Business Unit of



It is a world-class, fully secure storage facility operating out of the Western Sydney Records Centre (WSRC).

If you would like further information please call the Customer Service Unit on (02) 8805 5325 or visit our home page at

<https://www.records.nsw.gov.au/records-repository>

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