# Records risk for NZ public sector

**New Zealand government agencies have been given a rap on the knuckles for poor record-keeping practices in the 2014-205 annual report from Archives New Zealand, which found that that important documents could be damaged, destroyed or inappropriately accessed as a result.**

Chief Archivist Marilyn Little said it was "disappointing to see that, although the Act (Public Records Act 2005) came into force 10 years ago, barely half of the public offices audited in 2014/15 have record-keeping maturity at or above the level of a managed approach to records management.

"My strongest concerns are about the absence or ineffectiveness of reporting on record-keeping to leadership within public offices and the ongoing low levels of appropriate records disposal."

Record-keeping audits were undertaken across 33 NZ public offices in 2014/15, with self-assessment followed up by an on-site audit. This included tertiary education providers, state-owned enterprises, and government departments.

The report found that committing resources to dispose of physical records is still a challenge for most public offices.

"The effective management of born-digital records has been hindered by a generation of fragmented approaches across public offices to records management. The legacy of this era is a complex environment in which to develop processes for disposal, transfer and the future management of born-digital records."

"It is important to note that the audits were designed to assess overall recordkeeping maturity. In many public offices this was found embedded in business processes, procedures and systems, as opposed to specific recordkeeping programmes.

Some of the main concerns noted in the Archives NZ report included:

- public offices are not regularly reviewing and/or revising records management policies, procedures and directives. Ideally this should occur annually or biennially.

- 2014/15, there were fewer public offices monitoring and reviewing performance goals and objectives than in previous audit years. Most public offices' self-assessments indicated that more work is required in this area.
- Some public offices have provided records management training to operational records staff, but again the lack of monitoring and regular review of training plans was a cause for concern.
- more than half of the public offices audited did not have regular monitoring or reporting on policies, procedures and processes
- Some public offices are storing records in various semi-structured network drives and physical storage areas without comprehensive business rules, policies, or procedures. This haphazard approach exposes records to significant risks of loss and inaccessibility.
- As in 2012/13 and 2013/14, many storage facilities were managed on an ad hoc basis with few controls in place.
- Under half of the public offices audited in 2014/15 have disaster recovery plans for digital records that incorporate roles and responsibilities.
- Disposal and transfer processes are under-developed in nearly all the public offices audited. Disposal by systematic transfer of archival records to Archives is inconsistent. Well over half the public offices audited have yet to develop plans to create and implement policies, procedures or business rules for the disposal of records.
- Many public offices had plans to replace aging document management systems with enterprise content management systems offered as part of the all-of-government solution. Some public offices have put on hold the review of business classifications or taxonomies, metadata and the implementation of disposal authorities so that these can form part of the wider implementation plan of their new systems.

The report concludes with the observation that although the NZ Public Records Act came into force nearly 10 years ago, "There has been no clear and sustained improvement over the five years of the audit programme."

The full report is available HERE

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