

# Records Retention & Disposal Policy & Procedure

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## Purpose and Scope

This policy defines requirements relating to the retention and disposal of all RANZCOG organisational records in accordance with RANZCOG regulations and policy, and relevant New Zealand and Australian legislation. Principles and standards defined in this policy are consistently applicable to all records irrespective of their medium and format.

A 'record' includes any form of physical or digital information, including documents, data, audio-visual recordings and images, email and correspondence that contains evidence of significant business decisions or activities, or that defines organisational governance, assets, and operations. This includes records that have been converted from physical originals to digital formats.

## Policy

All members of RANZCOG staff, including management and members of the executive, are *individually responsible for making and keeping records of organisational business activities and decision-making*. This includes formal correspondence, agreements or undertakings involving external people and entities.

These records need to be made and kept in a designated RANZCOG system to comply with Commonwealth and National legislative requirements pursuant to:

- Corporations Act (Commonwealth of Australia) 2001
- Companies Act (New Zealand) 1993
- Evidence Act (Commonwealth of Australia) 1995
- Evidence Act (New Zealand) 1996
- Electronic Transactions Act (Commonwealth of Australia) 1999
- New Zealand Electronic Transactions Act (New Zealand) 2002
- Privacy Act (Commonwealth of Australia) 1988 and Australian Privacy Principles
- Privacy Act (New Zealand) 1993 and New Zealand Privacy Principles.

Depending upon the jurisdiction that Australian RANZCOG offices are operating in, State legislation is also applicable. For example, wilful destruction of evidence is a statutory crime under the Crimes (Document Destruction) Act (VIC) 2006. The Evidence (Document Unavailability) Act (VIC) 2006 allows courts to take action to remedy unfairness caused to any party due to the unavailability of evidence in the form of a record or document.

In addition to legislation, retention and disposal of research data is governed by:

- [The Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research](#): Management of Data and Information in Research (2018)

- [Te Apārangi/Royal Society Code of Professional Standards and Ethics in Science, Technology, and the Humanities](#) - Responsibilities and Standards, 8 (2019).

These codes require that data collected for research purposes is managed and retained according to conditions consented to by the research subject(s). These principles reflect the sensitive and private nature of some forms of information collected for medical research purposes.

### 1.1 Retention/Disposal Reference Guidelines

RANZCOG plays a significant advisory role in Public health in Australia and New Zealand, receives some forms of government funding, and increasingly shares information and data with government entities and stakeholders. To support good record-keeping practice that aligns with Public sector expectations, RANZCOG will refer to and apply standards and principles established under the Archives Act 1983 (Commonwealth of Australia), Public Records Act (Vic) 1973, Public Records Act (NZ) 2005 and Official Information Act (NZ) 1982.

While not directly subject to Public sector legislation, RANZCOG will apply the following standards to inform RANZCOG's retention and disposal actions:

- Commonwealth of Australia AFDA ([Administrative Functions Disposal Authority](#))
- Public Record Office Victoria [Retention and Disposal Authority for Common Administrative Records](#)
- New Zealand Archives General Disposal Authority 6 ([Common Corporate Service Public Records](#)).

These standards require that records be retained for *a specified period after the last action, use or reference based on the record has concluded*. See section 1.3 below for further definition of retention periods. Digitisation and Destruction of Records

Original source records that have been digitized may be destroyed in accordance with the Contract and Commercial Law Act (NZ) 2017 and Evidence Act (Commonwealth of Australia) 1995 *on the condition that the integrity of the digitization process is verifiable*. At minimum, the digital copy must capture the complete document, including text, figures (tables, charts etc.) and graphics, to the same standard of legibility as the original. Digitization actions that are applied to a large volume of records, or records that need to be retained permanently (see section 1.3 below), must be managed in line with Public sector records management practice. The following standards will be used to guide digitization of RANZCOG source records in Australia and New Zealand:

- National Archives of Australia [Preservation and Digitisation Standard](#)
- New Zealand Archives [Destruction of Source Information Guideline](#).

### 1.2 Retention/Disposal Principles

The following principles apply to retention and disposal of RANZCOG records.

#### Permanent Retention

- Records that hold enduring cultural or historical significance for RANZCOG and its membership will be *retained and managed permanently in their original form* unless digitization and disposal of physical originals is authorised by the CEO.
- Records that contain information of enduring Public or social interest, and/or provide evidence of significant RANZCOG contributions to the advancement of medical research, public health advice and women's health programs, education, professional knowledge and practice, will be *retained and managed permanently in their original form, or as a reliable and permanent digital copy*.
- Records that define RANZCOG's overall organisational planning, governance and/or accountability, such as master copies of records that define the constitution, regulations and organisational policy frameworks, activities and decisions of the Board, Council, Executive Leadership Team and Standing Committees, annual reports and consolidated annual financial statements, and RANZCOG strategic plans, and risk and asset registers, will be *retained and managed permanently in their original form, or as a reliable and permanent digital copy*.

- Aggregated summary records relating to member and trainee histories, including all research and educational activities and attainments, will be retained permanently in a digital format.
- Aggregated summary records relating to employee histories, including role(s), position description, and period of employment, will be retained permanently in a digital format.

### Retention of Records containing Personal and Private Information

- Records containing private information or data will be collected and retained in accordance with applicable [Australian Privacy Principles](#) and/or [New Zealand Privacy Principles](#) – i.e. only with consent, and for the purpose and period of time that it was originally collected, unless extended consent is obtained.

### Common Administrative Records Retention

- All forms of record that relate to common administrative functions (e.g. contracts and agreements, audit and investigation records, internal project records, general communications, general HR administrative records, financial administration, ICT and asset management records, health and safety records) will be retained in accordance with the standards defined in section 1.1.
- These standards generally require that administrative records be retained in a digital format for at least *7 years after the last action, use or reference based on the record has concluded*.

### Temporary or Ephemeral Records

- Records of a *facilitative or transitory* nature may be destroyed when reference ceases: this includes records created to facilitate assessment, evaluation and viewing of recording for verbal feedback (for all RANZCOG oral examinations) procedures whose reference ceases upon reaching an outcome unless a special consideration is initiated within timeframes specified in RANZCOG Exceptional Circumstance, Special Consideration and Reconsideration Policy and Procedure and RANZCOG Recording of Assessments Policy.
- *Unless they relate to records of a permanent nature* (e.g. formulation of RANZCOG constitution, RANZCOG policy framework, annual reports etc. - see above), superseded versions of records can be destroyed when reference ceases.
- Personal working drafts, copies and duplicates, and routine internal communications with short-term personal or team-based relevance, may be destroyed when reference ceases.

## 1.3 Retention & Disposal – Application of the Policy in Practice

The following principles apply to the application of this policy in practice:

- All retention and disposal actions must comply with RANZCOG regulations and policy governing specific RANZCOG services and functions.
- Where more than one retention principle or guideline applies to a record, the longer retention period will be applied.
- The policy may be used and applied by all staff: however, any questions of policy interpretation that arise should be referred to the relevant Director before any disposal action is initiated.
- The policy will be supported through the design and administration of RANZCOG business systems where possible.
- Third party service providers that create, manage and/or retain records on behalf of RANZCOG will be required to conform with this policy through relevant contracts and service agreements.

## 1.4 Retention & Disposal – Decision Support

The following process should be applied to support retention and disposal decision-making by staff.

Further advice must be sought from the relevant Director and/or the Governance Team prior to destruction or deletion of records collections where the appropriate retention and disposal action remains ambiguous or unclear.

Is the record a duplicate, personal working draft or reference copy, that is transitory, facilitative, and of short-term relevance?	Yes <span style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 15px; padding: 5px;">Destroy securely when reference to the record is no longer required</span>
No	
Does the record contain information that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has enduring cultural or historical significance for RANZCOG, or that is of enduring public interest?</li> <li>• Records significant RANZCOG contributions to O&amp;G public health practice and research?</li> <li>• Records aggregated data about the activities and attainments of RANZCOG members, trainees, staff and assets?</li> <li>• Performs a significant function in RANZCOG's overall approach to organizational planning, governance and/or accountability?</li> </ul>	Yes <span style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 15px; padding: 5px;">This record must be retained permanently in a managed system supported by RANZCOG ICT Services. Records with cultural, social or historical significance should be retained in their original format in an archival facility unless digital conversion is approved by the CEO.</span>
No	
Does the record contain information that supports <i>routine internal administrative functions</i> , decision-making and business operations that are common to most organisations – e.g. contracts and agreements, audit and investigation records, internal project records, general communications, general HR administrative records, financial administration, ICT and asset management records, health and safety records etc.	Yes <span style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 15px; padding: 5px;">Refer to specific retention and disposal guidelines for common administrative records (see section 1.1 of the policy). The relevant Director should be advised before aggregated collections of these record types are destroyed.</span>
No	
Does the record contain information that can be used to identify a person, or that is of a personal and private nature?	Yes <span style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 15px; padding: 5px;">Refer to relevant Australian or New Zealand Privacy principles and RANZCOG Privacy policy, and/or applicable codes of research conduct.</span>

## Related RANZCOG Documents

Records containing personal and private information must be managed in accordance with the RANZCOG Privacy Policy and Procedure.

Version	Date of Version	Pages revised / Brief Explanation of Revision
V1	July 2020	Final Draft approved by ELT
V2	September 2021	Amendments to the Temporary or Ephemeral Records to include viewing or recording for verbal feedback

Policy Version:	Version 2
Policy Owner:	Office of the CEO and President
Policy Approved by:	RANZCOG Board
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