Vital Records Policy

IR01-CP

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1. Purpose

This policy sets out MacDonnell Regional Council's (MRC) management principles on the identification management, storage and disposal of MRC's vital records.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to MRC employees. Read in conjunction with the Vital Records Register, this policy provides assistance to MRC staff in identifying those records without which MRC could not continue to function effectively.

3. Objectives

Vital records are a vital asset to MRC. Vital records facilitate information accessibility, provide evidence of actions and decisions, protect the rights and interests of MRC, and are critical to:
3.1   Emergency preparation and response
3.2   Core business operations i.e., critical client services
3.3   Protecting the legal and financial rights of MRC
3.4   Protecting the legal and financial rights of MRC's staff

When registering vital records the following details must be included for each record:
3.5   Record type, i.e., brief description of record type (important record)
3.6   Name of the area that is responsible for the record or the Business Classification Scheme (BCS) record identification number (Document Identification (Doc ID)
3.7   Brief explanation of the records critical purpose and/or consequences of loss
3.8   Location and storage, i.e., on-site, off-site, server etc.
3.9   Date of review / update / disposal
3.10   Accessibility requirements, i.e., authorisation, access to off-site storage, recovery protocols for systems

4. Definitions

The below table outlines definitions that may be considered specific to this policy, which without clarification may contain room for multiple interpretations. These definitions are provided to assist in the interpretation and implementation of all Policy, Procedures and Associated Documents (PPAD).

Important Record	A record that could be recreated with some level of resources
Non-essential Records	A record which would not cause any impact to operations if lost
NTAS	Northern Territory Archive Service
Permanent Record	Records that have a long-term value that must be stored and handled appropriately to ensure preservation
Temporary Record	Records that do not possess archival / enduring value

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IR01-CP

Useful Record	A record which would not cause any impact to operations if lost
Vital Record (also Critical Record)	Records which MRC could not continue to operate, are irreplaceable or would require significant resources to recreate

5. Statement

5.1 Identifying Vital Records

Establishing records, which are critical to operations, should be part of a broader analysis of MRC's record keeping requirements. Utilisation of risk management principles when assessing records may help to distinguish which records are vital

5.2 Approaches to Identify Vital Records

Identifying Vital Records is a critical responsibility. Only a small percentage of records will be vital. Most records will fall into one of the following categories:

- Important records
- Useful record
- Non-essential record

A number of approaches should be used to identify records considered vital for restoring critical business functions. Approaches may include:

- Review of the Disaster Management or Business Continuity Plan
- Risk assessment reviews
- Examination of organisational structures, policies and procedures
- Review of MRC's statutory and regulatory responsibilities
- Consideration of business activities and related records included in MRC's business classification scheme and/or approved Retention and Disposal Schedule

5.3 Managing Vital Records

Once vital records have been identified, the vital records must be registered. A vital records identifier/locator checklist is provided in IR01-P1 Vital Records Procedure. The checklist must be used to identify vital records and their whereabouts. A register should be developed and implemented from this list.

5.4 Preventative Measures

A range of preventative measures must be in place to ensure that the preventative strategies are cost effective for MRC. Strategies depend upon the types of record formats that are needed to protect records, i.e., fireproof safe within a storage facility that has a high level of fire and security protection. The strategies for specific protection for vital records may include:

- Duplication and distribution
- Ensure high levels of fire, water and security protection in storage containers and spaces, i.e. on-site and off-site storage
- Establishment of procedures for managing critical work in progress which may not be backed up or is located outside of storage facilities

5.5 Recovery and Restoration

The vital records recovery strategy is founded on a detailed knowledge of MRC's records holdings including every storage area in use, its contents and their nature, the location of vital records, and the level of information contained in finding aids or indexes, i.e., registers of information with storage location and record identifiers.

Vital records must be prioritised for recovery and restoration purposes. There must be copies of the vital records recovery plan in MRC's Counter Disaster Plan / Emergency Management Plan, for more information, please also refer to Emergency and Disaster Preparedness Procedure (Doc ID # 270762).

Considerations for recovery and restoration includes the following:
- Storage is suitable for the record format
- Record format is fit for purpose
- Organise procedures to access and retrieve vital records in an emergency
- Ensure back-up procedures for electronic vital records
- Develop and implement a Vital Records management plan that is viable and effective for MRC, and applicable to all types and formats of vital records. Ensure that this plan is included in MRC's Counter Disaster Plan
- Allocate responsibility to staff in the Counter Disaster Plan (Salvage Team). Ensure they have the authorisation to retrieve records (including security rated material), they are able to access storage areas, and are able to use equipment, which is required to retrieve records.
- Schedule regular audits and reviews to ensure currency and validity of vital records and to ensure that the vital records are adequately protected

5.6 Retention and Disposal of Vital Records

MRC is legally obliged to retain all vital records for the minimum retention period specified in the Records Disposal Schedule for Local Authorities in the Northern Territory 2018/3 – June 2018. No official records are to be destroyed without the appropriate authorisation via a Disposal Authorisation Form. Records retain these forms for the prescribed retention period. IR01-F1 Notification of Destruction - Doc Id # 270527.

6. Policy Details

Replaces Policy No: (if applicable)	N/A
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Review Cycle:	October 2024 – Review every four (4) years or after changes to relevant legislation.

7. Legislation and References

Related Legislation	Records Disposal Schedule for Local Authorities in the Northern Territory – 2018/3 – June 2018 Disposal Schedule Records for Short Term Value No. 2003/10 Records Disposal Schedule for Temporary Records that have been Digitised No. 2009/13 AS/NZ ISO 1015:2011 AS/NZS ISO 15489 (Set) AS/NZS 16175.1:2012
Related Policies	IR03-CP Digitisation Policy IR05-CP Records Management Policy
Related Procedures	IR01-P1 Records Emergency & Disaster Preparedness Procedure IR01-P2 Appraisal, Sentencing & Disposal of Records Procedure
Associated Documents	IR01-R1 Vital Records Register IR01-R2 Records Destroyed Register IR01-F1 Records Disposal Authorisation Form IR01-F2 Compliance Checklist for Identifying Records for Destruction IR01-F3 Application to Transfer Records – NTAS Records Management Framework

8. Version Control

Version No.	Approval Date	Policy No.	Minutes reference and Resolution number
1.	30 October 2020	IR01-CP	OCM Item #15.2 – OCM2020-112