

Transfer Procedures for NT Government Records

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Steps in the transfer process

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1.1 Appraisal of records

- 1.1.1 Appraisal is the process of determining whether records should be kept permanently, or may be destroyed once their usefulness has passed.
- 1.1.2 Records are appraised according to their administrative, informational, evidential or historical value. Records of **permanent value** will be retained permanently and will eventually be used for research. Records of **temporary value** must be retained for a period of time according to administrative, financial or legal necessity before they may be destroyed.
- 1.1.3 Records should be appraised prior to transfer to the NTAS to determine which storage conditions are required for them, and when they may be destroyed if they are temporary.
- 1.1.4 If the records concerned are of temporary value and have been retained for a reasonable period of time, it may be appropriate that they be proposed for destruction.
- 1.1.5 By Cabinet Decision No. 3035 of 7 July 1983, Cabinet directed that no government agency may dispose of its records without the approval of the Northern Territory Archives Service, the archival authority of the Northern Territory Government.
- 1.1.6 Approval must be obtained from the Director, NTAS before records may be destroyed. Applications for permission to destroy records must be made in writing to the Director providing a description of the records, their date range and quantity.
- 1.1.7 Inactive records which have assessed by the NTAS to have enduring legal, historical, administrative or informational value may be proposed for transfer. These records are considered to be permanent or archival and will be stored in optimum storage conditions to ensure their preservation.
- 1.1.8 In general, records in this category should not be transferred until at least four years from the date of last action on the file, as they would normally still be in current or semi-current use.

1.2.0 Application to transfer records

- 1.2.1 An application must be submitted to the NTAS before records are accepted for transfer. This may be done by completing the "[Application to Transfer Records](#)" form
- 1.2.2 All applications to transfer records should include details of agency title and section, address, contact officer and location of records for collection. The application form provides the NTAS with information to assess the transfer, such as the quantity, type of records, age etc. If there is not sufficient space for a large transfer there may be a delay before the transfer can go ahead.
- 1.2.3 The records proposed for transfer should be described by series title, i.e. the title of the group of records which have been created and maintained in the same identifiable sequence. Those series of records which are transferred to the NTAS, are controlled by an NTRS (Northern Territory Records Series) number, which is allocated at the time of the transfer of the first consignment of the series. If consignments of the series have been previously transferred, the NTRS number will already be known by agency staff.
- 1.2.4 The inclusive date range and the quantity of records needs to be indicated. The standard archives box used for the storage of files is known as a type one (T1) box. If the records are not yet boxed, an estimation of the quantity will be sufficient.
- 1.2.5 Once the application has been received by the NTAS, a staff member will telephone or visit to discuss the transfer.
- 1.2.6 To complete the "Application to Transfer Records" form (25 kb Word document) [click here](#).

1.3.0 Preparing records for transfer

- 13.1 Following approval by the NTAS for the transfer of the records, certain conditions must be met before physical transfer can take place. The agency is required to box and list the records in a manner acceptable to the NTAS.
- 1.3.2 Records for transfer should be packed in standard archives boxes (T1) which measure 385mm x 180mm x 260mm. These boxes are not provided by the NTAS and need to be purchased directly from the manufacturer. Details of the current supplier of archives boxes may be obtained from the NTAS.
- 1.3.3 Alternative arrangements may be made with the NTAS if records proposed for transfer will not fit into the standard archives box.
- 1.3.4 Self-locking type one (T1) archives boxes are supplied disassembled (see following page for assembling instructions). Tape or staples are unnecessary when assembling archives boxes and should not be used.

- 1.3.5 The box number should be penciled in on the middle of the front face of the box. There is no need to write the number of each file in the box on the outside of the box as this is recorded on the Series Consignment List. All writing on the box is to be in pencil only. The box will receive an adhesive label identifying the relevant details for its control and retrieval when it is processed at the NTAS.
- 1.3.6 Files and records should be packed in the archives boxes in the same order in which they were created and maintained.
- 1.3.7 The front of all files packed in the box should face in the same direction to allow for easy retrieval. It is advisable to pack half the files with the spine at the bottom of the box and half the files with the spine at the top of the box to evenly distribute the files within each box.
- 1.3.8 It is important that archives boxes are not over packed. Boxes should shut properly and not bulge at the sides. Over packing damages the records and makes it difficult to retrieve items from the box. Records in over packed boxes are more vulnerable to damage in the event of fire or flood. If a box will not shut properly or is bulging at the sides, it is over packed

1.4.0 **Compilation of series consignment lists**

- 1.4.1 All records for transfer to the NTAS must be listed by the transferring agency prior to transfer. A separate Series Consignment List should be completed for each series of records proposed for transfer.
- 1.4.2 For listing of records the NTAS has two forms: the Series Consignment List and the Series Consignment List Continuation Sheet . Copies can be obtained from the NTAS on disk or by e-mail in Microsoft Word 7.0 format.
- 1.4.3 **Series Number.** The NTRS number is the series control number allocated by the NTAS. Suffixes follow the NTRS number for each consignment of the series received. The following suffixes are used:
- P (Permanent)
 - R (Review)
 - T (Temporary)

In this example, NTRS 1036/R3 denotes that the consignment is the third received for that series and its disposal status will be reviewed in the year indicated at section 6 of the Series Consignment List form.

- 1.4.4 **Series Title.** The series title, like the NTRS number, may or may not have already been allocated. The series title is the title of a group of records which have been created and maintained in the same identifiable sequence. The title should include the name regularly used to describe the series and the physical nature of the record, such as: "Complaint files"; or "Building permit plans".
- 1.4.5 **Creating Agency/Transferring Agency.** There are separate sections

of the form for the creating agency and transferring agency as they may often be different. For example, the Department of Health and Community Services may be required to transfer records of the Department of Community Development which was one of its predecessor agencies. Details of the creating office are important to the NTAS which needs to record the changes in administration for the control of records in its custody.

- 1.4.6 **Date Range.** When recording the date range it is necessary to record the inclusive year range, i.e. the year of creation of the first record in the series and the year of the last known entry in the series. If uncertain of this, the date range of a random sample would be sufficient.
- 1.4.7 **Accession Number.** The accession number is allocated by the NTAS for its own administrative purposes, so this section should be left blank.
- 1.4.8 **Number of Boxes.** The section referring to the number of boxes has a provision for the different size archives boxes as well as for "other" types of records.
- 1.4.9 **Quantity.** The quantity in metres refers to the length of records as if placed on a shelf. As stored, a standard (T1) archives box measures 0.18 shelf metres.
- 1.4.10 **Range of Control Symbols.** The section referring to the range of control symbols requires an indication of the range of symbols in the system used to control the series. In many cases control systems will consist of annual single numbers, as in the example. In an alphabetical control system the range of control symbols will be "A-Z".
- 1.4.11 **Records Description.** In the records description section, which forms the major component of the Series Consignment List, all items must be listed. Without individual listing of each item there is no guarantee that records were ever transferred and the security of the records is put in doubt.
- 1.4.12 **Box Listing.** In listing the contents of each box it is necessary to list the record number as well as its title. This provides better access to the records and ensures that it is easier for both the agency and the NTAS to know exactly what records are in each transfer.
- 1.4.13 **Box Numbering.** It is very important that the boxes be numbered from 1 in all cases for each new consignment of a series. Under no circumstances should a new consignment be numbered as a continuation of a consignment previously transferred to the NTAS.
- 1.4.14 When space on the Series Consignment List Covering Sheet is full, the listing may be continued on the Series Consignment Continuation Sheets.
- 1.4.15 It is essential to take care and be accurate when preparing these lists as the information supplied on the Series Consignment Lists will be the main source of information for retrieval for the remaining life of the records within the series. Agencies should keep a copy of the Series Consignment List sent to the NTAS for their own reference.

- 1.4.16 On completion of the listing the Series Consignment List and Continuation Sheets should be forwarded to the NTAS. If there are problems in preparing lists, the NTAS staff will be pleased to help. A fully completed copy of the Series Consignment List will be forwarded to the transferring agency once processing of the transfer is completed.

1.5.0 Physical transfer of records

- 1.5.1 After receiving the completed Series Consignment List, the NTAS will contact agencies to arrange a suitable time for the physical transfer of the records.
- 1.5.2 The NTAS may collect small transfers within the Darwin area if resources are available at the time. Agencies are requested to make alternative transport arrangements if they are transferring large consignments in the Darwin area or if they are located out of Darwin.
- 1.5.3 The NTAS will not accept consignments of records unless prior arrangements have been made and approval given for their transfer.
- 1.5.4 Care should be taken in packing records for transfer so that the boxes and records are not damaged in transit.
- 1.5.5 Boxes should be loaded in numerical order to avoid unnecessary sorting of boxes when unloading.
- 1.5.6 If items are removed from boxes awaiting uplift, a slip identifying the removed records must take the place of the removed items. The NTAS must be notified if the items are to be removed permanently from a transfer so that the items may be deleted from the Series Consignment List.
- 1.5.7 Once Series Consignment Lists have been processed at the NTAS and the physical transfer has taken place, no additional items may be included in the consignment. Intersorting of items should be avoided wherever possible. Additional items which become available for transfer should be retained and included in a later transfer.

1.6.0 Processing and notification

- 1.6.1 Once the NTAS has checked and processed the consignments of transferred records, the Series Consignment Lists will be completed to include appropriate NTRS numbers, disposal status and accession numbers.
- 1.6.2 As soon as possible after the physical transfer, a completed copy of the series consignment list will be returned to the transferring office to ensure that both the agency and the NTAS have reference to the same lists.
- 1.6.3 Northern Territory Government records held at the NTAS are generally closed to public access for thirty years after their creation. Access arrangements are, however, negotiable and it is common practice to restrict public access to personal and sensitive records for much longer

periods. Arrangements concerning access to government records should be discussed with the staff at the NTAS prior to the transfer.

- 1.6.4 During the restricted period, records may be issued back to the creating agency through the Lending Service (see [Lending Procedures for NT Government Archives](#)).