

Managing public records when decommissioning business systems methodology

Purpose

Most business systems contain public records that must be captured and kept. This methodology supports public authorities to manage those records when decommissioning legacy business systems. It provides a transparent and defensible process for assessing the value of public records and determining appropriate disposal or preservation actions. It is not intended to replace normal records management practices, but to assist in addressing legacy situations where public records have not already been managed through established records management processes.

The methodology contains pathways covering the following scenarios where public records in the business system:

- have already been migrated to another system *or*
- are not accessible *or*
- are accessible and are not covered by a current disposal authorisation *or*
- are accessible and covered by a current disposal authorisation.

These scenarios are not mutually exclusive and you may need to follow more than one path. Use the workflow for each business system under consideration.

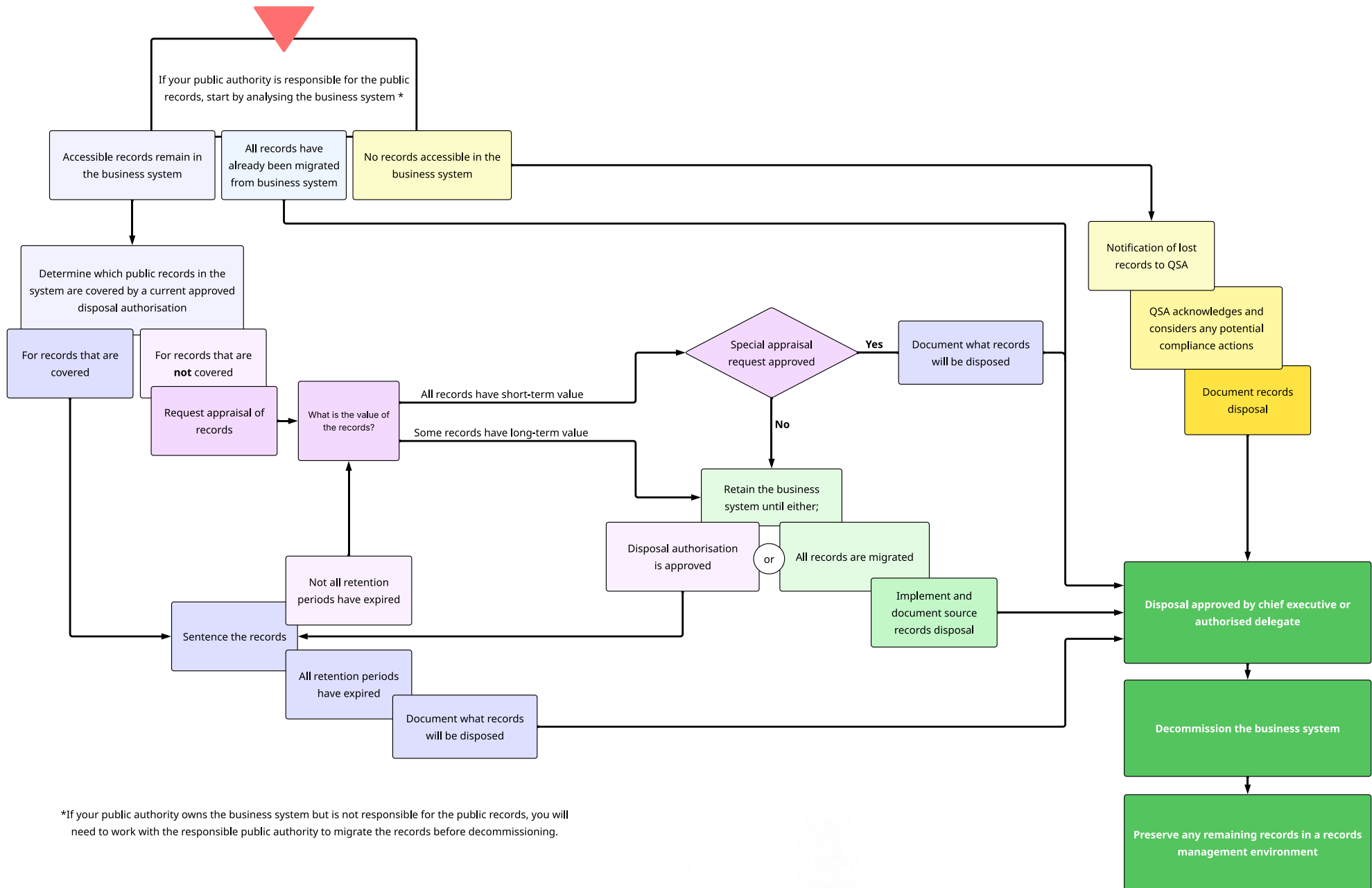
If you believe a legacy business system does not contain public records and plan to dispose of its data, contact [Queensland State Archives](#) (QSA) for more information.

Contents

Managing public records when decommissioning business systems methodology	1
Decommissioning business systems workflow	2
Determine who owns the public records in the business system.....	3
Undertake an initial analysis of the business system	3
Determine which public records are covered by a disposal authorisation	3
Quality assurance outcomes for migrating digital public records to another system	4
Scenario 1 – All public records already migrated	5
Scenario 2 – All public records not accessible	5
Scenario 3 – Accessible public records remain but records are not covered by a disposal authorisation	5
Scenario 4 – Accessible public records remain and records are covered by current disposal authorisation	7
Final steps to decommission the business system	9

Decommissioning business systems workflow

This workflow shows how to manage public records when decommissioning business systems.



*If your public authority owns the business system but is not responsible for the public records, you will need to work with the responsible public authority to migrate the records before decommissioning.

Determine who has responsibility for the public records in the business system

Confirm whether your public authority is responsible for the records in the system or identify which public authority (or authorities) is responsible, before decommissioning proceeds. The responsible public authority is usually the one who either created the public records, inherited the public records as part of a machinery-of-government (MOG) change, is responsible for the function or business activity the records document or otherwise has control of the records.

Responsibility for public records can be separate to having ownership of the system they live in. For example, public records may be in the custody of a private service provider and not the public authority responsible for them.

Business systems may also contain public records controlled by multiple public authorities. For example, a shared service provider may own a business system they use to provide records management services to multiple public authorities.

There are several things that you need to ensure before any decommissioning project commences:

- Involve all public authorities responsible for records in the system in the decommissioning process. Those public authorities decide what happens to the public records. Seek approval of any disposal decisions from their chief executive or authorised delegate before public records are destroyed under a disposal authorisation approved by the State Archivist.
- If you cannot identify the public authority responsible for the records, consult with Queensland State Archives before disposing of them.
- If your public authority holds information assets or records relating to a function or activity of government that has been privatised, you will need to take into account any requirements, rights or provisions outlined in any legislation, agreement or contract before carrying out any disposal of jointly owned records.

Undertake an initial analysis of the business system

Do an initial system scan to understand what the business system contains and what can be retrieved. You will need to determine if records belonging to your public authority:

- are currently in the business system
- can be accessed and are usable
- have already been migrated to another business system.

Where to from here

If all public records have already successfully been migrated to another system, follow the [all records already migrated](#) pathway.

If all public records are not accessible, follow the [all records not accessible](#) pathway. If [accessible records remain in the business system](#), determine which public records are covered by a disposal authorisation. You may need to take multiple pathways if only some public records fit into the above pathways.

Determine which public records are covered by a disposal authorisation

Analyse the business system to determine whether the records contained in the system are covered by a current and approved disposal authorisation.

The pathway you need to take next in the methodology will depend on whether or not the public records are covered by an existing disposal authorisation.

Match the records in the system to a current disposal authorisation by identifying the business function, activity, and record types documented by the system. Use the system's business purpose, workflows, and data fields to determine which disposal authorisations apply. Where public records are aggregated (for example, multiple transactions within one case file), consider how the record is managed and used in practice and sentence at a level that preserves the record's meaning and context. If records cannot be confidently matched to an approved disposal authorisation, treat them as not covered and manage them until disposal coverage is established.

Where to from here

- If public records **cannot** be matched to a disposal authorisation in a current approved disposal authorisation then the records **are not eligible for disposal until disposal coverage is established or an appropriate authorisation is obtained**.

Follow the [records not covered by a disposal authorisation](#) pathway.

- If public records **can** be matched with a disposal authorisation, then the records **have disposal coverage**.

Follow the [records covered by a disposal authorisation](#) pathway.

Quality assurance outcomes for migrating digital public records to another system

Quality assurance checks provide evidence that public records remain complete, reliable and usable after migration across business systems. Use the following outcomes as a baseline, and apply additional checks where public records are high value, long-term, sensitive or present a higher risk. You may tailor the level of checking to suit your business context.

A [quality assurance checklist for decommissioning business systems](#) is available to help document these checks and outcomes. Quality assurance outcomes can include confirming that:

- all intended public records are present in the target environment or export set
- record content matches the source and has not been unintentionally changed or altered during migration
- metadata, contextual relationships, attachments and structural information remain accurate and linked
- records remain accessible and usable after migration. They can be retrieved, opened and used to support business, legal and accountability requirements.
- the integrity of the public record is maintained. Integrity checks may be applied where appropriate, and migration are recorded, including who approved those activities.

All evidence of quality assurance checks, results and approvals need to be retained for the life of the public records.

Where to from here

Before disposing of source records or decommissioning the business system, confirm that [quality assurance outcomes](#) have been met and documented. Then proceed to the relevant scenario pathway.

Scenario 1 – All public records already migrated

1. Confirm the migration was successful

Confirm the public records have migrated successfully to the target system and that the system supports the quality assurance outcomes.

Where to from here

Once the migration has been checked, [implement and document source records disposal](#).

Scenario 2 – All public records not accessible

1. Submit a notification of lost records

Where public records cannot be accessed, your public authority will need to [submit a notification of lost records](#) to QSA. Record what system was involved, what record types are affected, the date loss or inaccessibility was identified and what actions were taken to restore access. Please contact QSA for advice on the notification process.

Where to from here

Once you receive acknowledgment of the notification from QSA, you can implement and document the disposal of lost records. Document advice from QSA as well as the Chief Executive or delegate's disposal decision and circumstances of loss clearly. Ensure appropriate internal reporting to address and mitigate future risks.

Scenario 3 – Accessible public records remain but records are not covered by a disposal authorisation

1. Undertake a high-level appraisal of the public records in the business system

If accessible public records remain and are not covered by a disposal authorisation, you need to undertake a high-level appraisal of the system and records to determine how long the records are **likely** to be required to be kept to meet business, legal, social, historical and other needs.

Records will either have:

- long-term value.

or

- short-term value

A high-level appraisal helps estimate likely retention needs where no approved disposal authorisation applies. Focus on the system's business purpose, the functions and activities it supports and the consequences if records were unavailable. Consider operational value, regulatory value, accountability requirements, sensitivity and potential historical or community value. Use this appraisal to categorise record sets as likely short-term or long-term value, decide whether migration is needed, and determine whether a disposal authorisation or a new disposal authorisation is required to support management of the records. Where necessary, seek advice from QSA on the development of a disposal authorisation to manage these accessible public records that are not already covered by a disposal authorisation.

Where to from here

[1\(a\) All records have short-term value](#)[1\(b\) All or some records have long-term value](#)**1(a). All records have short-term value**

Public records with short term-value are those that:

- are likely to have only short-term retention periods (less than 5 years)
- or**
- are nearing the expiry of their likely retention period (less than 5 years remaining).

Where to from here

Request a [special appraisal decision](#) for these records

or

Follow the [has records with long-term value](#) pathway below if you choose not to submit a request.

1(b). All or some public records have long-term value

To reach this step, the high-level appraisal established that all or some of the records:

- are likely to be of long-term value
- or**
- are likely to be of short-term value, but the application for one-off disposal authorisation has been refused or is not applied for.

You will need to manage and preserve the records until they can lawfully be disposed of.

You will need to retain the business system until:

- records are migrated to another system
- or**
- retention periods under an approved disposal authorisation have expired and records can be destroyed.

Where public records cannot be migrated immediately, maintain access to them in a controlled way. Consider virtualising the business system (running it as a virtual machine) to reduce dependency on ageing physical hardware, or retaining the system on original infrastructure where virtualisation is not feasible. Monitor licensing, vendor support and security risks, and plan for eventual migration or export. These arrangements should be treated as an interim measure rather than a long-term preservation strategy.

Where to from here

When migration or export occurs, [apply the quality assurance outcomes](#) and document results before disposing of any source records.

If records are to be **retained in the business system**, you will need to:

- develop a disposal authorisation
- get approval from the State Archivist
- continue to follow the [records are covered by a disposal authorisation](#) pathway.

Scenario 4 – Accessible public records remain and records are covered by current disposal authorisation

1. Sentence the records

Sentencing is the process of applying an approved disposal authorisation to public records to work out the minimum retention period, disposal trigger, and authorised disposal action. If accessible public records remain and are covered by a disposal authorisation, you need to sentence the records to determine:

- how long they need to be kept
- and
- if retention periods have expired or not.

Where to from here

If all retention periods have expired:

- [implement and document records disposal](#)
- then
- [decommission the system](#)

If retention periods **have not expired** or only **some have expired**:

- [implement and document records disposal](#) for records that can be lawfully destroyed
- and
- follow the [not all retention periods have expired](#) pathway for records that need to be retained.

2. Not all retention periods have expired

You will need to determine if:

- records have less than five years remaining before the records would be eligible for disposal
- or
- all records have short-term retention periods (less than 5 years)
- or
- some or all records have long-term retention periods (more than 5 years).

Where to from here

Follow the [all records have short-term retention periods](#) pathway if:

- records are within 5 years of their retention periods expiring
- OR
- all records have short-term retention periods

Follow the [has records with long-term retention periods](#) pathway if:

- some or all records have **long-term retention periods**.

2(a). All public records have short-term retention periods

Records with short term-value are those that:

- have short-term retention periods (less than 5 years)
- or
- are nearing the expiry of their retention period (less than 5 years remaining).

Where to from here

Apply for a [special appraisal decision](#) for these public records.

or

Follow the [has records with long-term value](#) pathway if you choose not to submit an application.

2(b). Has public records with long-term retention periods

To reach this step, the sentencing process established that all or some of the public records have:

- long-term retention periods
- or
- short-term retention periods, but the request for a special appraisal decision has been refused or is not applied for.

You will need to manage and preserve the public records in the business system until:

- they are migrated to another system
- or
- retention periods have expired and records can be destroyed.

Where to from here

If all or some public records are to be migrated, ensure records have been successfully migrated.

If public records are to be retained in the business system, you will need to keep and maintain the system until:

- all records are migrated
- or
- all retention periods have expired and records can be destroyed.

3. Request a special appraisal decision

Disposal of public records where there is no disposal authorisation or when the minimum retention period has not been met requires a special appraisal decision to be made by the State Archivist. Your request for a special appraisal decision should describe the records, the business context, any legislative requirements, why disposal is proposed and what risks were assessed. If a new disposal decision is authorised you will need to document the decision and disposal action.

Contact QSA for advice about [special appraisal decisions](#).

Where to from here

If the request is **approved**, [implement and document records disposal](#)

If the request is **not approved**, follow the [has records with long-term value](#) pathway

Final steps to decommission the business system

Implement and document source records disposal

Only dispose of source records after the migration has been checked and the target business system is confirmed as fit for purpose. Document decisions and approvals that support a defensible process, including what was disposed of, what disposal authorisation was relied on, when disposal occurred, who authorised it and what checks were completed before disposal.

If the process involves format conversion or digitisation, record the quality assurance steps taken to confirm the converted record is a complete and accurate representation of the source.

Decommission the business system

Follow your public authority's established ICT governance and change management processes when decommissioning the business system. This methodology addresses the management of public records during decommissioning and should be used alongside internal ICT processes that manage technical, security and operational considerations.

Preserve remaining public records

Preserve any remaining public records, as well as the migrated records, for as long as they need to be retained. Choose storage and management arrangements based on access needs, security requirements, file formats and retention periods. Plan for media and technology change by developing a continuity plan that includes regular integrity checks and scheduled refresh or migration activities. This ensures public records remain accessible, reliable and usable for the full retention period.