

# What is a public record?

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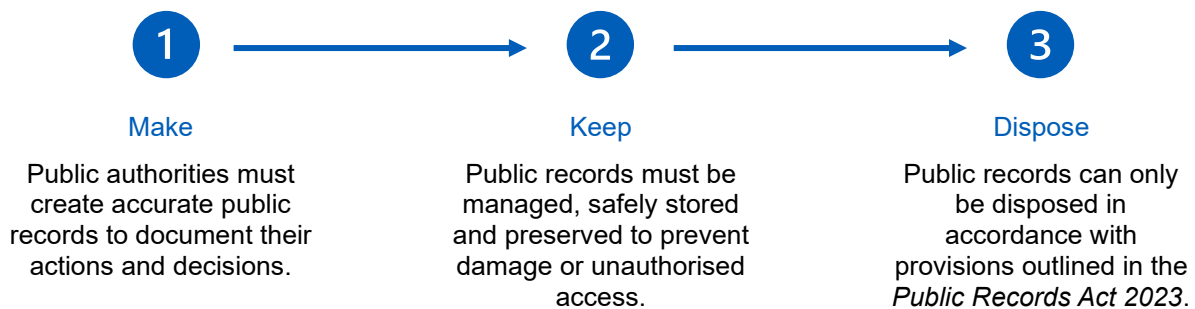
A public record, under s9 of the *Public Records Act 2023* (PR Act), is “information recorded on, in or by using any medium that is made, received or kept in the course of a public authority carrying out activities for a purpose of the authority, including the exercise of its statutory, administrative or other public responsibilities, and that evidences the activities, affairs or business of the authority”.

### In simple terms, a public record is...

any information, regardless of its format or location, that is made or received as part of your official duties as a public sector employee. This could be a document, text messages or data generated in government systems while you're completing everyday tasks. If you make a decision, take action or participate in an activity as part of your role, you're creating a public record!

## Why does it matter?

Public records help provide accountability to the people of Queensland. They help preserve evidence of government activities, providing transparency for the public, future governments and for legal or historical purposes. Public authorities must manage public records throughout their lifecycle.



## What do I need to know?

For effective records management, you need to be able to prioritise the management of different types of public records. Here are the key characteristics of records that you will most commonly need to identify and manage in your daily work.

- 1 Short-term value public records:** Often referred to as ‘**transitory**’, these public records are generally created as part of daily activities and are only required to be kept for a limited time to support day-to-day business functions of a public authority. They have a low or limited value and do not need to be captured in a records management system.
- 2 High-value public records:** These are records that your public authority could not function without, such as patient records for a hospital, records about significant infrastructure or major policy decisions. Examples include service delivery records, significant contracts and significant briefings.
- 3 High-risk public records:** These are records that could create significant risk, such as those containing commercially sensitive information or personal or sensitive information. Examples include personal data or legal documents.
- 4 Permanent value public records:** These are records that must be kept permanently due to their enduring value, as approved under a retention schedule and guided by [QSA's Appraisal Statement](#).

## Characteristics of authoritative public records



### What is my role in managing public records?

Every public sector employee plays a crucial part in making and keeping public records. Effective records management is essential for providing good services to the community, enhancing transparency and compliance with the *Public Records Act 2023*.

By recognising what qualifies as a public record and managing public records, you help your public authority to have complete, accurate and reliable public records.

### Where can I find more information

#### Where can I find more information on records management?

- Visit the [Queensland State Archives website](#) to find the latest resources and updates about records management.
- If you have specific queries about your responsibilities or need further clarification on any information we've provided, you can email us at [rkqueries@archives.qld.gov.au](mailto:rkqueries@archives.qld.gov.au) or call us on (07) 3037 6630.

#### What is the *Public Records Act 2023*?

- [Watch](#) Louise Howard, the Queensland State Archivist, [explain how the \*Public Record Act 2023\* modernises records management for all Queensland public agencies.](#)
- You can also read a summary of the changes to the legislation in the [Know Your Act fact sheet](#).

#### How can I find out more information about what a public record is?

- Refer to the [Records you need to keep fact sheet](#) from Queensland State Archives for detailed examples of what qualifies as a public record, guidance on what needs to be kept and advice on managing records under the *Public Records Act 2023*.
- For information specific to ministerial offices, consult the [Records Ministerial Offices need to keep fact sheet](#), which outlines what records are needed to document decisions, actions and duties performed within ministerial portfolios.