



# PUBLIC RECORDS RETENTION & DISPOSAL MYTHS: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Queensland State Archives

<b>Myth 1</b> I need to keep all public records <sup>1</sup> in paper format	<b>Myth 2</b> All records need to be kept for 7 years	<b>Myth 3</b> Emails are not records and can be deleted at any time	<b>Myth 4</b> The best time to dispose of records is when we run out of storage space
<p><b>No</b>, records that are created digitally, such as emails, should be retained and managed digitally.</p> <p>You should only print digital records if your agency does not have a digital recordkeeping system.</p> <p>You can digitise temporary paper records and destroy the original paper if your agency has an approved Digitisation Disposal Policy in place. Permanent paper records can also be digitised, however the original needs to be transferred to QSA.</p>	<p><b>No</b>, not all records need to be kept for 7 years.</p> <p>Different types of records must be kept for different lengths of time. Some can be disposed of as soon as there is no longer a business use. Others need to be kept for several years (e.g. two, 20, 80 years, etc.).</p> <p>Refer to your agency or sector retention and disposal schedule or the <i>General retention and disposal schedule</i> (GRDS) for more information about how long to keep a record.</p>	<p><b>No</b>, emails can be records too. Email is simply another method of transacting business and where emails generate records, they should be managed in the same way as other corporate records. Emails that are records should ideally be captured into a recordkeeping system. If you can't do that, they need to be preserved and managed so they are accessible by your agency<sup>2</sup>.</p> <p>Many emails have only short term informational value and can be deleted when no longer required.</p>	<p><b>No</b>, the disposal of records should be done on a regular basis as part of business as usual.</p> <p>It's much easier to dispose of records regularly (which includes transferring permanent records to QSA!) than it is to deal with large backlogs.</p> <p>By regularly disposing of records, you can avoid unnecessary record storage and management costs.</p>

<sup>1</sup> A record in this context means an official public record.

<sup>2</sup> Arrangements in place for your individual public authority will be determined by your accountable officer. For information on the way this operates in your public authority, contact your records area.

<sup>3</sup> The *Public Records Act 2002* sets out the obligations on your public authority.