Information Sheet – Appraisal

Defining Appraisal

The process of evaluating records to determine which are to be retained as archives, which are to be kept for specified periods and which are to be destroyed.

Considerations for Appraising Records

Administrative Value

Do the records still support an ongoing function or activity (i.e. have all transactions ceased in relation to these records)? If not, then the records are deemed active. If the administrative function relating to the records has ceased, but intermittent records may still be created, or actions relating to the records may still arise, the records are seen as semi-active. If all action has ceased and no further documentation or transactions are to occur, then the records are inactive.

Legal Value

Will you need your records in the instance of future litigation? This can sometimes be very difficult to ascertain but some examples include signed and sealed contracts, policy documents, or strategic planning documents. At times, records may be created due to legislative requirements and their length or retention actually defined. Such records are usually pre-defined (i.e. pro forma). This category usually leads to records being maintained as long-term temporary (i.e. in excess of 7 years).

Financial Value

Do the records relate to any current or ongoing financial transactions? Are they the only evidence of a financial transaction occurring? Do they summarily document financial transactions? Are they master copies? Most financial records are short-term temporary and can be disposed of after seven years. Summary documentation, however, will most likely be retained longer.

Historical Value

Do your records reflect significant historical patterns or policy that have shaped the approach and outcome of programs? Do they reflect a unique way of thinking at a particular moment in history? Are they of interest to researchers from a variety of backgrounds? Records that come under this category are deemed permanent. Examples of permanent records may include components of policy and correspondence files, summary documentation on particular functions, or files that reflect a particular form of service provided. Records of permanent value are eventually transferred to the Public Record Office Victoria.