

Handbook

Records classification



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Records classification

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PREFACE

This document was prepared by the Joint Standards Australia/Standards New Zealand Committee IT-021, Records Classification, as an Australian Handbook.

The aim of this Handbook is to—

- provide practical information and techniques for designing records classification schemes;
- equip people familiar with business classification and analysis with the skills and techniques to assess, determine, and construct tools to support records classification and titling;
- equip related information professionals such as, enterprise architects and business analysts with an explanation of how records classification schemes are constructed and the reasons why they differ from tools designed primarily to retrieve information;
- provide guidance to those who train users in records classification; and
- provide information to software developers of systems that manage records to enable the continued development of tools to support records classification.

This Handbook is presented in 10 Sections.

Section 1 introduces the use of classification for recordkeeping purposes and its relationship to other metadata elements which are used to find and manage records.

Section 2 outlines the concepts relating to the role of a records classification scheme, its relationship to business activity classification; current design techniques and choosing an approach that best fits an organisation.

Section 3 outlines the elements of a record classification scheme and relationships to other recordkeeping tools and processes.

Section 4 outlines techniques for gathering information to develop a records classification scheme.

Section 5 outlines techniques for constructing a records classification scheme and provides examples of models that can be used by an organisation.

Section 6 outlines techniques for developing and managing a records classification scheme, including program planning, user consultation and ongoing maintenance.

Section 7 outlines techniques for implementing classification.

Section 8 provides a checklist to assist designers to select an appropriate model for their records classification scheme.

Section 9 is a glossary of terms used throughout the Handbook.

Section 10 lists the documents that are referred to in this Handbook.

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STANDARDS AUSTRALIA

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1 INTRODUCTION

Classification for recordkeeping purposes has ambitious aims to manage records and to ensure that they can be found, used and understood across time. However, it is frequently criticised because the tools can be difficult to use. You often have to have an understanding of the business being performed and know where to look in order to apply a correct classification.

Part of the solution is recognising that, for recordkeeping purposes, designing a classification tool that reflects the business taking place, and not just the subject or content of a record, provides significant strategic advantage.

Records classification enables—

- work to be linked to form a continuous record of activity;
- recording and documenting changes to the way business activity is described;
- meaning to be passed on to those who may not have been directly involved in the business that was undertaken;
- work to be distributed to appropriate people and groups;
- management responsibility for sets of records to be distributed;
- links to security and access permissions to be applied to records; and
- links to disposal periods and actions to be applied to records.

The purpose of record classification is not solely to describe content or enable searching and retrieval. Rather, record classification is used to support a whole suite of recordkeeping processes, including identifying records that need to be captured and created to support business and providing a structure for determining and implementing retention, security and access decisions.

Classification for recordkeeping purposes is used to ensure that the links between the business being performed and the resulting records are robust and maintained. The purpose of records classification is not to describe the subject or content of a record. Rather, it is to place the record in the context of the business activity that created it.

This difference is essential for recordkeeping that demands information managed as records is authentic, reliable and has integrity. Classification in a recordkeeping context plays a major part in preserving the relational links between the description of the business and the records. The primary purpose is to link information about records to enable the contents to be linked to associated events so that the ‘full story’ can be recreated.

And while classification is acknowledged as essential, it is not the only method, or indeed the most important searching mechanism for retrieving records. Finding records is based on searching a range of attributes attached to a record, for which there is a whole range of elements and rules embedded in recordkeeping metadata standards.

These elements and rules are outlined in ISO 23081.2 and include:

- Subjects, topics and keywords that are used to describe and index content.
- Dates that are used to record when a record is created, actioned, or is scheduled to be performed.

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