OVERVIEW
The purpose of this policy is to establish a framework in which the electronic records management program can function.

Electronic records are a component of the records management program at the NSW Rural Assistance Authority. This policy supports the Authority’s Records Management Policy, specifically in the context of the electronic medium.

Electronic records generated or received by the NSW Rural Assistance Authority are to be treated as official records. For public offices subject to the State Records Act these are State records as governed by the Act.

Good electronic recordkeeping:
- maximises business opportunities
- minimises the risks and liabilities associated with failure to capture and maintain the evidence needed to meet business and accountability requirements
- helps the Authority move from paper-based to electronic ways of working, bringing environmental benefits and cost savings
- secures maintenance of the integrity of electronic records.

All procedures and practices concerning electronic records management are to be in accordance with this policy.

BACKGROUND
The NSW Rural Assistance Authority Electronic Records Management Policy was established to comply with the State Records Act 1998 (NSW) using the corporate records management system recommended by NSW Government Selected Applications Systems and incorporating the Australian Standard® ISO 15489-2002, as a records management standard and Australian Standard® AS4390 as a code of best practice in the care and storage of the Authority’s records.

SCOPE
This policy applies to all staff of the NSW Rural Assistance Authority.

POLICY
Good electronic recordkeeping is essential for the creation and capture of electronic records as evidence of business activities.

The Authority does this by making recordkeeping a routine part of business in the electronic environment by building it into business processes and tools.

Records will be managed in such a way that the relationships between non-electronic and electronic records are identified.

The Authority ensures that these records satisfy identified business needs, accountability requirements and community expectations.
Responsibility for the management and maintenance of electronic records rests with individuals at all levels in the Authority.

NSW Rural Assistance Authority staff who make use of electronic records will do so in accordance with guidelines to make that usage efficient, consistent and compliant.

Objectives

The Government's objectives for using information management and technology to deliver government services to the people of NSW will be supported by maintaining electronic records in electronic form where it is appropriate to do so.

Electronic records are more accessible and generally have greater value than printed versions of them. (Some kinds of electronic records, such as compound documents, cannot be maintained in hard copy form without loss of content or meaning.)

The Authority will make more use of information management and technology to deliver services, conduct business and manage its information resources, ways will be established to maintain records generated in the electronic environment, and their associated metadata, in electronic form.

Maintaining electronic records and providing official and public access to them over time, including as State archives, involves shared responsibilities between the NSW Rural Assistance Authority and State Records. The Authority will cooperate with State Records to establish arrangements for the long-term management of electronic records and for providing access to them.

Establishing and operating effective electronic recordkeeping systems and practices within the Authority requires a multidisciplinary approach. The Authority will make effective use of the necessary range of expertise available within the NSW Rural Assistance Authority and elsewhere. This includes expertise in records management, information management and technology, business systems analysis and design, risk assessment, auditing and the law.

Legal and Policy Framework

Electronic recordkeeping will comply with recognised authority sources influencing recordkeeping that are relevant to the NSW Rural Assistance Authority's business environment, such as the AS/NZS ISO 9000 series of quality systems standards.

Electronic records, like records in other formats, are subject to legislation documented in the Authority’s Records Management Policy and to legal processes such as discovery and subpoenas. The records may also be required by Royal Commissions, the Courts, auditors and other people or bodies to whom or which they may be subject.

To further comply with the State Records Act and with Australian Standard® AS ISO 15489, Records Management issued as a code of best practice under the Act. The Authority will ensure through training and promulgation of this document that all staff are made aware of and understand their responsibilities to comply with this policy.

Business Systems

The electronic business processes and systems at the NSW Rural Assistance Authority which capture records in electronic form must manage the content, context and structure of records as a whole. The systems must ensure that records are reliable and authentic and comply with national and international standards on electronic recordkeeping.

Electronic records are to be captured in the NSW Rural Assistance Authority records management system (RAA TRIM) and titled accordingly.
Retention of records
Electronic records must only be disposed of in accordance with the Authority’s authorised disposal schedules.

Access to electronic records
The Manager Records has been nominated as the System Administrator of the Authority’s records management system (RAA TRIM). Access to RAA TRIM is to be arranged through the Manager Records.

RAA TRIM has initially been made available to Administration staff and Section Managers only, with access by other areas of the Authority being progressively rolled out following completion of training and assessment of need for individual users.

Individual access to the records management system is to be authorised by the appropriate Section Manager with reasons for access detailed in the approval. The authorisation is then to be forwarded to the Manager Records for implementation.

All final versions of electronic records that are maintained in the records management system are not capable of amendment.

When confidential material is held in electronic form, due diligence must be undertaken by creators and capturers to ensure that such confidentiality is maintained and appropriate access restrictions are assigned. This is the case for Personnel files and other confidential matters such as Farm Debt Mediation cases.

Should it be necessary for electronic records to be protected from inappropriate access by unauthorised personnel restricted access to the file or document is to be arranged through the Manager Records.

Management of Electronic Mail as Official Records
Email, like word processing, is a medium rather than a record type. Email documents, including attachments dealing with Authority matters, are official records and should not remain in the email application.

In order to achieve full compliance with NSW Standards on Electronic Record Keeping Australian Standard AS® 4390 1996 Records Management, it has been determined that upon receipt of any email, whether addressed to an individual or received through the Authority’s generic ‘Rural.Assist’ mail box the recipient should decide if the email is Business Related. These records must be saved to the records management system (RAA TRIM) or printed on paper and attached to the relevant file, as soon as possible after receipt.

DEFINITIONS
For the purpose of this policy the following definitions apply:

Capture - A deliberate action which results in the registration of a record into a recordkeeping system. For certain business activities, this action may be designed into electronic systems so that the capture of records is concurrent with the creation of records.

Electronic records - Records communicated and maintained by means of electronic equipment.

Information systems - Organised collections of hardware, software, supplies, policies, procedures and people, which store, process and provide access to information.
**Record** - Recorded information, in any form, including data in computer systems, created or received and maintained by an organisation or person in the transaction of business or the conduct of affairs and kept as evidence of such activity.

**Recordkeeping** - Making and maintaining complete, accurate and reliable evidence of business transactions in the form of recorded information.

**Recordkeeping systems** - Information systems which capture, maintain and provide access to records over time.

**RELATED LEGISLATION**

- *State Records Act 1998 (NSW)*

**RELATED POLICIES**

- Records Management
- Records Management – Functional Retention and Disposal Schedule
- Records Management – Strategic and Operational Plan

**RELATED DOCUMENTS**

- State Records – Policy on Electronic Record Keeping

**REVISION HISTORY**

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