



Future Proof

protecting our digital future

News for NSW Public Sector Chief Executives

Issue 02, October 09

Message from the Director

Welcome to the second issue of Future Proof News for chief executives. Since our first issue in November last year, perhaps the most striking change to the digital landscape has been the explosion of social media / web 2.0 technologies. Sharing all kinds of information - personal and business related - using tools and platforms such as blogs, tweets, photo sharing and social networking sites has become pervasive, even in government. The NSW Police are tweeting crime statistics, Councils are consulting with ratepayers online and cultural institutions including State Records are putting images from our collections online and inviting community comments (see our photostream at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/state-records-nsw/>).



All of these endeavours generate digital information that in some cases will need to be retained to meet business, legal and community expectations for evidence - that is, some of this information has to be kept as digital records and archives. To help government devise practical strategies for recordkeeping in a web 2.0 world, we have produced some guidance on 'Records

management and web 2.0' which can be accessed on the Future Proof website and blog.

At the same time, State Records is continuing to promote and lobby for the funding required to establish a trusted archival repository for long term digital information to be retained as part of the State archives collection. We are at present only able to accept hardcopy and other physical format records. Not only is the project of paramount importance for us as an archive, but it is vital for the NSW Government if it is to truly maximise the advantages to be gained from using and sharing public information.

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Digital recordkeeping and Government 2.0

In September, Penny Sharpe, MLC, hosted an event called NSW Public Sphere at Parliament House. Inspired by the Public Sphere event run in Canberra by Senator Kate Lundy, NSW Public Sphere had a range of speakers and panels that explored how the use of web 2.0 technologies and more open and available government data are transforming government and the public's interactions with government and elected representatives.

Cassie Findlay from State Records spoke at the event on 'Preserving

digital information', making the point that without trusted, accessible public information, the aims of more effective and transparent government through web 2.0 will not be realised. This has been highlighted in various forums on Web 2.0 implementation, including at the Commonwealth level, where the Government 2.0 Taskforce includes a representative from the National Archives of Australia.

The Premier, Nathan Rees, was a special guest speaker at NSW Public Sphere, where he launched a competition for software developers, 'Apps for NSW', seeking new and innovative ways to provide government information to the public. In launching the competition he noted: "This is all about making government information accessible for people, businesses and community groups."



The Premier Nathan Rees speaking at the NSWsphere event at Parliament House on September 4. Photo: Paul Hemsall

In his Memorandum to agencies M2009-11 *NSW Standard on Digital Recordkeeping*, the Premier draws a clear connection between improved service delivery, more accessible

government information and digital recordkeeping. He notes: "Efforts to ensure the trustworthiness of digital records are in keeping with my commitment to fostering openness and accountability in New South Wales by improving access to information about the activities of NSW Government."

By implementing the Standard in accordance with the timetable set out by the Premier in the Memorandum, your organisation can establish a robust and sustainable platform for the management of digital records so they are useable and available now and in the future.

For more information go to:
<http://futureproof.records.nsw.gov.au/resources/>

Computing in the Clouds

Cloud computing is the label attached to the use of applications that sit on someone else's server that you access via the web. In cloud computing the web is no longer just a communications network: it becomes a platform for computing¹. (1) Some common examples of cloud computing include:

- email services like Microsoft Hotmail and Yahoo
- document sharing services like Google Docs
- photo storing services like Flickr
- specialist applications such as project management software that are delivered online under licence arrangements.

More and more NSW public offices are using cloud computing for mainstream business. As a result the recordkeeping implications of this new technology need to be considered.

¹ Alert: The Privacy Implications of cloud computing, Privacy Rights Clearinghouse, 12 Sep 2008
<http://www.privacyrights.org/ar/cloud-computing.htm>

If your organisation is storing its data on someone else's hardware you may lose some control of it. The hosting company becomes responsible for the security and protection of the information. Access to and sharing of the information may be left to their discretion, with potential privacy risks. Then there are legal issues about who owns the data and whether the local privacy laws of the country in which the data is stored apply. In extreme cases you may find yourself unable to access your own data! Similarly, the data may be in jeopardy if the hosting company goes out of business. Another potential problem may be getting the data back at the end of a contract and providing continued access to that information if you don't have the application to read it. All of these pose serious threats to the ongoing accessibility of government information.

State Records advises that public offices considering entering into cloud computing arrangements conduct a thorough risk assessment before entering into contracts. Cloud computing is not appropriate for very sensitive or personal information. In addition, the hosting company must be able to meet the requirements of the State Records Act and standards issued under the Act if State records are to be stored with them. Contractual arrangements need to mitigate risks and the public office is responsible for monitoring arrangements with the hosting company. More information is available from State Records' website.

FOI Reform - Open Government Information

The Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 and consequential legislation was enacted following recommendations made by the Ombudsman in his 2009 review of the Freedom of Information Act, and after written submissions were received on the Bills from

interested parties including many government agencies.

The Privacy Commissioner, Judge Ken Taylor AM RFD, was appointed as acting Information Commissioner in July 2009 and has begun the process of setting up the new Office of Information Commissioner (OIC), including the recruitment of a permanent Information Commissioner.

On 25 September the Director of State Records met with Judge Taylor to discuss how State Records can assist the new Office as it develops guidance on the new right to information regime, and advice for agencies on how to prepare and to handle the transition from FOI. It was agreed at the meeting that State Records' communication channels including the website, *For the Record* e-newsletter and Records Managers Forums would be useful means of communication to assist the OIC to inform agencies about the implementation of the Act. The new right to information regime will be well supported by good records management practices, and particularly by standards on digital record keeping.

Links to the new legislation and information about the reform process are available from:
<http://www.informationcommissioner.nsw.gov.au>

Follow us on Twitter!

The Future Proof strategy now has its own Twitter account. Follow us for news and updates on digital recordkeeping, preservation of digital information and progress towards a digital State archive.



<http://twitter.com/FutureProofNSW>

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