

— ARCHIVES ACT 1983 (CTH)

Commonwealth

Archiving Social Media: A Guide For Federal Government

 COMMONWEALTH LAW AUSTRALIA-WIDE LAW RETENTION & DISPOSAL CHECKLIST ARCHIVE-READY

Everything your agency needs to know about social media recordkeeping: the records Act, the access regime, retention and disposal, and a ready-to-use readiness checklist.



— SOCIAL MEDIA ARCHIVING FOR AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT

Commonwealth social media records, ready when an **FOI request** arrives.

Ready to find it, review it and export it. Posts, comments, replies, edits, deletions and associated media on official accounts can be government records when they evidence official business — and when a FOI request arrives, the response duty is statutory. The statutory period governs the decision and notice; locating the complete record set is the operational work needed to make that decision defensibly.

Freedom of Information Act 1982 No. 3, 1982 — An agency or minister must acknowledge a request in writing within 14 days of receipt and notify a written decision within 30 days after receipt, extendable where third-party consultation is needed (a further 30 days), by written agreement with the applicant (up to 30 days at a time), or with the Information Commissioner's approval for complex or voluminous requests; charges processing can suspend the clock. These are decision mechanics for Commonwealth agencies and Ministers — they do not govern state, territory or local councils.

— THE LEGAL CONTEXT

Social media records carry legal obligations. **A reliable archive helps your team meet them.**

Archives Act 1983 (Cth). Commonwealth records may not be destroyed, altered or transferred out of Commonwealth custody except as the Act permits, generally under a records authority issued by the National Archives of Australia. Agencies are expected to manage information in line with the National Archives' standards and policies, including Building trust in the public record.

Retention in Australian Government. Retention follows the function the record documents. Social media records are kept under the same records authority as the business activity they evidence. Agencies may make documented, risk-based decisions about capturing replies and public comments, and sentence records under the relevant authority. Confirm the class with the National Archives of Australia or your information governance team.

Primary sources

- **Archives Act 1983 (Cth)**
- **Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)**
- **National Archives of Australia — managing social media and instant messaging**
- **OAIC — how long does an agency have to process an FOI request?**
- **OAIC — extensions of time**

Reviewed against current official sources: 30 August 2026 · General information, not legal advice.

The Commonwealth framework

Four things shape the social media record in Australian Government: the records Act, the access regime, retention and disposal, and the consequences of getting disposal wrong.

RECORDS ACT

Archives Act 1983 (Cth)

Archives Act 1983 No. 79, 1983

Current National Archives guidance states that social media and instant messages used as part of agency business are official Government records, with documented, risk-based decisions permitted for replies and public comments.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Freedom of Information Act 1982 No. 3, 1982

An agency or minister must acknowledge a request in writing within 14 days of receipt and notify a written decision within 30 days after receipt, extendable where third-party consultation is needed (a further 30 days), by written agreement with the applicant (up to 30 days at a time), or with the Information Commissioner's approval for complex or voluminous requests; charges processing can suspend the clock. These are decision mechanics for Commonwealth agencies and Ministers — they do not govern state, territory or local councils.

RETENTION & DISPOSAL

Records authorities issued by the National Archives of Australia

Retention and disposal authorities

Retention follows the function the record documents. Social media records are kept under the same records authority as the business activity they evidence. Agencies may make documented, risk-based decisions about capturing replies and public comments, and sentence records under the relevant authority.

CONSEQUENCES

Unauthorised destruction of Commonwealth records is prohibited

Archives Act 1983 (Cth) s 24

Section 24 of the Archives Act 1983 prohibits the unauthorised destruction, disposal, transfer, damage or alteration of Commonwealth records, subject to the Act's exceptions — disposal generally happens under a records authority issued by the National Archives. Separately, a request not decided in time is taken to be refused, which opens Information Commissioner review.

If it was posted, commented on, edited or deleted on an official channel — it can be a government record when it evidences official business.

Who oversees the record

The authorities that set the recordkeeping standards, publish the social media guidance and review how requests are handled in Australian Government.

RECORDS AUTHORITY

National Archives of Australia

Managing social media and instant messaging

Sets the recordkeeping standards and publishes the guidance that applies to official social media in Australian Government. Your retention and disposal decisions are made under its authorities.

OVERSIGHT

Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC)

www.oaic.gov.au

Reviews how FOI requests are handled, including complaints about delay or refusal — which makes a findable, exportable record the easiest way to keep a request routine.

WHO IS COVERED

Commonwealth agencies · Ministerial offices

The Commonwealth FOI Act applies to Commonwealth agencies and Ministers — not state, territory or local councils.

WHAT TO CAPTURE

Posts, comments, edits, deletions and media

Preserve original content with its context: conversation relationships, timestamps, available metadata and version history. A screenshot may omit metadata, edits, deletions and conversation relationships — a capture that keeps the thread and the changes is easier to rely on later.

Without a complete archive, **responding with confidence** to a request, audit or inquiry gets harder every day.

— READY TO GET STARTED

Social Media Records **Readiness Checklist.**

A social media archive is a critical part of your recordkeeping strategy — one shared source of truth for your records, legal, IT and communications teams.

**Get the right people involved.**

Bring together records, communications, legal, governance and IT.

**Understand what laws apply.**

Know your records Act, access regime and retention authorities.

**Know your formats.**

Preserve original content, context, metadata, links and attachments.

**Think about privacy.**

Protect personal information and control access appropriately.

**Know which accounts are in scope.**

Identify every account used to conduct official business.

**Define what needs to be captured.**

Include posts, comments, replies, edits, deletions and media.

**Set your retention rules.**

Sentence records under your retention and disposal authority.

**Capture edits and deletions.**

Preserve content even after it changes or disappears.

**Plan for information requests.**

Make records easy to search, retrieve and export.

**Protect record integrity.**

Maintain authentic, complete and defensible records.

**Control access to your archive.**

Set clear permissions and maintain an audit trail.

**Test your process regularly.**

Make sure you can find and export records when needed.

Captured. Searchable. Defensible.

Ready to see how Brolly supports the capture, search, integrity and export steps on this list? Turn the page.

Keep the social record ready before the request arrives.

Social content can change or disappear long before an information request is received. Brolly gives authorised teams a searchable archive of supported content from connected official accounts, preserving available context so records can be found, reviewed and exported when needed.



“Find a tool you can trust, especially when working in the public sector. We have that with Brolly – if you ever need those records, you know they’re there.”

Anthony, Manager Marketing & Campaigns — NSW Department of Communities and Justice

[Read the NSW DCJ story →](#)

- ✓ **Capture supported posts, comments, edits & deletions automatically**
- ✓ **Search and export response-ready record sets with metadata intact**
- ✓ **Nothing disposed of without your instruction**

[Book a free demo →](#)

[The Commonwealth law guide](#)

Captured. Searchable. Defensible.