

# Public service to ban paper in boxes: New digital policy to make sweeping reforms across APS

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A new policy for the federal public service will crack down on bureaucratic documents stored in boxes as it demands all agencies have entirely digital work practices.

The [Digital Continuity 2020 Policy](#), released on Tuesday by the National Archives of Australia, sets the demands for all federal agencies and aims to put to death record-keeping methods used for the past century.



Finance Department head Jane Halton spoke of small people stamping their feet. *Photo: Jay Cronan*

And one powerful agency head, Department of Finance secretary Jane Halton, has warned managers not to be intimidated by resistant staff.

She called on public servants to fight the "tyranny of the small person" who usually "wears a propeller on their hat" and says "no, I like it my way".

"We are going through one of the globe's great revolutions, the digital revolution," Ms Halton said at the policy launch.



National Archives director-general David Fricker says public servants can no longer entomb pieces of paper in boxes.  
*Photo: Jamila Toderas*

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Ms Halton took a swing at hard-copy paper forms which the federal bureaucracy still asked members of the public to fill out.

She said she herself was frustrated by writing her name, address and age "25 times" on forms when dealing with government services.

Ms Halton said the public service needed a "collect once, use many times" approach.

The policy will force agencies to manage their information as an asset, ensuring it is created and managed for as long as required, taking into account business and other needs and risks.

Agencies will transition to entirely digital work processes, meaning business processes including authorisations and approvals are done digitally, and that information is created and managed in digital format.

Agencies will have "interoperable" systems of record keeping so their information can be easily found and shared with other agencies.

Agency bosses were expected to identify paper records for future culling by the end of this year.

The first official deadline looming for agencies will be to establish information governance committees by June 2016. Agencies will need plans for how they will deal with their information by the end of next year.

The transition to the new era of record keeping will be complete by the end of 2020.

National Archives director-general David Fricker said information stored by the government now needed to outlive technical obsolescence.

He said public servants could no longer "entomb pieces of paper in boxes".

The policy said developing end-to-end digital work processes provided opportunities for agencies to establish more mature and efficient procedures and services that engaged the public directly and effectively.

"Work processes that create and collect digital information and keep it in an accessible digital form can enable better productivity and responsiveness to client and government behaviour," the policy said.

"Digital information that is kept in digital form is more usable and can be shared more easily and at less cost.

"Digital information kept in paper and other analogue forms can result in inefficiencies such as unnecessary duplication, increased storage costs, and unreliable or inaccessible information that cannot be easily found and cost-effectively shared or backed up for business continuity."

Agencies will report back to the National Archives annually via a survey.

Public servants at the policy's release were told about training sessions to help them make changes.

Read more: <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/it-pro/government-it/public-service-to-ban-paper-in-boxes-new-digital-policy-to-make-sweeping-reforms-across-aps-20151027-gkjpgf#ixzz3qUZa9365>