

# Text messages: advice for Ministers

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## 1 Introduction

This factsheet steps you through the decision process for managing your text messages in accordance with the Public Records Act 2005 (the Act).

For more information, please see the separate factsheet *17/F24 - Core public recordkeeping responsibilities for Ministers*.

## 2 Step 1: is the information a public record?

If you are conducting business in your official capacity as a Minister or Associate Minister of the Crown by text messages, these are public records and therefore must be managed appropriately under the Act.

Not all information that you create or receive as a text message is a public record. Text messages about personal or non-ministerial business are not public records under the Act. For example, if you receive an invitation to lunch from a friend or the agenda for your next party political meeting.

## 3 Step 2: assess the value of the information

The majority of text messages that you create or receive in your official capacity are facilitative, transitory and/or short-term value. For example, you don't need to retain a notification that the car is waiting, or personal notes from a meeting where a separate formal record is made.

However, some text messages may require or initiate further action, or are potentially of longer-term value. In these cases the text message may need to be sent on to someone else to action or to be retained for a period of time as evidence of a decision or a transaction. For example, if you are notified of a problem or a complaint, or you make a decision on an issue relating to your portfolio.

When assessing the value of information and deciding whether to delete or retain your texts, some of the questions you might ask yourself are:

- does the information record a decision or action you have taken as a Minister?
- does it affect the rights and entitlements of New Zealanders?
- will the information be needed by yourself or others in the future?
- is it a copy of information received by others?

## 4 Step 3: delete or transfer the information

You can delete a text message that you create or receive in your official capacity if the information contained in it is only facilitative, transitory and/or short-term value under a disposal authority issued by the Chief Archivist<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://records.archives.govt.nz/assets/Guidance-new-standard/16-Sp6-GDA7.docx>

**OR**

You can transfer the information in the text message to your support staff if it facilitates the creation of another record or if the information has potential longer-term value. Your office support staff will assist to work out and agree on the most efficient means for you to do this. The original text message may then be deleted.