

Northern Territory Archives Service

Cabinet Submissions and Decisions

In 1978 the Commonwealth passed the Northern Territory (Self Government) Act 1978 establishing the Northern Territory as a distinct political entity under the Crown, with limited state-like powers, effective on 1 July 1978. The Act gave the Northern Territory self-government, extending local autonomy to the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, and providing power to the Administrator to grant or deny assent to proposed laws. Following this, the first Ministry of the new Northern Territory Government was appointed and the Legislative Assembly was given authority and responsibility for the finances of the government of the Northern Territory.

The Cabinet

The Cabinet consists of those elected members of the Legislative Assembly who have been appointed as Ministers by the Administrator. The Cabinet generally meets on a weekly basis to make decisions on matters such as major policy issues, proposals with significant expenditure or employment implications, matters which involve important initiatives or departures from previous arrangements, proposals with implications for Australian, state and local government relations, legislation, and high level government appointments.

The records of Cabinet meetings and decisions are held in the strictest confidence until they are released 30 years after their creation.

Access to Cabinet Records

On 1 January each year the records of the Northern Territory Government's Cabinet are released for public access, having reached 30 years since their creation.

The Northern Territory Archives Service is responsible for managing, preserving and providing access to Territory Archives. Archives Advices nos.1-6 relating to access may be downloaded as PDF documents from:

<https://dtc.nt.gov.au/arts-and-museums/northern-territory-archives-service/government-recordkeeping/archives-management-standards>.

In accordance with the Information Act government agencies transfer permanent value records of their business and activity to the archives service for inclusion in the Territory Archives. An access agreement is negotiated by the responsible agency and the archives service when the records are transferred. Public access to government archives is restricted for a minimum of 30 years, unless it is in the public interest for the records to be restricted for longer.

The Cabinet Office in the Department of the Chief Minister provides secretariat services to Cabinet and the Executive Council, and is the agency responsible for the records of Cabinet. An access agreement negotiated between the Northern Territory Archives Service and the Department of the Chief Minister provides for an annual opening of Cabinet submissions and decisions and of the Executive Council meeting papers, on 1 January each year after the records become 30 years old (some items may be restricted for longer periods where sensitive information has been identified).

Understanding Cabinet Submissions and Decisions

Most business comes before Cabinet by way of formal Cabinet submissions, identified by a consecutive number. Cabinet submissions generally follow a set format. This includes a cover sheet which provides brief details of the submission (e.g. title, purpose, sponsoring Minister, relationship of the proposal to existing policy, timing considerations, staffing implications, costs) followed by the body of the submission which includes recommendations, background materials, options, budget implications, timing issues and other key topics. There may also be attachments to the submission. Submissions are usually prepared by Government agencies at the direction of, or with the agreement of, the Minister responsible for that agency. Submissions may also include comments from other Northern Territory Government agencies which were consulted during the development of the submission.

Each decision made by Cabinet is formally recorded in a separate document known as a Cabinet decision. Like Cabinet submissions, each Cabinet decision is given a consecutive number. Most Cabinet decisions will have a corresponding Cabinet submission, but Cabinet may also issue a Cabinet decision without a submission. Note that the decision number is not the same as the corresponding submission number (apart from a small number of very early submissions and decisions in a new Government's term when the numbers may coincidentally align).

Ministers may from time to time present memoranda to Cabinet, or table a document at a Cabinet meeting. These documents will generally be incorporated in the formal records of the Cabinet meeting. Such documents will usually result in a Cabinet decision, but not in every case.

The Cabinet submissions and decisions are kept in bound volumes (NTRS 2575).

The table below lists the records of Cabinet and other significant related series, open for public access: Records restricted for more than 30 years are not listed below.

Main Series

Series	Title	Description	Series Date Range
NTRS 2575	Cabinet submissions and decisions	<p>Cabinet submissions, decisions, and associated papers including budget information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volumes 5-17, Meeting number 28 on the 7 December 1977 to Meeting number 64 on the 22 December 1978, are open from 1 January 2009. Volumes 18-32, 35-43 Meeting number 65 on the 2 January 1979 to Meeting number 90 on the 5 December 1979, are open from 1 January 2010. Volumes 44-64, Meeting number 91 on the 19 December 1979 to Meeting number 121 on 23 December 1980, are open from 1 January 2011. Volumes 65, 68A, 68C-70, 71B-79, 81A-90, Meeting number 122 on 14 January 1981 to Meeting number 154 on 21 December 1981 are open from 1 January 2012. Volumes 92-93B, 95-103, 105-115B, 116B-117, Meeting number 156 on 2 February 1982 to Meeting number 182 on 14 December 1982 are open from 1 January 2013. Volumes 118B, 199B-123, 125A, 125B, 126B-127A, 129A-129B, 131A, 131C-132B, 133B-135B, 136D, 138-139A, Meeting number 183 on 18 January 1983 to Meeting number 205 on 8 November 1983 are open from 1 January 2014. Volumes 141B, 146-147, 150A, 151A-152, 153B, 156-158A, 159,161A, 162, 165A, Meeting number 207 on 17 January 1984 to Meeting number 235 on 14 December 1984 are open from 1 January 2015 Volumes 168A-168B, 171-173, 176, 177, 178B-180, 184A-187, 193, 197-198, 202, Meeting number 238 on 14 January 1985 to 	1971-2008

Main Series

Series	Title	Description	Series Date Range
		<p>Meeting number 288 on 17 December 1985 are open from 1 January 2016</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volumes 207A, 208, 211-213B, 214, 216-219, 222, 223B, 224B-224C, 227, 228B, 230A-230B, 233-234A, 235, 237A, 238A-238B, Meeting number 289 on 23 January 1986 to Meeting number 330 on 16 December 1986 are open from 1 January 2016 Volumes 240, 241A, 241B, 243, 245, 248, 258B, 261A, 263A, 263C, 265A are open from 1 January 2018 	
NTRS 3353	Index to Cabinet submissions and decisions	Annual indexes, created by the Cabinet Office to assist with accessing the volumes. The index provides details of the meeting number, meeting date, decision number, and title of submission	1977-1987
NTRS 3750	Redacted copies of Cabinet decisions	This series consists of copies of restricted Cabinet decisions which have sensitive information redacted to allow public access.	1984-1987

Related Series

Series	Title	Description	Series Date Range
NTRS 3351	Executive Council meeting papers	<p>Agenda and business papers with related attachments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volumes 1-12 are open from 1 January 2009 Volumes 13-17, 19-23 are open from 1 January 2010 Volumes 24-25, 27-35 are open from 1 January 2011. Volumes 36-39, 41-44, 46-48, are open from 1 January 2012 Volumes 49-61A are open from 1 January 2013 Volumes 62-73 are open from 1 January 2014 Volumes 74-81 are open from 1 January 2015 Volumes 83-86, 88-91 are open from 1 January 2016 Volumes 92, 94-96 are open from 1 January 2017 Volumes 97-98, 100-101 are open from 1 January 2018 	1969-1987

Main Series

Series	Title	Description	Series Date Range
NTRS 3352	Index to Executive Council meeting papers	An index created by the Cabinet Office to assist with accessing the meeting papers. The index lists business papers submitted to each meeting	1977-1987
NTRS 3354	Photographic copyprints relating to members of the Northern Territory Cabinet	Photographic copyprints taken from original photographs of the members of the Northern Territory Cabinet.	ca 1978- ca 1987

Further information

These series can be accessed by appointment in the Reading Room of the Northern Territory Archives Centre, Darwin, open from 9.00am-4.30pm, Tuesday-Friday.

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