

## Records Information – Handling Public Records

Public records provide unique evidence of our past. Physical records in the custody of Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) date from the early period of public administration in the Port Phillip District, and many are very fragile. Please help us make it possible for future generations to use this rich and irreplaceable resource by handling records carefully.

### Opening and closing records

Ensure an adequate flat surface and ample area on which to place and open the volume or file.

Ensure that your hands are clean before handling records as dust and oils are readily transferred. Replace records in the order in which they were found.

Open the cover first. Taking account of the fragility and any existing damage turn the pages in small enough groups to ensure that no further stress is placed on the record. Hold the pages by the outer edge or corners. Do not open the pages by pushing the page or thumb or finger licking.

When closing files or volumes close only a safe number of pages at a time and always close the cover on its own to prevent creasing of the first or last pages.

### Reading records

Do not unfold pages that are tightly folded, cracking or crumbling. Seek assistance from staff if necessary. Do not fold papers.

Use the weights provided to enable pages to be held open without stress. Do not lean on records, take notes on top of records, or trace records.

Pencils or laptops may be used for making notes. Pens are not permitted in PROV reading rooms as they can leave permanent marks on records.

The corrosion of metal clips can weaken surrounding paper so that although a file may appear sound it may tear or break up easily if there is corrosion. If clips need to be removed to view the record safely please seek staff assistance.

Please notify reading room staff before handling records if you notice that mould is present. If you find records in a deteriorated condition please advise staff.

### Handling volumes

Keep spine and cover supported and use volume holders provided in PROV reading rooms. Avoid opening volumes beyond their natural limit, as this can break a volume's spine.

Never pile fragile or damaged volumes on top of one another or larger heavier volumes on top of smaller ones. Do not place volumes on top of documents and files.

### Making copies

Researchers can make copies of records free of charge using their own digital camera, provided that conditions of use are observed. For details see [PROVguide 24 Use of Digital Cameras in PROV Reading Rooms](#).

Photocopies can be ordered through PROV if it will not harm the record. Alternative copy methods are available for large and fragile records, such as bound volumes, photographic prints, maps, plans and some drawings. Refer to [PROVguide 2 Copying Services](#) for details.

Public records are unique and many are fragile. Please handle them with care and help preserve our archival heritage.

PLEASE DO

*Handle records with care*

*Use stands for large volumes*

*Notify staff if mould is present or if records are badly damaged*

*Use pencils*

*Keep records in original order*

PLEASE DON'T

*Stack fragile volumes*

*Put undue stress on the spine of volumes*

*Lick fingers or push to separate pages*

*Force creased or brittle pages open*

*Use pens*

*Remove pins or clips from files*

*Please ask for staff assistance if you have any problems in handling records*

*Thank you for your co-operation.*