The committee changes every year. The building's memory shouldn't.

Best Practice Record Keeping

General guidance, not a rulebook - every building's circumstances differ, so take what's useful and leave the rest.

Every AGM, a building hands a legal duty and a six-figure budget to three people who walk out holding nothing. Not because anyone withheld anything — because in most buildings there was nothing to hand over.

Records are the fix, and they're also a legal obligation. Here's both halves.

What the law requires you to keep

State	How long	Notes
NSW	7 years	Minutes, financial statements and accounting records, correspondence sent and received, meeting notices, voting papers, and signed managing agent and building manager agreements. NSW Government guidance is that since 11 June 2024 records must be kept electronically.
VIC	7 years, and some permanently	Most documents minimum 7 years; voting papers and proxies 12 months. A permanent category includes plans of subdivision, AGM minutes, building permits, contracts and occupancy permits.
QLD	Varies by record	Body corporate records are kept under your module; fire safety installation maintenance records must be kept for 2 years and include the maintenance person's name and licence number.
Other states	Check your Act	Retention periods and categories differ - confirm locally.

NSW has teeth on this one. *Where the owners corporation gives notice to a person holding its records - including a strata managing agent whose appointment has ended - that person must deliver them up within **14 days**, with a maximum penalty of $2,200 for each failure. That provision exists because the alternative happens.*

What the law doesn't get back for you

This is the part committees discover too late. The statutory list will get you the documents. It won't get you any of the following, and none of it is on any retention schedule anywhere.

- **Which of the open jobs is actually open.** Minutes say the pool gate was discussed in February. They don't say whether anything happened after that.
- **What's waiting on whom.** Most strata delay isn't disagreement — it's nobody knowing who currently has the thing.
- **Why a decision went the way it did.** The minute records the resolution. It rarely records that the dearer quote was chosen because that contractor holds parts locally.

- **The correspondence that was never the scheme's.** A committee's dealings with the insurer, the solicitor, the council, the contractor — much of it lives in a secretary's personal email account. It was never a record of the owners corporation, so nothing can compel its return.

Seven habits that fix it

1. **Give the building its own email address.** Not a personal one. Every piece of correspondence in and out goes through it. When someone's term ends, the building's correspondence doesn't leave with them.
2. **Keep one action register, and only one.** Every open item, its date first reported, its current status, and what it's waiting on. If your building has several partial lists in different heads, it doesn't have a list.
3. **Date everything from when it actually happened**, not when you got around to writing it down. A register that pretends the building started this year is worse than none.
4. **Record the reasoning, briefly.** One sentence on why, attached to the decision. It's the single cheapest gift you can leave the next committee.
5. **Name files so a stranger can find them.** `2026-08-14 Fire Safety Statement - lodged.pdf` beats `scan_003.pdf`. Date first, in year-month-day, so they sort themselves.
6. **Store it where the building can reach it**, not on one person's laptop or in one person's cloud account. If access depends on a person, it isn't a record.
7. **Write down what only one person knows.** The gate code. The valve behind the pump room door. The neighbour who must be told before scaffolding goes up. Write it down and it stops being a risk.

In a lot of buildings the real handover document is a person - usually the building manager, carrying the operational memory unpaid and entirely in their head. That's not a criticism of anyone; nobody gave them anywhere else to put it. But a building that can survive its building manager's absence is also a building that can afford to give them a holiday.

Your annual records health check

Task	Who's doing this	By when
☐ Every statutory record for the required period is held, and we know where		
☐ Records are held somewhere the building controls, not an individual		
☐ The action register is current and lists what each item is waiting on		
☐ Committee correspondence runs through a building address, not personal inboxes		
☐ Decisions made outside meetings are recorded and minuted		
☐ Compliance certificates and reports are filed together, by date		
☐ The long-term fund forecast, insurance policy and by-laws are all findable in under a minute		
☐ Someone other than the secretary knows how to get into everything		
☐ Handover notes exist for the next committee, and are updated as things change		

Owners can ask to see the records

Worth knowing on both sides of the table. An owner is generally entitled to inspect the owners corporation's records on written request — the roll, the financial statements, the insurance policies, the long-term fund plan, and the management agreements.

In NSW there's a prescribed fee — $31 including GST for the first hour and $16 for each additional half hour. **In Victoria an owners corporation cannot charge to inspect** the records and register at all, though it can charge a reasonable fee for copies.

A building that can answer these requests easily is a building with its records in order. A building that finds them painful has just diagnosed itself.

Sources: NSW Fair Trading and the Strata Schemes Management Act 2015, Queensland Government (BCCM Act and modules), Consumer Affairs Victoria and the Owners Corporations Act 2006, Landgate WA - current as at August 2026. Always confirm against your own scheme's registered by-laws or rules, as some schemes have variations.