

**NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE OF SOUTH AFRICA
NASIONALE ARGIEF EN REKORDDIENS VAN SUID-AFRIKA
DIAKHAEFE TŠA BOSETŠHABA TŠA AFRIKA BORWA
INQOLOBANE YOKUGCINA AMAGUGU KAZWELONKE ENINGIZIMU AFRIKA**

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CIRCULAR NO 5 OF 2006

TO THE HEADS OF ALL GOVERNMENTAL BODIES

**PRESERVATION AND DISPOSAL OF VISITORS' BOOKS: NOTIFICATION OF
ISSUING OF GENERAL DISPOSAL AUTHORITY AV2**

1. Two volumes of Visitors' Books that had been maintained at Mahlaba Ndlopfu, formerly Libertas, the official residence of the President in Pretoria, covering the periods 1979-1992 and 1994-1996 respectively, were recovered by the National Archivist with the assistance of the SAPS and the Presidency in August 2006 after having been advertised by an auctioneer. These Visitors' Books are of considerable historical and archival value.
2. The incident raised concerns that owing to the physical nature of Visitors' Books, and their use in some cases in official residences as well as offices, the risk exists that they may not be identified and managed as public records. Visitors' Books kept in an official capacity by state functionaries in offices and official residences constitute public records and are subject to the provisions

REFERENCE: 13/1/5
7/1/P

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of section 13(2)(a) of the National Archives and Records Service of South Africa Act, which stipulates that no public records under the control of any governmental body may be transferred to an archives repository, destroyed, erased or otherwise disposed of without a written disposal authority having been issued by the National Archivist (and similar provisions in provincial archival legislation).

3. This circular seeks to inform the heads of governmental bodies and the responsible records managers of the position as set out in paragraph 2 above. Records managers are requested to ensure that the existence of Visitors' Books kept in both public offices and official residences is accounted for by their inclusion in the office's classification systems, such as the Records Control Schedule and/or the File Plan.

4. This circular also serves as notification of the issuing by the National Archivist of a General Disposal Authority AV2 regarding Visitors' Books which is applicable to all governmental bodies in all spheres and levels of government. The General Disposal Authority authorizes the destruction of Visitors' Books when no longer required **with the exception of the following cases** in which Visitors' Books should be preserved for transfer into the custody of the National Archives Repository in the case of national government, or the relevant provincial archives repository in the case of provincial and local government, when they are 20 years old:

Offices and official residences of the Governor-General of the Union of South Africa, and the State President and the President of the RSA

Offices and official residences of the Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa and the RSA

Offices and official residences of Ministers and Deputy Ministers since 1910

Offices and official residences of the Speakers of the Houses of Parliament since 1910

Offices and official residences of the Administrators of the Provinces, 1910-1994

Offices and official residences of Premiers and MECs of the Provinces and Speakers of the Provincial Legislatures since 1994

Offices and official residences of the heads of state of the former self-governing territories and independent states

Embassies of the Union of South Africa and the RSA abroad

Offices and residences of Mayors of local government structures

5. In cases in which Visitors Books' are destroyed in terms of General Disposal Authority AV2, a destruction certificate should be submitted to the relevant public archives service in terms of the *Records Management Policy Manual*, which is accessible on the National Archives and Records Service's website at http://www.national.archives.gov.za/rms/best_practice.htm#rm_publications
6. This circular will also be published on the National Archives and Records Service's website at <http://www.national.archives.gov.za/rms/circulars/index.htm>.
- 7 Your continued co-operation in ensuing sound records management in the interests of accountability is appreciated.

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