Getting started with State Records Authority of NSW's *Authority Editor*

Welcome to *Authority Editor*, a program for drafting and editing retention and disposal authorities. This guide will get you installed and started on your first XML retention and disposal authority. For fuller information about the program, see the in-program help or the [online help pages](). For guidance about developing a retention and disposal authority, see the *Procedures for disposal authorisation* (available at [SRNSW's website]()).

Contents:

1. Installing

MS Windows

To install on a Windows XP/Vista computer, simply run the setup file 'InstallAuthorityEditor.exe'.

You will be prompted for a location to install to, whether you would like shortcuts created, and whether you want the program to open all files with the extension '.xml' by default.

OS X/Linux

To install on a Mac OS X or Linux computer, you will first need to set up the right environment:

If you are on a Mac and don't already have macport, get it here: <http://www.macports.org/install.php>

Then, open a terminal and enter these commands at the prompt:

Mac:
sudo port install ruby
sudo port install rb-gnome
sudo port install rb-rubygems
sudo gem install nokogiri

Linux (Debian or Ubuntu):
sudo apt-get install ruby ruby-gnome2 rubygems
sudo gem install nokogiri

Now that you have the environment set up, all you need do is unzip the *Authority Editor* source files to your computer, open a terminal, navigate to the directory containing the source files, and enter the command 'ruby init.rb'.

2. The Authority Details screen

On loading, the first screen you will see is the *Authority Details* page for a new retention and disposal authority entitled 'new.xml'. The *Authority Details* page covers information that relates to the draft authority as a whole such as its date range (*Authority date range)* and significant events in its history (*Status events*).
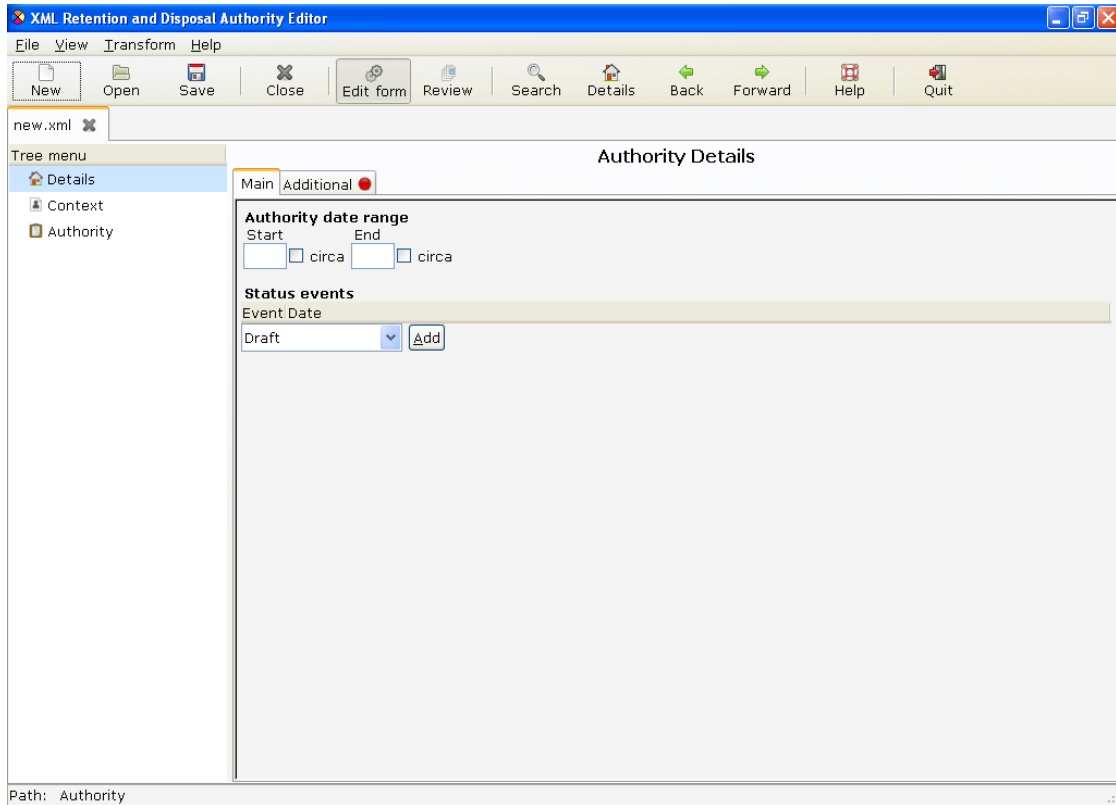
Tip The example authority created in this tutorial is included with *Authority Editor.* You may find it helpful to have that example authority open while reading this tutorial. To do so select 'File – Open', select the 'examples' directory, and select the file 'SRNSW_example.xml'.

Adding *Status events*

Let's begin by recording that it is your agency that is responsible for creating this draft authority. To do this, left-click 'Add' next to the 'Draft' dropdown under *Status events*. Enter your agency's formal name in the 'Agency' field. Leave the 'Number' field empty; this will be added by SRNSW staff. This is a first draft, so the version information is correct. The date field should contain the date on which you complete and submit the draft. Try adding a date now by left-clicking 'Select' and choosing today's date (when you complete the draft you can update this field). Finally, left-click 'Apply' to commit your changes.
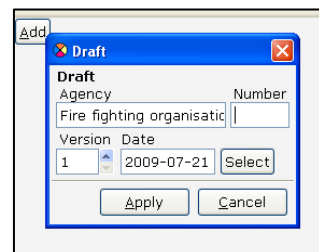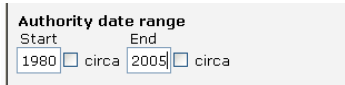

Your new draft event will now be listed as an entry under *Status events*. To edit an entry, simply double left-click on it. To delete or move an entry, right-click on it and select the appropriate option from the pop-up menu.
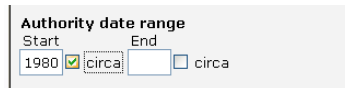

Adding an *Authority date range*

The *Authority date range* indicates the date range of the records to which the functional retention and disposal authority can be applied. A date range can have:

- both a 'Start' and 'End' date (e.g. 1980-2005; this means the authority will only apply to records falling within these dates)
- just a 'Start' date (e.g. 1980; this means the authority will apply to records created from 1980 onwards)
- just an 'End' date (e.g. 2005; this means the authority will apply to records created up to and including 2005).

Dates can be qualified by a 'circa' attribute by checking the 'circa' box next to the relevant date field (e.g. c.1980+).


Enter an appropriate date range for your authority in these fields.

3. The Context screen

Adding supporting documentation

State Records requires organisations to include some information gathered during their investigation into organisational context in the supporting documentation they submit with the draft functional retention and disposal authority. We need enough contextual information to understand the history of your organisation, the functions it performs (and possibly has performed through time) and the legislation it administers.

You can add this supporting documentation within *Authority Editor* under the *Context* menu. To do this, first right-click on the *Context* item in the tree menu. Contextual items can be added individually (by selecting 'Add context' from the pop-up menu) or in bulk (by selecting 'Add supporting documentation'). The latter is easiest, so go and select 'Add supporting documentation' now.
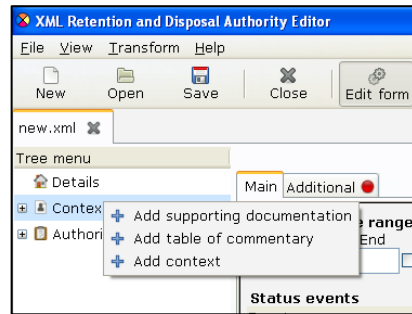
Your *Context* menu will now be populated by the five standard contextual items required by State Records. For each of these items, include the content of your supporting documentation within the *Context content* fields. Include any sources you use, such as your organisation's website or annual reports, by left clicking the 'Add' button under *Sources* and entering the source's title and web address (if any).

Individual context items can be deleted, moved or copied by right-clicking on the item in the tree menu and selecting the relevant option from the pop-up menu.
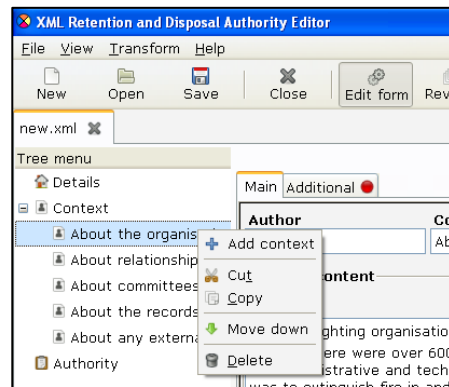
4. The Term screen

Building an authority

Retention and disposal authorities are composed of *terms* and *classes. Terms* give a classification structure to authorities and are based on the functions and activities performed by your organisation. *Classes* (disposal classes) are groups of records to which disposal actions are assigned. Although *Authority Editor* allows a variety of different *term* and *class* structures to be created, in most cases a three-level, function-activity-class structure is recommended.

To create a function-activity-class structure, right-click on the *Authority* item in the tree menu and select 'Add function-activity-class' from the pop-up menu. You can add additional functions to your authority by repeating this step.
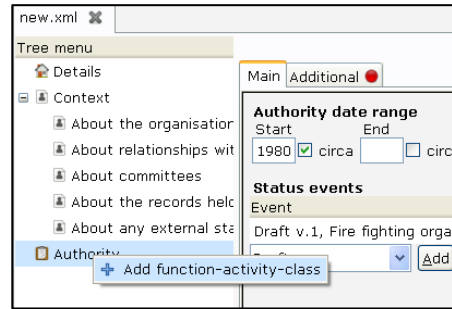
To add an additional activity, right-click on the new function term in the tree menu and select 'Add activity-class' from the pop-up menu.
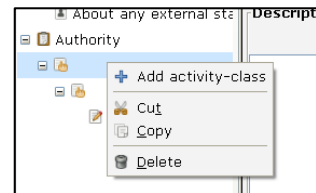
To add additional classes, right-click on an existing class and select 'Add sibling class' from the pop-up menu.
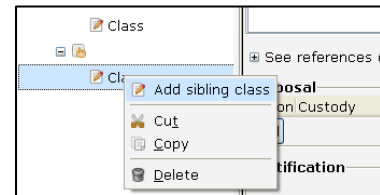
Adding term information

Once you've created the structure you want, you can start filling in the term and class information. Select individual terms and classes by left-clicking on items in the tree menu.

Select your first function and give it a title and a description.
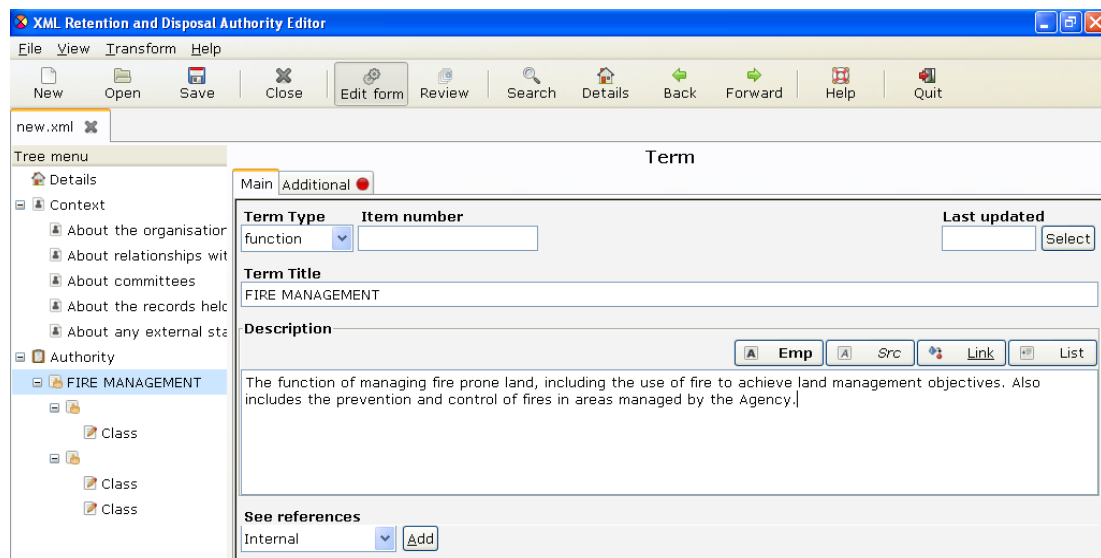
> **Tip** The buttons above the description field allow a limited set of mark-up to be used. You can emphasise words (e.g. **not**), identify sources, hyperlink sources, and create bulleted lists.

See references can be added to term descriptions by choosing the type of see reference from the drop-down menu (select 'internal' for references to other terms in the same authority, 'GDA12' for references to the personnel records authority, 'GA28' for references to the administrative records authority, and 'Another authority' for references to terms in any other authority) and left-clicking 'Add'.

For example, to create an internal see reference choose 'Internal' from the drop-down menu, left-click 'Add' and, in the pop-up dialogue, fill in the appropriate term titles (select 'Add' to add an activity title) and describe the records to which the see reference relates in the 'See Text' field (usually begins 'for records relating to...').
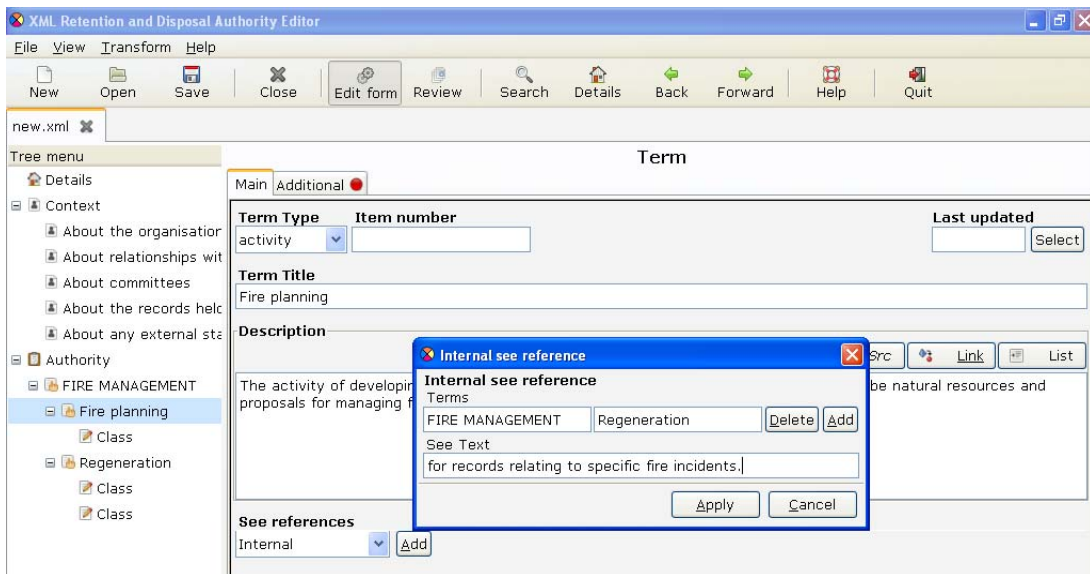

Repeat this process to describe activity terms within your functions.

5. The Class screen

Describing a disposal class

Disposal classes are groups of records performing or recording similar transactions and therefore sharing the same disposal action and minimum retention period.

In the same way that you described your terms, enter a clear description of the transactional processes and types of records that are covered by the class in the *Description* field.
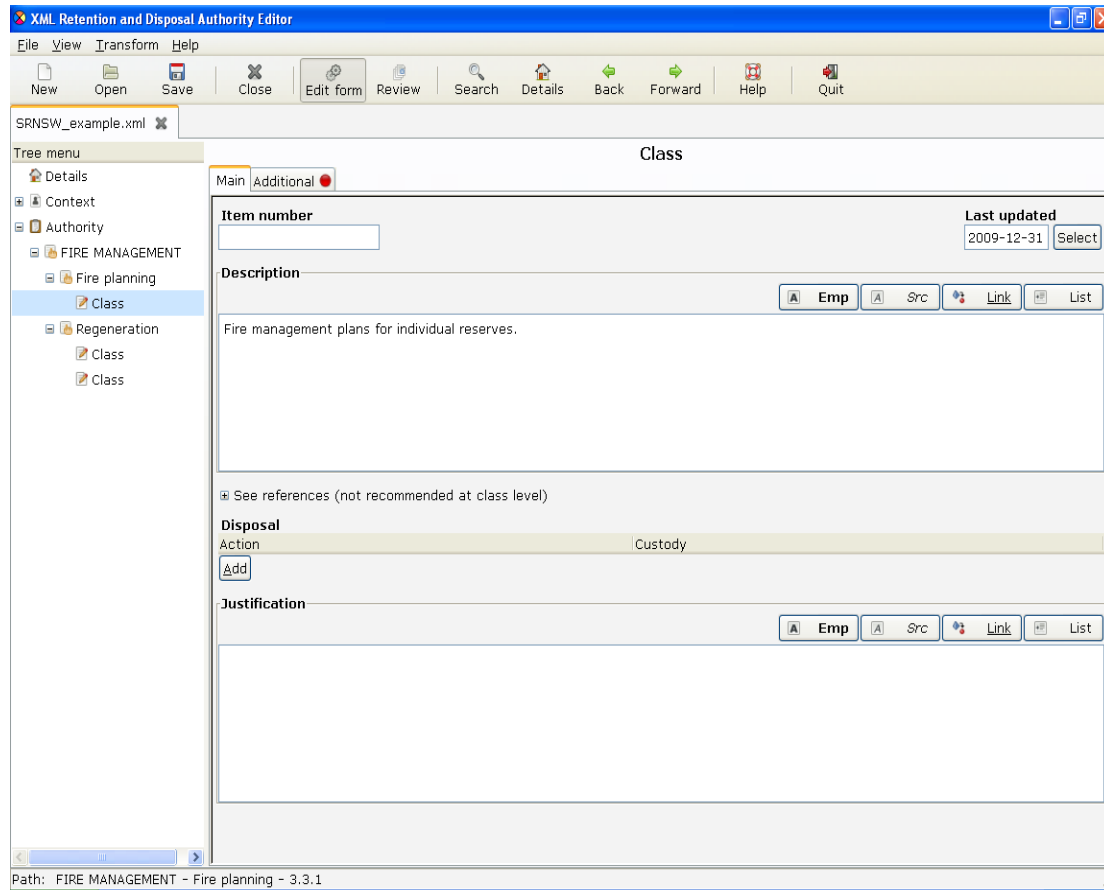

Adding disposal information

Each disposal class must have a disposal action that specifies what should happen to the records.

To enter a disposal action:

- left-click 'Add' under *Disposal*
- if you have determined that the records should be retained for a minimum period of years or months before the disposal action is implemented, enter the number of years or months under 'Retention period'.
  Note: If the disposal action does not require entry of a specific month or year, e.g. 'Retain until administrative or reference use ceases', leave these fields blank
- if you have determined that a disposal trigger (e.g. 'action completed', 'contract expires' or 'date of receipt') should occur before a disposal action

is implemented or before a retention period commences, select a standard disposal trigger from the 'Disposal trigger' dropdown menu or enter a disposal trigger by typing directly into the 'Disposal trigger' field.

- under 'Disposal Action', choose either 'Destroy' or 'Required as State archives', as appropriate.
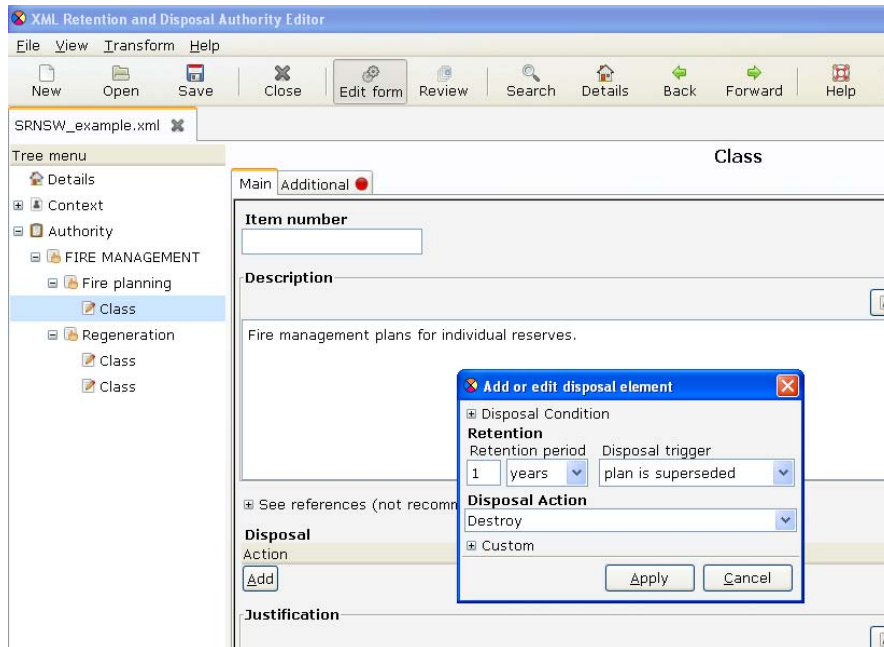
- to enter proposed custody arrangements for records required as State archives, follow the steps described above, i.e. under 'Retention period' enter the number of years for which your organisation proposes to retain the records before transferring them to State Records and under 'Disposal trigger' enter the 'trigger' event (e.g. 'action completed', 'superseded', etc) from which the retention period commences.
  Note: By selecting 'State archives' under 'Disposal Action' the Authority Editor will render the information entered under 'Retention' as proposed arrangements for transferring the records to State Records (see entry 3.6.1 in the tutorial example authority).

Tip It is also possible to choose a disposal action of 'Retain in agency' or 'Transfer' from the 'Disposal Action' dropdown menu. These disposal actions should only be used in limited circumstances. You should contact State Records for more guidance about using these disposal actions.

On clicking 'Apply', your new disposal action will appear as plain English in the *Disposal* list for the class. To go back and edit it, simply double left-click on the list item. To delete it, right-click on the item and select 'Delete'.
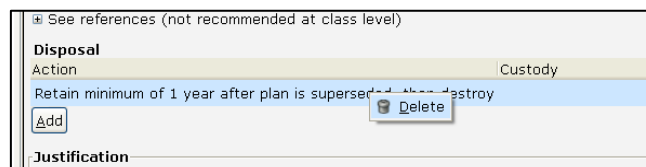
Adding a *Justification*

Each disposal action must have a definitive, measurable statement that gives a clear rationale for the identified minimum retention period or the recommendation to retain the records as State archives.

Enter this statement in the *Justification* field. To assist agencies, State Records has compiled a sample of common justifications. To access this list, place the cursor in the *Justification* field and press 'Control-J'. Select the appropriate justification from the lists provided and then click 'Apply'.
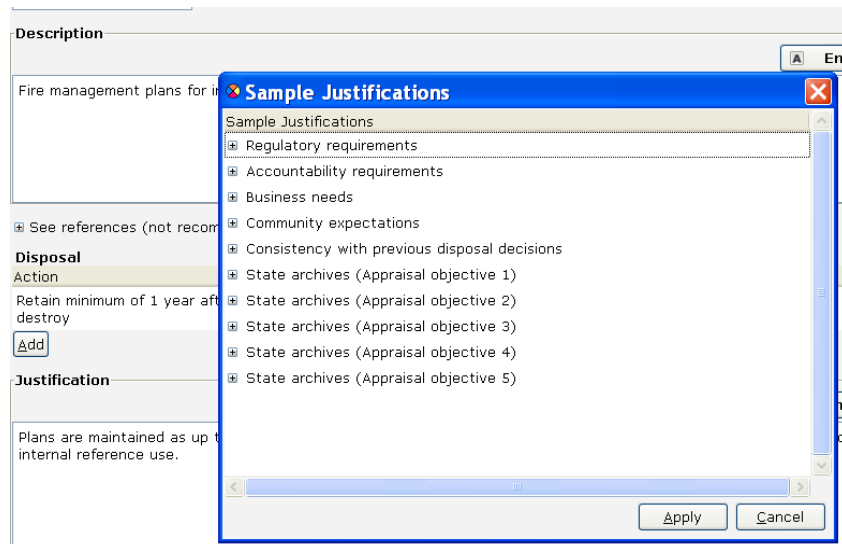

You may modify these justifications as required.

6. Transformations

One of the most valuable features of an XML format for retention and disposal authorities is the range of editing and reporting functionality that can be easily accessed through XSL (eXtensible Stylesheet Language) transformations. State Records uses XSL transformations to automatically edit authorities (e.g. sort or number authorities), preview authorities as HTML pages, and create MS Word and tab-separated versions of authorities.

Edit transformations

To see how an 'Edit' transformation works, select 'Number items' from the 'Transform – Edit' menu.
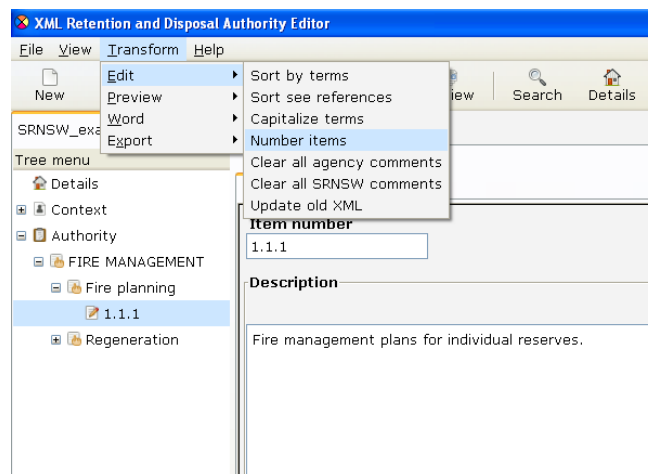
You can do this transformation at any time. If numbering changes because new terms and classes have been added between drafts, or terms have been moved around, simply re-do this transformation.

Preview transformations

The 'Preview' transformations create HTML previews of XML authorities. To see how a 'Preview' transformation works, select 'Authority' from the 'Transform – Preview' menu.
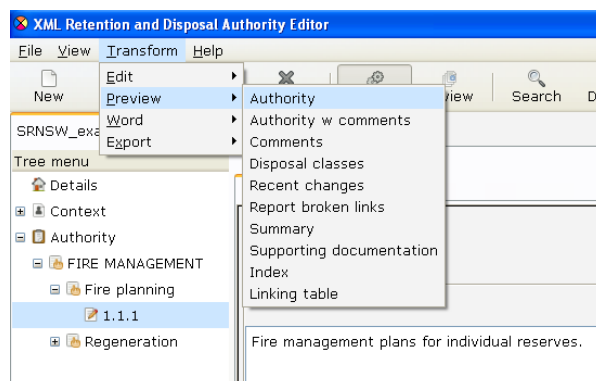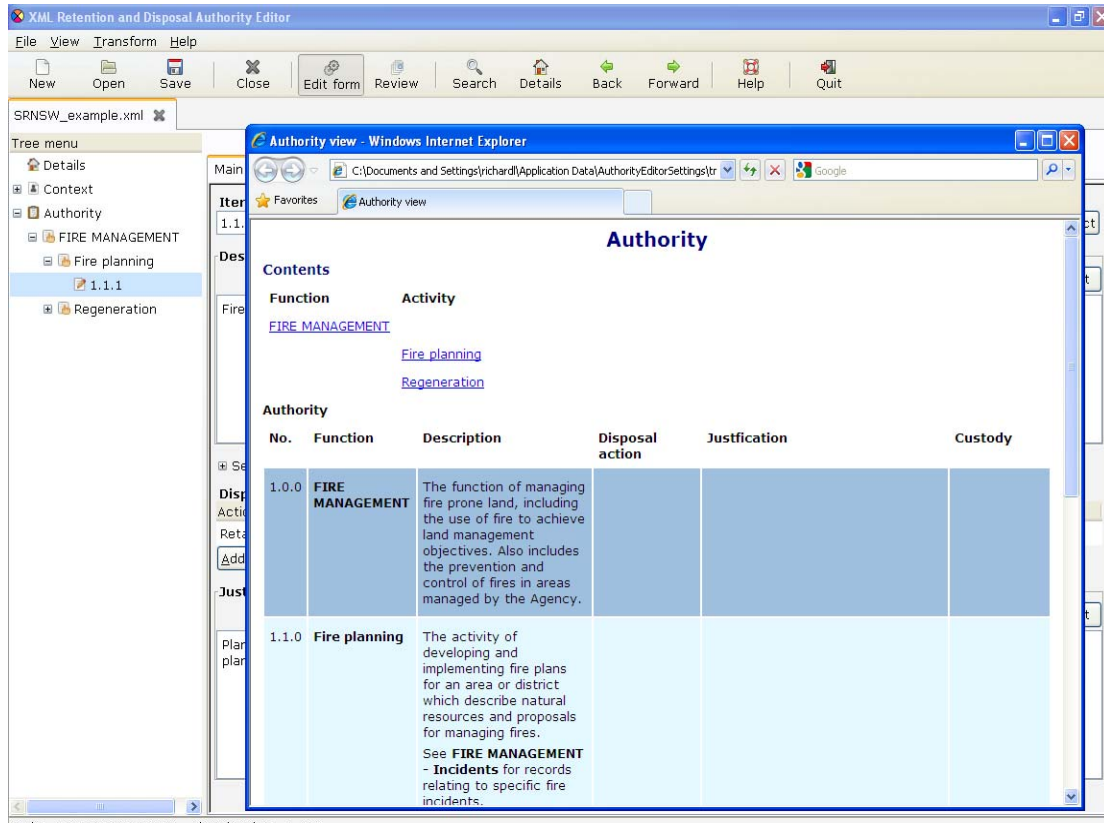
Word transformations

The 'Word' transformations create MS Word versions of XML authorities. To see how a 'Word' transformation works, select 'Draft authority' from the 'Transform – Word' menu.
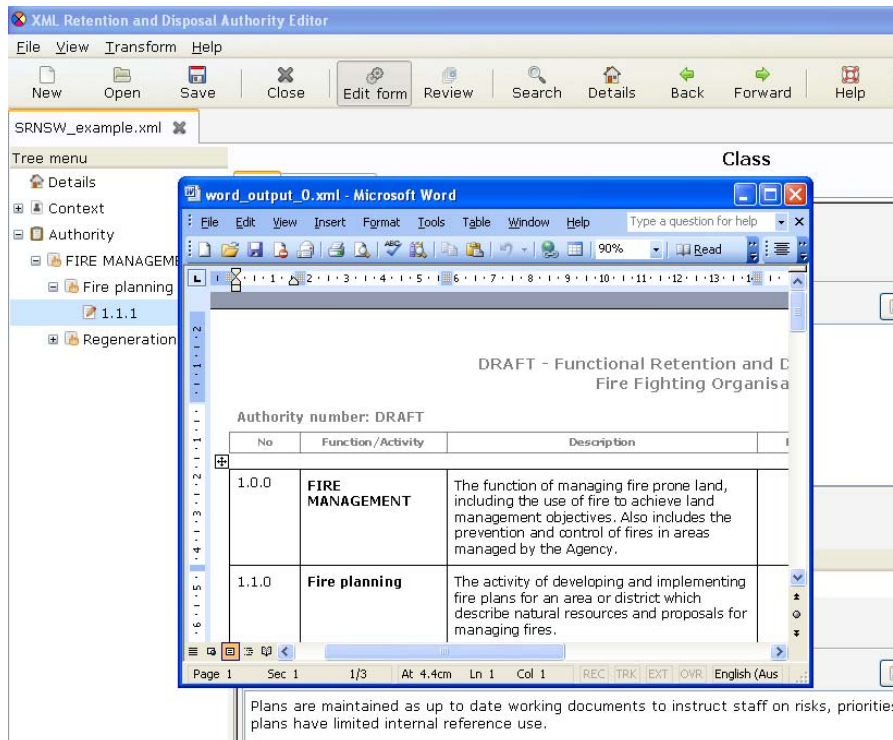
Export transformations

'Export' transformations output the contents of XML authorities in formats suitable for import by other systems or programs. State Records has developed a generic 'Tab separated version' transform that you can access in this menu. (**Note:** This transformation doesn't include function and activity scope notes or components of non-standard (i.e. custom) disposal actions.)

Outputs from 'Export' transformations are opened within the program itself. To save an export transformation, select 'File – Save as' and choose an appropriate location and filename.
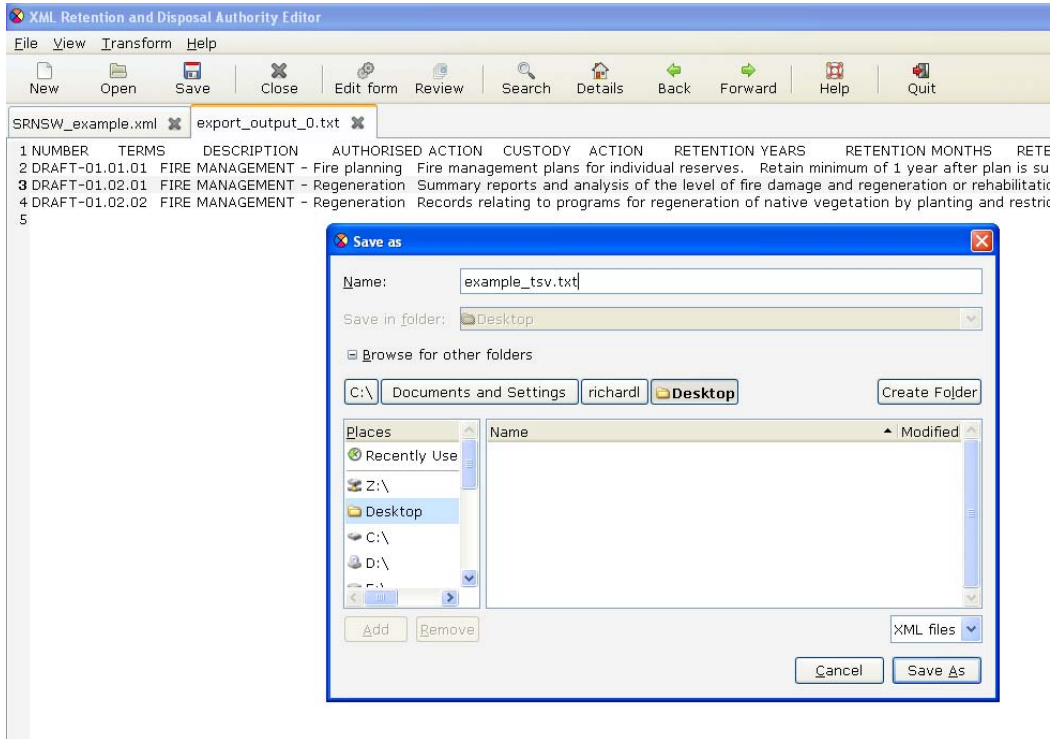
7. Reviewing your work

Review view

The *Review* view allows you to check the progress of your work and to review updates and comments when drafts are exchanged. To view your authority in this way simply select 'Review' from the toolbar or from the 'View' menu.

While in this view, if you note any terms or classes that need amending, simply double left-click on the item to edit it in the *Edit form* view. Having made a change, you can then return to the same place by selecting *Review* again.

Adding comments

You might like to add comments to particular terms or classes. This may be to respond to comments made by State Records reviewers or to flag or include additional information with an item. To add a comment while in the *Review* view, simply right-click on a term or class and select 'Add comment' from the pop-up menu.

Tracking updates

If 'Track updates' is selected as a program preference (it is by default), the program will record dates on which terms or classes are updated. In the *Review* view, you can highlight changes after a certain date by selecting a date in the 'Highlight updates since' field of the preferences menu (select 'View – Preferences).
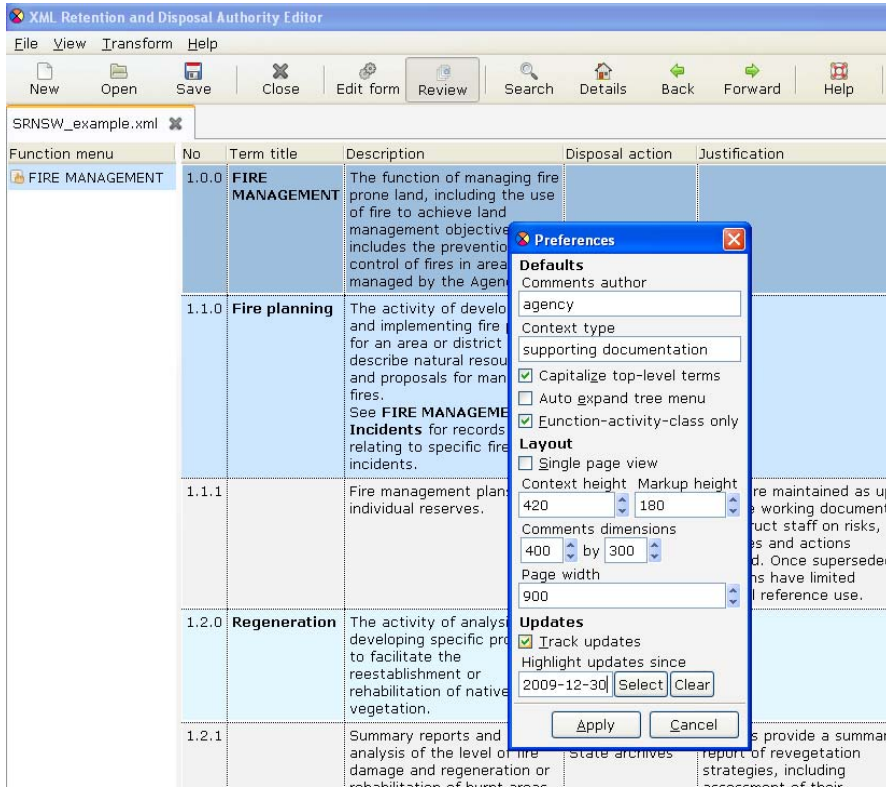
Once this preference is activated, any term or class updated since that date will be highlighted by a pink update entry in the *Review* view (when you apply preferences the 'Review' view is not automatically refreshed, so you may need to refresh your view for the highlighting to work).


Tip Another way to view terms and classes that have been updated is to select the 'Recent changes' transform from the 'Transform – Preview' menu. This stylesheet displays all terms and classes that have an update date and is sorted by the date of change (so the most recent changes appear first).

---

8. Saving your work

Congratulations on getting this far! All that is left to do is to save your work to disk and send it to State Records for review.

To save your work, simply select 'Save as' from the 'File' menu, give your authority a logical name (e.g. the name of your agency and a version number), and choose a save location.

When you are ready to have this draft reviewed, attach your saved file to an email and send it to disposal@records.nsw.gov.au.
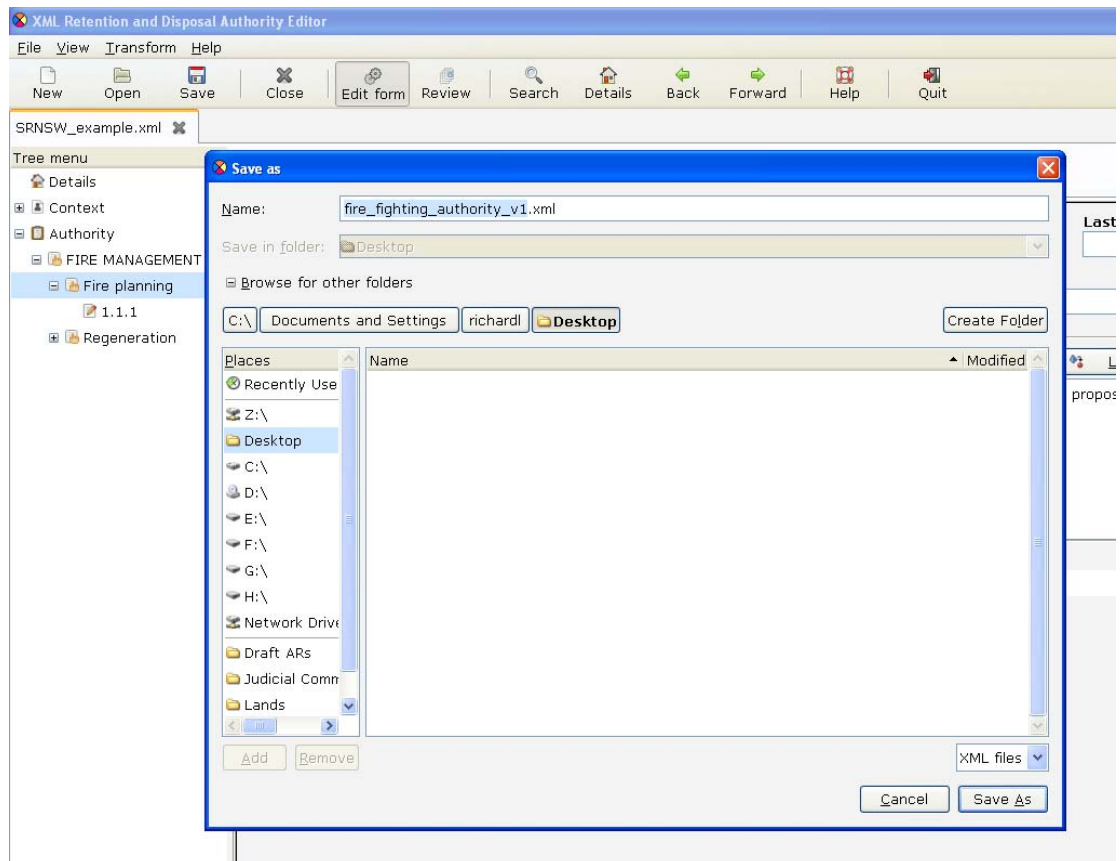
Tip Save your work regularly! It never hurts to have a back-up and it is horrible to lose work. Use the 'Control-S' shortcut to do a quick save.