

THE OBERON COUNCIL

POLICY FOR USE OF INTERNET & EMAIL

Objective

To provide guidelines for the use of the internet and Council's electronic mail (email) system and establish procedures for creating, retaining, managing and disposing of email that meet the Australian Standard AS 4390 for Records Management.

Scope

This policy applies to all Council employees, Councillors, contractors, consultants, temporary and casual employees and other authorised personnel offered access to Oberon Council resources.

Introduction

Internet access and e-mail provided to Councillors and employees are public resources to be used for legitimate business purposes. All email accounts including the data and messages contained within or transmitted via them are the property of Council and are primarily intended for business use only.

Council employees should not transmit any classified, staff in confidence, commercial in confidence, restricted or sensitive material over unsecured communication devices such as e-mail.

Use of email and internet must be consistent with other relevant laws, policies and practices regulating:

- Copyright breaches and patent materials legislation
- Anti-discrimination legislation
- Privacy legislation
- Council's Code of Conduct
- Practices regulating discriminatory speech and the distribution of illicit and offensive materials, particularly those that are sexual or pornographic in nature.

Failure to comply with this policy may lead to disciplinary action, should users conduct and/or should actions be unlawful or illegal, they may be personally liable.

Council reserves the right to control and monitor the use of its equipment/services and audit and remove any illegal material without notice.

Personal Use

Reasonable personal use of e-mail and/or internet is permissible, however, personal use is a privilege which needs to be balanced in terms of operational needs. Its use must be appropriate, lawful, efficient, proper and ethical. Personal use should:

- Be infrequent and brief
- Not involve activities that might be questionable, controversial or offensive, including gambling, accessing chat lines/rooms, transmitting inappropriate jokes or sending junk programs/mail
- NOT extend to sending non-business related written material to any political organisation.
- Not disrupt Council communication systems
- Not interfere with employees' job responsibilities or detrimentally affect the job responsibilities of other employees.

Employees reasonably suspected of abusing personal use requirements will be asked to explain such use.

E-Mail

1. Email messages must be kept as Council records if they provide evidence of Council's business and activities, are needed for use by others or affect the work of others. Staff sending and receiving email are responsible for deciding if an email message is considered to be Council record and making sure that these messages are documented to provide a formal record.
2. Email messages which become Council records must be kept in accordance with the approved retention periods listed in the Local Government Disposal Schedule.
3. Access to email is limited to Council staff, or other authorised persons, who have been given a user identification and password. Staff must not give their password to another staff member or member of the public and must not access other staff members' email without appropriate authority. Unauthorised access to programs or information will result in disciplinary action.
4. The email system is part of Council's computer network and all the information processes, transmitted or stored in the system, are the property of Council.
5. Email is a business tool. Staff must make sure that all email messages are brief, concise and business related and are kept in the system only as long as required.
6. Email messages kept as Council records are accessible to the public under Freedom of Information and Privacy legislation.
7. Email systems should not be assumed to be secure. Staff must be aware of the potential risks involved in sending confidential or sensitive information by email.

Procedures for use of email

1. Email should be treated with the same significance as the signed letter.
2. Email must be accessed at least once a day by each employee with access to a networked personal computer. Any unwanted email should be deleted.
3. Staff can maintain their own email address book.
4. Personal or private information such as personal notes or invitations, staff appraisals or job applications should not be included in an email message because it could be read by, or misdirected to, unauthorised persons. Messages may also continue to exist long after the sender has deleted them. Deletion eliminates the message or file name from the computer directory but the information itself exists in the back up system until it has been overwritten.
5. An email message sent with a Council document as an attachment, must note details of the source of the document on the attachment. These details should include the addressee, the sender and the date and time of dispatch and receipt.
6. Email messages that are kept as Council records should be sent to the Records Clerk to record on AMREC.
7. Email is admissible as evidence in court so good judgement should be exercised when writing emails.
8. Messages should be kept polite and should not be written in upper case as this is considered as 'shouting'. Only information that is of value to the receiver should be sent and messages should not be made High Priority unless they are truly urgent.

Use of Internet/Web Sites

It is inappropriate to:

- Intentionally download unauthorised software.
- Download files containing picture images, live pictures or graphics for personal use.
- Download computer games, music files or accessing web radio or tv stations.
- Visit inappropriate web sites including chat lines/rooms, on-line gambling, sexually explicit or pornographic web sites.

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