

## 3.26 Computer, Internet, Email and Social Media

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POLICY TITLE: COMPUTER, INTERNET, EMAIL AND SOCIAL MEDIA

FILE REF: SC67

EXPIRY DATE: MAY 2027

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### OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that Councillors and staff use the Council's e-mail and internet communications systems effectively and responsibly.

### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 1) Lockhart Shire Council recognise the opportunities which the Internet opens up for work purposes. Council wants its Councillors and staff to use the Internet so that they are connected to other people and vital sources of information in Australia and around the world.
- 2) Use of e-mail and the Internet by Councillors and staff is therefore permitted and encouraged where such use is suitable for Council business purposes and supports the goals and objectives of the Council.
- 3) At the same time, how staff members use on-line facilities is important to the success of the Council's business dealings and its reputation.
- 4) All network, e-mail and Internet accounts maintained on Council computing systems are the sole property of the Council.
- 5) Users in possession of Council electronic equipment must at all times handle the equipment in a responsible manner and ensure that the equipment is kept secure.
- 6) Users must use their own username/login code and/or password when accessing the Computer Network.
- 7) Users should protect their username/login code and password information at all times and not divulge such information to any other Person, unless it is necessary to do so for legitimate business reasons.
- 8) Users should ensure that when not in use or unattended, the Computer device is locked.
- 9) Occasional personal and social use of e-mail and the Internet is acceptable but use of Council facilities to conduct business other than official Council business is prohibited.
- 10) The Council has the right to record all Councillor and staff member internet usage carried out on Council equipment and to monitor the e-mail account or internet browsing of any user for legitimate business reasons, including compliance with these guidelines, compliance with any applicable laws, and where there is reasonable suspicion of activities that may violate these procedures.

### POLICY STATEMENT

#### **Computer Software Purchase and Usage**

- 1) Under no circumstances are software products not owned by or not legally in possession of the Council to be installed on Council equipment.
- 2) Software obtained in confidence or under licence must only be used by staff members or authorised agents of the Council in accordance with relevant licence agreements.
- 3) Proposals for purchase of software for official Council purposes should always be directed to the Director of Corporate and Community Services.

### **3.26 Computer, Internet, Email and Social Media**

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#### **Internet Usage**

- 1) The Internet is to be used in a manner that is consistent with Council's standards of business conduct and as part of the normal execution of a Councillors' or staff members' responsibilities.
- 2) The internet should be used for business-related activity but a small amount of personal use is acceptable, similar to permitted usage of the Council's telephones.
- 3) Use of the Internet in the following manner is strictly prohibited:
  - a) Visiting web sites containing objectionable or criminal material such as pornography.
  - b) Internet-enabled activities, such as gambling, excessive gaming, conducting a business or conducting illegal activities.
  - c) The uploading or downloading of commercial software, games, music videos or other intellectual property in violation of copyright.

#### **Email Communications**

- 1) "E-mail" is a tool for business communications, which users have a responsibility to use in an efficient, effective, ethical and lawful manner.
- 2) Users of the e-mail system should follow the following guidelines and conventions:
  - a) Always represent yourself as yourself – never someone else.
  - b) Don't publish or send material that is embarrassing or has the potential to embarrass the Council or bring it into disrepute.
  - c) Don't download onto your computer any files or information that might compromise the integrity of the computer system – beware of viruses.
  - d) Material that may be considered inappropriate or disrespectful to others should not be accessed or stored.
- 3) Use of the e-mail system in the following manner is strictly prohibited:
  - a) Creation and exchange of offensive, harassing, obscene, pornographic or threatening messages.
  - b) Exchange of proprietary information, commercial-in-confidence information, trade secrets, or any other privileged, confidential or sensitive information outside the Council.
  - c) Creation, storage or exchange of information in violation of copyright laws.
  - d) Reading or sending messages from another user's account, except under proper delegation arrangements.
  - e) Altering or copying a message or attachment belonging to another user without the permission of the originator.
  - f) Any usage for non-Council related commercial purposes.
  - g) Any usage for inappropriate political purposes.

#### **Use of Social Media**

- 1) Council acknowledges that social media can be an effective means of communication and community engagement if used responsibly.
- 2) Social media tools include:
  - a) Social networking sites such as Facebook and Instagram.
  - b) Video and photo sharing websites like Flickr and YouTube.
  - c) Micro-blogging sites like X (formerly Twitter).
  - d) Forums and discussion boards such as Whirlpool, Yahoo! Groups or Google groups.
  - e) Online encyclopedias such as Wikipedia.
- 3) The Policy does NOT apply to personal use when no reference or inference is made to Council, Councillors, related issues or its staff.
- 4) Council recognises that Councillors and staff may wish to use social media in their personal lives. The Policy does not intend to discourage nor unduly limit personal expression or online activities. However, users should recognise the potential for damage to be caused (either directly or indirectly) to the Council in certain circumstances via personal use of social media when the user can be identified as a Council representative.

### **3.26 Computer, Internet, Email and Social Media**

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- 5) Only employees authorised by the Director Corporate and Community Services to do so may upload or post information on social media on Council's behalf, including on the community-owned Lockhart Shire Facebook page. In this regard authorised employees should:
  - a) Only comment on topics within their own area of responsibility and only if they have delegated authority to do so.
  - b) Ensure any Council related content that is published is factually accurate and compliant with Council policies and management directives (e.g., on confidentiality, privacy and copyright).
  - c) Not reveal confidential or commercially sensitive information about Council and only disclose publicly available information.
  
- 6) An employee's access to and use of the above tools outside the course of employment is a private matter for the employee and councillor, however issues may arise where Council is mentioned on-line or where it is possible to link employees and councillors with their employment at Council. In such cases, the following rules apply:
  - a) Do not mix the professional and personal issues in ways that are likely to compromise the interests and reputation of Council;
  - b) Do not imply Council endorsement of your personal views;
  - c) Councillors and staff should be aware of the laws covering libel, defamation, privacy and the protection of intellectual property;
  - d) Councillors and staff should familiarise themselves with Council's Code of Conduct. Councillors and staff who are identified as an employee of Council, and post comments or pictures on social media that negatively impact on Council's reputation may be in breach of the Code of Conduct.
  - e) Users are personally responsible for the content published in a personal capacity on any form of social media platform.

#### **Use of Non-Council Owned Mobile Devices**

- 1) Council recognises that mobile devices are becoming a common and cost-effective tool for information management and communication including Councillors and staff having the option of connecting their own mobile devices to Council equipment and networks.
- 2) Councillors and staff may be permitted to connect non-Council owned mobile devices to Lockhart Shire's systems and networks for the express purpose of receiving email, contact and calendar updates.
- 3) Permission to connect non-Council owned mobile devices to Council's systems and networks can only be completed with the authorisation of the Director Corporate and Community Services.
- 4) The use of a non-Council owned mobile device connected to Council's network, is subject to the following conditions:
  - a) The owner/user of the device will notify the Director Corporate and Community Services immediately upon loss, theft or suspected loss/theft of the device;
  - b) The user of the device agrees to protect Council information residing on the device;
  - c) No Council data other than mail (including attachments stored within the mail system), contacts and calendar items may be stored on non-Council owned devices unless expressly authorised in writing by the Director Corporate and Community Services;
  - d) Non-Council owned devices will not be supported by Council's IT personnel with the exception of connectivity to Council services;
  - e) Council will accept no liability for functionality, serviceability or performance associated with the device and any responsibility with regard to warranty will reside solely between the owner/user of the device and the supplier/manufacturer;
  - f) Council accepts no responsibility or liability for the loss of Council related or personally related data residing on the device;

#### **Recording and Monitoring of Activity on Council's Computer System**

- 1) On a continuous and ongoing basis Council will carry out computer surveillance of any User at such times of Council's choosing and without further notice to any User.

### 3.26 Computer, Internet, Email and Social Media

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- 2) Computer surveillance occurs in relation to:
  - a) Storage volumes;
  - b) Internet sites – every web site visited is recorded including the time of access, volume downloaded and the duration of access;
  - c) Suspected malicious code or viruses;
  - d) Emails – the content of all emails received, sent and stored on the Computer Network. (this also includes emails deleted from the Inbox);
  - e) Computer hard drives – Council may access any hard drive on the Computer Network;
  - f) Text messages - Council may access any text messages stored on a User's handheld device and the User must provide Council with the device for the purpose of allowing such access; and
  - g) Mobile telephone records – Council may access the records of a User's handheld device that has been provided by Council.
  - h) Council retains logs, backups and archives of computing activities, which it may audit. Such records are the property of Council, are subject to State and Federal laws and may be used as evidence in legal proceedings, or in workplace investigations into alleged misconduct.
  
- 3) Council may retain, use and/or disclose the computer records where the retention, use or disclosure is:
  - a) For a purpose related to the employment of any employee; or
  - b) Related to Council's business activities; or
  - c) To a law enforcement agency in connection with an offence;
  - d) In connection with legal proceedings.
  - e) Related to maintenance of the computer network in terms of storage volumes, disk capacity and the like;
  - f) In compliance with the State Records Act and Council's records management obligations.

*Reviewed by Council 20 May 2024  
Refer Minute No. 81/24*

*Reviewed by Council 17 May 2021  
Refer Minute No. 81/21*