

Electronic Communications Policy

Keywords: *Email, web, facebook, social media*

Corporate Plan:	N/A
Classification:	<i>Executive Services – Public Relations – “Electronic Communications”</i>
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Next Review Due:	<i>By November 2027</i>
Responsible Officer(s):	<i>Chief Executive Officer</i>
Council File Reference:	<i>COUNCIL POLICIES (P)</i>
Applicable Legislation:	<i>Local Government Act 1999, Freedom of Information Act 1991 (SA), Local Government (Elections) Act 1999 (SA) and State Records Act 1997 (SA)</i>
Relevant Policies:	<i>This policy should be read in conjunction with:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Elected Members – Records Management</i> - <i>Media & Communications Policy</i> - <i>Code of Conduct - Council Employees; Code of Conduct Elected Members and Committee Members</i>
Related Procedures:	<i>Not subject to Public Consultation, Berri Barmera Council Style Guide</i>
Delegations:	<i>Chief Executive Officer</i>

1. Purpose

Electronic communications and publications originating from Council systems are considered to be representative of Council itself.

Employees are required to conduct themselves accordingly when using the Internet for business purposes, e-mail, social media platforms and related applications, both inwards and outwards.

2. Definitions

Council Staff	Includes people employed by Council, trainees, work experience placements, independent consultants and contractors and other authorised personnel offered access to the Council's resources.
Electronic messaging	Electronic messaging is a generic term encompassing all forms of electronic communication. This includes text messages, voice mail, electronic document exchange (electronic fax), electronic data interchange, and multimedia communications such as tele/video conferencing and videotext. It involves the electronic transmission of information as discrete

	electronic messages over computer based data communication network or voice messages over a telephone network
Hack	To attempt by illegal or unauthorised means to gain entry into another's computer system or files.
Tablets	Portable electronic devices, usually with a mobile operating system and touchscreen display, that may be used as a mobile computer.

3. Principles

This policy regulates use of the following forms of electronic communications for general Council employees:

- Email
- Social Media platforms (including but not limited to facebook, twitter, Instagram and Yammer)
- Website
- Fax
- Ipads
- E-Newsletters

Employees accessing the above forms of electronic communications are responsible for reading and abiding by this policy, in conjunction with Berri Barmera Council Style Guide.

4. Policy Statement

Framework for Policy

Internet, Email and Social Media Platforms

Legal Risks

Email / Social Media platforms are organisational communication tools and users are obliged to use these tools in a responsible, effective and lawful manner. Although by its nature email/social media platforms seem to be less formal than other written communication, the same laws apply. Therefore, it is important that users are aware of the legal risks of electronic communication:

- If a user sends or forwards email/social media platform messages with any libellous, defamatory, offensive, racist or obscene remarks, the user and Berri Barmera Council can be held liable.
- If a user unlawfully forwards confidential information, the user and Berri Barmera Council can be held liable.
- If a user unlawfully forwards or copies messages without permission, the user and Berri Barmera Council can be held liable for copyright infringement.
- If a user sends an attachment that contains a virus, the user and Berri Barmera Council can be held liable.
- Personal signatures included with electronic documents are to be deemed as the signature of the intended sender and considered legal. Unauthorised use of another person's signature is considered fraudulent, with the user being liable for illegal use.

By following the guidelines in this policy, users can minimise the legal risks involved in the use of electronic communication tools. If any user disregards the rules set out in this Policy, the user will be fully liable and Berri Barmera Council will disassociate itself from the user as far as legally possible.

Legal Requirements

The following rules are required by law and are to be strictly adhered to:

- It is strictly prohibited to send or forward any communication containing libellous, defamatory, offensive, racist or obscene remarks. If an electronic communication of this nature is received, the recipient must promptly notify their supervisor.
- Where doubt exists regarding the level of confidentiality of a document received (email or social media platforms), do not forward a message without acquiring permission from the sender first.
- Do not send unsolicited messages.
- Do not forge or attempt to forge messages.
- Do not send messages using another person's email/social media platform accounts.
- Do not copy a message or attachment belonging to another user without permission of the originator.
- Do not disguise or attempt to disguise your identity when sending mail.

Best Practice

Berri Barmera Council considers electronic communication as an important means of communication and recognises the importance of proper content and speedy replies in conveying a professional image. Therefore, Berri Barmera Council requires staff to adhere to the following guidelines:

- Writing emails/use of social media platforms:
- Write well-structured emails/social media information and use short, descriptive subjects.
- Berri Barmera Council's email proforma has been circulated to all staff and must be always used. A disclaimer has been added to the pro-forma (see Disclaimer)
- Use the spell checker before you send out an email or social media communication.
- Do not send unnecessary attachments. Compress attachments larger than 200K before sending them.
- Do not write in capitals.
- Do not use cc: or bcc: fields unless the cc: or bcc: recipient is aware that you will be copying a mail to him/her and knows what action, if any, to take.
- When forwarding emails/social media comments, state clearly what action the recipient is expected to take.
- Only send communications of which the content could be displayed on a public notice board. If they cannot be displayed publicly in their current state, consider rephrasing the document, using other means of communication, or protecting information by using a password (see confidential).
- Only mark email/ social media documents as important if they really are important.
- Consider use of Council's E-news Platform to assist with mass mailing to a subscriber list
- Replying to emails/social media platforms:
- Emails/social media comments should be answered within at least 8 working hours, but users must endeavour to answer priority communication within 4 hours.

- Emails from our Elected Members are considered as priority emails.
- Newsgroups:
- Users need to request permission from their supervisor before subscribing to a newsletter or news group.
- Maintenance - emails:
 - Delete any email messages that you do not need to have a copy of and set your email client to automatically empty your 'deleted items' on closing.
- Records Management - emails:
 - Users are required to record all outgoing/incoming emails relevant to the Council on the Council's Records Management System. It is the responsibility of the user to ensure that adequate records are kept.

Personal Use - emails

Although Berri Barmera Council's email system is meant for business use, Berri Barmera Council allows the reasonable use of email for personal use if certain guidelines are adhered to.

The following applies:

- Personal use of email should not interfere with work.
- Personal emails must also adhere to the guidelines in this policy.
- Personal emails are kept in a separate folder, named 'Private'. It is recommended that personal emails be deleted regularly so as not to clog up the system.
- The forwarding of chain letters, junk mail, jokes and executables is strictly forbidden.
- Consider using Yammer for the occasional sharing of really good and clean jokes and general social notifications
- Users should exercise discretion in the number of personal emails and the time spent on non-work related emails should be kept to a minimum.
- Do not send mass mailings.
- All messages distributed via the company's email system, even personal emails, are Berri Barmera Council's property.

Confidential Information

Avoid sending confidential information by e-mail. If you do, you must secure the information by including it in a Microsoft Word or Excel file and protecting it with a password. Then provide the recipient with the password by means of other communication, for instance by telephone.

Disclaimer – emails

The following disclaimer will be added to each outgoing email:

Disclaimer: The information contained in this message and any attachments may be confidential information. If you are not the intended recipient, any use, disclosure or copying of this message or any attachments is unauthorised. If you have received this document in error, please advise the sender. We do not guarantee that this e-mail or any attachments are free from viruses or defects. The recipient assumes all responsibility for any loss or damage resulting directly or indirectly from the use of any attached files.

System Monitoring

You must have no expectation of privacy in anything you create, store, send or receive on the company's computer system. Your electronic communication/s can be monitored without prior notification if Berri Barmera Council deems this necessary. If there is evidence that you are not adhering to the guidelines set out in this policy, Berri Barmera Council reserves the right to take disciplinary action, including termination and/or legal action.

Email Accounts

All email accounts maintained on our email systems are property of Berri Barmera Council. Passwords should not be given to other people outside the organisation and should be changed once a month. Email accounts not used for 60 days will be deactivated and possibly deleted.

Questions

If you have any questions or comments about this Policy, please contact the Chief Executive Officer. If you do not have any questions Berri Barmera Council presumes that you understand and are aware of the rules and guidelines in this Policy and will adhere to them, and that you understand that failure to do so might result in disciplinary or legal action.

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Elected Members – Records Management
- Media & Communications Policy
- Code of Conduct - Council Employees; and Code of Conduct Council members and Committee Members.
- Berri Barmera Council Style Guide

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