

Email Management Policy



Town of Cottesloe

1. Policy Statement

Town of Cottesloe email accounts are intended for business transactions in support of the Town's strategic goals and objectives. Accordingly any email transmission residing on the Town's network is potentially an official record.

The effective management of electronic mail transmissions is essential in order to permit the Town to meet various legislative and accountability requirements and administrative needs.

The roles and responsibilities of the Town's employees, defined by this policy, reflect the Town's current electronic recordkeeping system.

2. Introduction

A large portion of the Town's operational communication is carried out via electronic mail. Email is used for a wide range of purposes, including instructions, negotiations, authorisations, development of policies, employment matters, communications with residents, advice of meeting arrangements, circulation of reports and Council and Committee minutes and agendas. Since most of these email communications are official records within the meaning of the *State Records Act 2000* (the Act) and other applicable legislation, it is necessary to ensure they are effectively and efficiently managed.

This policy will assist staff in understanding their recordkeeping responsibilities relating to the management of email records and will permit the Town to control the quality and quantity of its email messages. The completeness of the Town's records will enable it to provide evidence of, and justification for, its activities and decision-making processes, thereby facilitating compliance with its legislative environment.

3. Definitions

'Accountability'	The principle that individuals, organisations, and the community are responsible for their actions and may be required to explain them to others (including regulatory authorities, stakeholders, and the public).
'Subject Files'	Subject Files are administrative files managed by the Records Manager and organised according to Keywords for Council Thesaurus.
'Electronic Mail'	Electronic mail or email is defined as the transmission of messages over computer networks.

‘Record’	Recorded information in any form, including data in computer systems, created or received and maintained by an organisation or person in the transaction of business and kept as evidence of such activity.
‘Records Management’	The field of management responsible for the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use and disposal of records, including procedures for capturing and maintaining evidence of and information about business activities and transactions in the form of records.
‘Records Management System’	An information system that captures, manages, maintains and provides access to records over time.
‘Retention and Disposal Schedule’	A records retention and disposal schedule is a systematic listing of the records series maintained by an organisation in which the period of time that each series is to be maintained or reviewed for destruction or kept for permanent archival retention is stated.
‘Retention Period’	The period for which a record must be kept before it may be destroyed.
‘State Records Commission’	The State Records Commission was established in 2001 under the terms of the Act. It is responsible for establishing principles and standards that govern recordkeeping by government organisations, and monitoring the operation and compliance with the Act.

4. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish an organisation wide policy of the management of electronic mail transactions as official Town records.

5. Scope

This policy applies to all staff that use the Town’s electronic mail system to create, receive, transmit, and retain information. This includes permanent, temporary and part-time employees and contractors.

5.1 Legislative Requirements

The Act has specific provisions relating to the responsibility to create, manage and dispose of records in accordance with principles and standards issues by the State Records Commission.

Electronic mail transmissions are included within the meaning of the Act’s definition of a ‘record’ which includes *‘anything on which information has been stored or recorded, either mechanically, magnetically, or electronically’*.

5.2 Determining the Value of an Email Message

For the purpose of this policy email transmission falls into one of the following four categories.

5.2.1 Personal Email

Personal email messages have no relevance to the official business of the Town and can be deleted at any time.

5.2.2 Spam Emails

Unsolicited email messages that are not related to an employee's work responsibilities should be deleted immediately.

5.2.3 Information Value Only

Emails that relate to the business of the Town, but are intended only for informational value or to facilitate Town business may be deleted once they are no longer needed. This includes:

- Email messages received by courtesy copy and where no action is required. Examples include copies of committee minutes, reports and newsletters.
- Advertising material and any other publicly available material
- Invitations
- Internal Social Arrangements
- Informational and/or broadcast messages

5.2.4 Administrative Email

As a general rule, emails received or initiated by the Town's employees and which relate to the business activities of the Town and that have continuing administrative value to the Town must be retained for as long as they are needed to meet administrative and legal retention requirements. Administrative email includes:

- Authorisations and instructions
- Commitments of behalf of the Town
- Communications between the Town's employees relating to official business
- Development or amendment of policies and procedures
- Emails that add value or support to an existing record
- Final versions of reports or recommendations prepared for management and external organisations.
- Formal communications with external organisations
- Formal communications with residents and rate payers
- Formal drafts of agreements and legal documents and associated correspondence
- Minutes and agendas of committees and working parties
- Negotiations and commitments on behalf of the Town
- Research matters
- Statistics and analysis
- Submissions by external bodies
- Where a precedent is created
- When an email requires action from an employee
- Where legal advice is involved

5.3 Roles and Responsibilities

All Town of Cottesloe employees have a responsibility to create and keep records that adequately record the Town's activities and should observe the following when constructing and managing their email:

- a. Decide if individual email messages have value as official Town records.
- b. Email messages that are official Town records must be registered into the recordkeeping system (TRIM). Note, the retention and disposal schedule has been applied to all files in TRIM.
- c. Prevent the premature deletion of email records and delete them only in accordance with approved retention and disposal schedules. Note: Email messages in Outlook can be deleted once captured in TRIM.
- d. Employees who receive administrative emails are expected to ensure the email 'inbox' is read and actioned during any periods of leave/absence.
- e. Respect the confidentiality of email records and the privacy of personal information.
- f. Protect email transmissions against unauthorised access.
- g. Protect email records against alteration and manipulation.
- h. Employees must decide if attachments should be kept, together with the email, as a record. In most circumstances the attachment should be included along with the email message to ensure that the meaning and completeness of the email is retained.
- i. Retain the transmission data of email messages to ensure the integrity of the email as an official Town record. This includes retaining the date and time of the message, sender and recipient details, subject of the message and any attachments to the email.
- j. Where email messages form part of an email conversation string it is not necessary to include each reply separately. Email strings should be included as records at significant points during the conversation or at the end of the email exchange.
- k. Ensure the subject field is sufficiently descriptive about the content of the message to facilitate prompt identification of specific email messages.
- l. Where practical, use folders in Outlook based on the title of the files in TRIM to manage email transmissions. Folders titled Annual Report, Budget issues, Conferences, Research Issues, etc permit email to be more effectively managed than by using only the Inbox and Set folders or organising emails into month or year. It also facilitates the efficient retrieval of messages relating to the same subject and allows for the systematic disposal of redundant emails to take place.
- m. Include an appropriate signature (your name, position, and name of organisation) and a disclaimer. The following disclaimer notice is provided as an example:
PLEASE NOTE:
This email and any attached files may contain confidential information and may be privileged. If you are not the intended recipient any use, disclosure, dissemination or copying of this email or the contents thereof is unauthorised. If you have received this email in error, please advise the sender by return email immediately and delete this

message and any attachments.

- n. Responsibility for deciding whether an email transmission is to be included in the recordkeeping system resides with the originator of the email. When email is received from outside the Town it is the recipient's responsibility.

5.4 Retention and Disposal

Standard 2, Principle 5 (Retention and Disposal) issued by the State Records Commission requires the Town to retain its records for varying periods of time before they are disposed. Accordingly, email records with continuing value must be disposed in accordance with the retention periods indicated by the General Disposal Authority for Local Government Records.

The General Disposal Authority incorporates all appropriate legislative, fiscal, administrative and archival requirements that must be considered when records are appraised for the retention requirements. It should be noted that there isn't one single retention period that specifically covers all records created by email, as it is the information content of each email that must be addressed to determine its retention period. By observing these schedules employees:

- a. Ensure they comply with legislative requirements.
- b. Ensure that records created by email are available for evidentiary purposes, to meet requests under Freedom of Information legislation and other discovery requests and judicial orders.
- c. Prevent the premature destruction of relevant records, thereby avoiding potential administrative or legal problems.

The retention and disposal schedule has been applied to all files in the recordkeeping system (TRIM).

When email records are subject to legal processes such as discovery and subpoena, they must not be destroyed even if the retention period has passed.

Personal emails and emails meant only for information value may be deleted at any time after they have been read.

5.5 Access to Email Records

- Electronic messages must remain accessible while they are required to meet administrative and external accountability requirements.
- Email records are official records that belong to the Town and, subject to confidentiality considerations, should be available to any authorised staff member where the email has relevance to their work.
- Employees are required to protect personal or commercially sensitive information from unauthorised disclosure.
- Town records created by email must be made accessible to authorised external agencies requesting them, and when required for legal proceedings.

5.6 Outcomes of Effective Email Management

- Adds to the corporate memory of the Town, and results in better quality decision-making as all information is stored in the Town's recordkeeping system (TRIM).
- Ensures official records created by email are available and accessible to employees.
- Evidence and decision-making and ability to defend decisions during litigation.
- Facilitates identification and accessibility of email transmissions requested by legal processes under Freedom of Information.
- Legislative and external accountability requirements are met, and penalties for non-compliance avoided.
- Prevents the illegal destruction of Town records.
- Promotes sharing of information.

Adopted	26 October 2009
Expected date of review	