

8.5. Use of Corporate Email Domain

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ATTACHMENTS: Nil

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to seek Council cooperation with the intent of Councillor correspondence being directed to email addresses using the @northsydney email domain only, from 1 September 2021.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

All Councillors have received a corporate email address using the North Sydney Council email domain to be used for all email related to the Councillor's civic role. Over time there has been a tendency to use a mix of both Councillors formal email addresses and personal email addresses to distribute internal documentation, memorandum and notices, This practice appears to have developed from convenience. From 1 September 2021, the North Sydney Council email domain will be used for all email related to the Councillor's civic role.

This is to ensure Council meets its obligations in respect to the maintenance and security of Council records. These include:

- Obligations under the State Records Act 1998 regarding the creation, sending, receiving, storage and disposal of Council information.
- Requirements under Council's Privacy Management Plan to use Council-issued systems and processes
- Requirement to appropriately separate personal and civic interactions with Council as required under the Code of Conduct
- General cyber security expectations and ability to manage and respond to cyber-security threats including phishing.

Any relevant policies including the *Councillor Access to Information and Interaction with Staff Policy*, and *Mayor and Councillor Facilities and Benefits Policy* will be updated to reflect this provision by way of a further report to Council following the conduct of the election.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

There are no specific financial implications as a result of this recommendation. The provision and use of North Sydney Council email domain addresses does not represent any cost to Council. It is possible that the increased security provision may mitigate the risk of cyber security incidences that result in a cost to Council.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT Council note that from 1 September 2021 that all Councillor email correspondence and communication will go through the North Sydney Council email domain.

2. THAT following the conduct of the 2021 local government election that the *Councillor Access to Information and Interaction with Staff Policy, Mayor and Councillor Facilities and Benefits Policy* and any other relevant policy be updated to reflect this provision.

LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

5. Our Civic Leadership

5.2 Council is well governed and customer focused

CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

Community engagement is not required.

DETAIL

Following the conduct of the 2021 local government election, all Councillors will receive a corporate email address using the North Sydney Council email domain and this will be used for all email related to the Councillor's civic role. This is to ensure the security of information, improve Council's ability to manage cyber security risks and to ensure compliance with relevant legislation and policies. In making this determination, consideration has been given to the following:

State Records Act 1998

In the performance of their civic duties, communications between the organisation and Councillors are State records. Councillors are subject to the State Records Act when they create or receive 'State records'.

A State record is 'any record made and kept or received and kept, by any person in the course of the exercise of official functions in a public office, or for any purpose of a public office, or for the use of a public office' (section 3(1) *State Records Act 1998*). This includes emails.

There are specific obligations under this legislation relating to the appropriate storage, handling and disposal of State records. Council is unable to ensure it is meeting its obligations when records are not maintained within the corporate system.

The Code of Conduct (clauses 8.21 to 8.24) places obligations on Councillors and staff regarding the creation, sending, receiving, storing, and disposal of Council information. Councillors and staff are required to comply with the requirements of the *State Records Act 1998* and council's records management policy.

Privacy Management Plan

Council's Privacy Management Plan provides that Councillors and staff must use Council-issued systems and processes for conducting Council business, unless expressly authorised otherwise. In addition, it provides that Council may refuse requests from

Councillors or staff to use an unsecure method such as emailing documents to personal email accounts.

This provision is part of Council's approach to ensure personal information held by Council is stored securely. Information Privacy Principle 5 requires that Council must store personal information securely, keep it no longer than necessary and dispose of it appropriately. Council is also required to protect personal information from unauthorised access, use, modification or disclosure.

Individuals may disclose personal information to North Sydney Council with the expectation that it will not be provided beyond Council's systems. In some instances, effectively defining or identifying what constitutes person information can be complex and ensuring information remains within the North Sydney email address domain assists in keeping personal information secure.

The management of personal information and privacy matters have been a topical issue for Council of late and as a result there has been an increased focus on reviewing systems to meet privacy obligations.

Cyber-security

Part of North Sydney Council's network security is the firewall that controls and monitors network traffic. Restricting traffic to the corporate domain for email is part of the security in place to respond to the increased level of cyber-security threats including phishing.

There have been some recent examples of spear phishing recently being a targeted attempt to obtain sensitive information from an account or person. Perpetrators may seek to emulate an existing account for this purpose.

Restricting email communication to a North Sydney email domain assists in the identification and management of internal and external email addresses which is part of Council's approach to increased cyber security.

Insider risk management in Microsoft 365 allows for the configuration of specific IT policies to identify risk indicators through audit logs and to take automated action to mitigate these risks. These risks may include data theft by departing employees and data leaks of information outside Council by accidental oversharing or malicious intent.

Code of Conduct

Councillors and staff must undertake any personal dealings with the Council in a manner that is consistent with the way other members of the community deal with the Council (Code of Conduct clause 5.29). By requiring that Councillors use the North Sydney email domain for performance of their civic role, rather than a personal email account, there is a clear distinction between civic and personal dealings.

Following the conduct of the election the related policies will be provided to Council for consideration. The provision regarding the use of North Sydney Council email domain will be reflected in the following polices and any others as appropriate:

- Councillor Access to Information and Interaction with Staff Policy
- Mayor and Councillor Facilities and Benefits Policy