

Managing Emails that are Public Records - Policy and Guideline

Email is an important communication mechanism for Queensland public authorities and a fundamental tool for conducting business. Emails, like public records in other formats, must be captured and appropriately managed to preserve evidence of government activity.

The *Managing Emails that are Public Records* policy and guideline has been developed to assist public authorities to create, capture and manage emails that are public records. This includes emails that provide evidence of a public authority:

- conducting business activities;
- making decisions; or
- carrying out transactions.

The policy and guideline is available on the Queensland State Archives website: <http://www.archives.qld.gov.au/publications.asp>.

Management of emails that are public records should not occur in isolation from the management of other paper-based or electronic records. It should be part of an information and records management strategy that encompasses all the information created or received by a public authority that is considered the evidence of its business activities.

What do I need to know about the policy and guideline?

The policy includes four principles relating to:

1. Meeting legislative and regulatory requirements
2. Creating and capturing emails that are public records
3. Maintaining, preserving and disposing of emails that are public records, and
4. Providing an organisational framework to support email management.

Public authorities can use the policy to develop strategies for creating, managing and retaining emails that are public records. The guideline provides practical advice on implementing the principles that can be incorporated into organisational email policies and procedures.

The policy and guideline applies to all emails that are public records created or received by a public authority or under contractual agreements with contractors, non-government organisations, shared service providers or Commonwealth agencies.

Key messages outlined in the policy and guideline

Principle	Key messages
Public authorities must meet all legislative and regulatory requirements relating to the management of emails that are public records	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Emails that document business activities, decision-making or transactions are public records and subject to the <i>Public Records Act 2002</i> and a range of other legislation and standards containing recordkeeping provisions. ▪ Emails may be subject to administrative and legal processes such as FOI, discovery and subpoena. They are potential evidence in civil and criminal cases and may be required to be presented in a court of law.
Public authorities must ensure that emails that are public records are captured as full and accurate records into an identifiable and authorised recordkeeping system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To be a complete record, an email must have content, context and structure and accurately reflect what was communicated, decided or actioned. ▪ The capture and maintenance of recordkeeping metadata in accordance with an approved recordkeeping metadata standard is essential to the quality of “completeness” in relation to a public record. ▪ Emails that are public records must be captured into an identifiable and authorised recordkeeping system as soon as they are created or received, or as soon as possible thereafter. ▪ All senders and receivers of emails have a responsibility to ensure the capture of emails that are public records.
Public authorities must maintain, preserve and lawfully dispose of emails that are public records.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Emails that are public records must be maintained in a readily accessible, useable and meaningful format, irrespective of the origin or format of the records. ▪ Under section 13 of the <i>Public Records Act 2002</i>, it is unlawful to dispose of a public record without approval under a Retention and Disposal Schedule authorised by the State Archivist ▪ To guard against unlawful disposal, public authorities should ensure that staff are aware of their recordkeeping responsibilities, including the retention periods for public records.
Public authorities must provide an organisational framework that supports the management of emails that are public records.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The effective management of emails that are public records requires the coordinated effort, shared responsibility and support of all public authority staff including Chief Executive Officers. ▪ The ongoing development, implementation, monitoring and review of organisational email management policies and procedures that establish rules and document responsibilities for capturing, maintaining and preserving emails will assist a public authority to effectively manage emails that are public records. ▪ Building the capacity of email users to identify and capture email records appropriately into the public authority’s recordkeeping system is integral to the successful implementation of email policies and procedures.

For further information regarding email management see Queensland State Archives’ publications:

- *Managing Emails that are Public Records* policy and guideline
- Public Records Brief – *Capturing emails into an eDRMS*
- Public Records Brief – *Email archiving solutions alone do not achieve recordkeeping compliance.*

For more detailed guidance on the management of public records, visit the Queensland State Archives’ website at <http://www.archives.qld.gov.au>, or contact us on:

Telephone: (07) 3131 7777

Email: info@archives.qld.gov.au