



POLICY REGISTER

Communications Device Policy

Policy adopted: 17.12.2021 (Minute No. 220/2021)

Reviewed: 2025

File Ref: D21.57902

Document Control

Issue.	Prepared/Revised by and Date	Action/Amendment Description	Approved By and Date
1.0	Glenn Wilcox A/General Manager	First Edition	BSC Minute No. 220/2021)
2.0	Executive Services		Council 2025/102

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to document Balranald Shire Council's (BSC) requirements and expectations regarding the use of its communications devices. The policy aims to ensure BSC employees understand the way in which BSC's communication devices should be used in the organisation. BSC makes its communication systems available to employees to enable efficient sharing and exchange of information in the pursuit of BSC's goals and objectives.

Scope

This policy applies to Councillors, all BSC employees, contractors, consultants, temporary and casual employees and any other authorised personnel offered access to BSC communication devices and systems. Communication devices and systems include but are not limited to:

- All computers (laptop and desktop).
- All iPads, tablets, data phones.
- BSC's email system.
- All telephones (land-line and mobile).
- All copying devices.
- All two-way radios.
- Facsimile machines.

Personal Use

Reasonable personal use of BSC's communication devices is permissible; however, personal use is a privilege, which needs to be balanced in terms of operational needs; its use must be appropriate, lawful, efficient, proper and ethical.

BSC recognises that:

- Councillors and Employees are also private citizens with individual personal needs and obligations.
- Councillors and Employees may need to make use of communication devices for personal purposes.
- There is a reasonable limit to which BSCs' communication devices may be used for personal purposes.

Every employee has a responsibility to be productive and act appropriately during their work time, therefore, personal use:

- Should be infrequent and brief.
- Must not disrupt BSC communication systems.
- Should not interfere with the employee's job responsibilities or detrimentally affect the job responsibilities of other employees.
- Employees reasonably suspected of abusing personal use requirements will be asked to explain such use.
- Councillors and Staff who have been allocated a laptop or other communications devices (iPad, data phone, etc.) are responsible for all access to websites, emails, downloads, etc. that occur on that device whilst at work, at home or elsewhere by themselves or by any

other person.

Inappropriate Use

The use of BSCs communications devices to make or send fraudulent, offensive, sexually explicit, unlawful or abusive information, calls or messages is **strictly prohibited**.

Any employee identified as the initiator of fraudulent, unlawful or abusive calls or messages will be subject to disciplinary action and possible criminal prosecution.

Staff who receives any threatening, intimidating or harassing telephone calls or electronic messages should immediately report the incident to their Manager/Supervisor / General Manager.

All employees should be aware that it is illegal to record telephone conversations unless authorised under relevant legislation to do so.

Sites

All staff access to the internet is routed through BSC's proxy server (BSC IT Section). All sites visited by staff are logged and are available for review. BSC makes available a filtered Internet for staff use. Sexually explicit, offensive and other sites are not available. Blocked sites that are required for business activities should be approved by a member of senior management prior to being unblocked.

Staff are not to:

- Intentionally download or load unauthorised software.
- Visit inappropriate Web sites.

Use of Email

Email (external / internal) forms part of the official business communications of BSC (see BSC's Records Management Policy).

As such, email is governed by the same legislative requirements (State Records Act 1998, GIPA Act, Privacy & Personal Information Protection Act 1998,) as all other BSC records.

Email is accessible through BSC's E-mail Server. All business-related emails must be registered in the electronic document management system and not stored in email accounts.

All emails, both external and internal, are archived by BSC (BSC IT Servers) and are available for review. Such reviews will be authorised by the General Manager.

In addition to inappropriate usage restrictions for communication devices, email is **not** to be used for:

- Sending or distributing 'chain' letters, 'hoax' mail or for other mischievous purposes (spam).
- Unauthorised accessing of data or attempt to breach any security measures on the system, attempting to intercept any data transmissions without authorisation.
- Sending E-mail messages of a defamatory nature. Email can be used as evidence in a court of law. BSC and the sender can both be held liable for publishing defamatory material.

Email - Leave Arrangements

When employees are on extended leave, the 'Out of Office Assistant' is to be used to inform each sender:

- When the employee will be back from leave, and

- Urgent matters should be e-mailed to BSC's central email address; BSC@BSC.nsw.gov.au

When the employee returns to work they are to ensure that the 'Out of Office Assistant' is turned off and all relevant matters have been or will be dealt with.

Email - Prevention of Virus Attacks

Recipients of e-mail messages that have a suspicious title are **NOT** to open the e-mail message without prior consultation with BSC's IT Section. Although virus protection software is installed, there is no guarantee that this will prevent all viruses from infiltrating the BSC network.

Where documents are received as an attachment to an email message, these attachments, under all circumstances, must be scanned by anti-virus software to avoid the potential risk of infecting the BSC network.

Software programs received as an attachment to an email message are not to be installed onto a PC or BSC's network under any circumstances without the prior permission of the General Manager who will consult BSC IT Section.

Email Disclaimer

The following should be included as a standard footer, on every external email sent from BSC's system:

IMPORTANT NOTICE REGARDING CONTENT & CONFIDENTIALITY

The views expressed in this email are not necessarily those of BSC unless otherwise stated. Whilst BSC does use anti-virus software this cannot ensure that this message is free from viruses or any other defect or error.

This electronic message is intended only for the addressee and may contain confidential information. If you are not the addressee, please be advised that any transmission, distribution or photocopying of this e-mail is strictly prohibited. The confidentiality attached to this e-mail is not waived, lost or destroyed by reasons of a mistaken delivery to you. The information contained in this e-mail transmission may also be subject to State Government access to information legislation. If you have received this email in error, please contact the author of the message, as soon as practicable.

Monitoring Use and Breaches of this Policy

BSC may monitor, copy, access and disclose any information or files that are stored, processed or transmitted using BSC's equipment and services. Such monitoring will be used for legitimate purposes only (such as legal discovery) and in accordance with any relevant privacy legislation and / or guidelines.

Reviews of email and phone usage may occur at the request of the General Manager.

BSC employees who breach this policy may be subject to disciplinary action pursuant to BSC's Code of Conduct and the NSW Local Government (State) Award. Such disciplinary action may include termination of employment.

Councillors who breach this policy may be subject to disciplinary action pursuant to BSC's Code of

Conduct and the NSW Local Government Act 1993.

Private Use Payment

BSC allows limited personal use as per this policy.

The General Manager shall review annually a private use limit before private use accounts are issued to employees. This limit is the minimum amount to cover the costs of administration and account issue on a monthly basis and the cost to BSC based on the phone plan or service provided. E.g. A corporate phone plan with unlimited calls and text may require no employee contribution.

Private use of Mobile Phones as approved by BSC (excluding the Mayor/General Manager) will require the staff member to reimburse the costs of all **private** calls, texts or messaging service and website use.

A staff member may make arrangements to make weekly deductions for payment of private phone usage.

Full payment of the phone account will be made within 30 days of receipt of the phone account.

Review

This policy should be reviewed every 4 years or following an ordinary election of BSC. The policy may be reviewed and amended at any time at BSC's discretion (or if legislative or State Government Policy changes occur).

Staff Acknowledgement

The General Manager must ensure that all new staff, and existing staff, receives a copy of this policy. Councillors and staff shall be requested to sign the BSC Communications Agreement (Attachment 1) after the Councilor and staff member have read the policy document.

Related BSC Policies

- BSC Records Management Policy.
- BSC Code of Conduct.

ATTACHMENT 1

*BSC
COMMUNICATION DEVICES AGREEMENT*

NAME: _____

- I understand my responsibility as a user of BSC's communication devices and systems including private use payments where approved.
- I have received, read, understand and will abide by the BSC Communication Devices Policy.
- I understand that any breach of the Communication Devices Policy may result in disciplinary action under BSC's Code of Conduct and may be dealt with pursuant to the NSW Local Government (State) Award or Local Government Act 1993.
- I also understand that if I commit any breach of this policy, my access privileges may be revoked.

User Signature: _____

Date: _____