SESLHD PROCEDURE COVER SHEET

NAME OF DOCUMENT	Records Management - Management of Emails
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EXECUTIVE SPONSOR or EXECUTIVE CLINICAL SPONSOR	Head, Office of the Chief Executive as nominated Senior Responsible Officer for records, information and data.
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POSITION RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DOCUMENT	Manager, Executive Services
FUNCTIONAL GROUP(S)	Records Management - Corporate
KEY TERMS	Records management; emails, recordkeeping
SUMMARY	E-mail messages involving substantive business (as opposed to purely ephemeral messages) must be readily accessible any time they are required as proof of business transactions and should not be deleted without proper authority.

1.   PURPOSE

The purpose of this procedure is to detail the requirements for all staff and contingent workers to manage electronic mail messages in accordance with the requirements of the *State Records Act 1998* and to provide guidance for determining what emails are official records.

2.   BACKGROUND

E-mail messages involving substantive business (as opposed to purely ephemeral messages) must be readily accessible any time they are required as proof of business transacted and should not be deleted without proper authority. Email messages may contain vital business information necessary to support daily business operations and future decision making and may be required for legal processes such as discovery orders, subpoenas and applications for records under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* or required by auditors, courts or Royal commissions.

3.   RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Chief Executive** has ultimate responsibility with delegated responsibility to Head, Office of the Chief Executive as Senior Responsible Officer for records, information and data, to set and issue standards in relation to Records Management and to monitor and audit compliance with these standards.

- **Tier 2 Directors, Chief Executive direct reports and General Managers** are responsible for ensuring that records and information management strategies and records management operational plans and business processes at a local level have adequate staffing, technology and resources to ensure compliance with the requirements of SESLHD Records Management policies and procedures, the *State Records Act 1998* and best practice standards.

- **All staff and contingent workers** are responsible for routinely capturing email messages which have substantive business value into approved recordkeeping systems.

- **The Associate Director Digital Health** is responsible for ensuring:
  - emails in online, near line and offline storage are available to authorised users and protected from unauthorised access, alteration or destruction
  - emails stored in near-line or off-line repositories are migrated through system and service transitions
  - decommissioning of systems (for example Mimosa and Quest Archive Management) considers retention and disposal requirements for records and information held in the system and emails. As a temporary risk mitigation strategy SESLHD staff may request extended retention periods for specific email accounts, where there is an identified business need or a risk that a specific email account may hold records of continuing value that are required as State Archives. This temporary retention extension will provide the owner of the email account time to transitions the emails to SESLHD's official corporate electronic document and records management system, Content Manager.

4.   DEFINITIONS

Classification - means the systematic identification and arrangement of business activities and/or records into categories according to logically structured conventions, methods and procedural rules represented in a classification system.

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Contingent Workers - provisional group of workers who work for SESLHD on a non-permanent basis, also known as temporary contract workers, independent contractors or consultants or volunteers.

Electronic messaging - a general term covering all forms of electronically generated communication. This includes electronic mail, voice mail and tele / video conferencing. This policy essentially relates to electronic mail.

Ephemeral messages - ephemeral messages are records with little value after a short period of time. These records may be of a personal nature or are created in the course of business but considered to have no continuing value and therefore can be destroyed.

Official Records - recorded information, in any form, including data in computer systems, created or received and maintained by an organisation or person and kept as evidence of business activity.

Off-line - offline storage is used to store older, inactive data that is seldom accessed. It may be stored on tape or disk. Offline storage is not connect to a system and requires manual intervention to make the data accessible

On-line - data that is directly accessible to the system

Near-line - an intermediate type of data storage that represents a compromise between online storage (supporting frequent, very rapid access to data) and offline storage / archiving (used for backups or long-term storage, with infrequent access to data). Examples of nearline storage include tape and disk libraries

Record - a record may have any or all of the following attributes:
- information which is of administrative, legal, fiscal, evidential or historical value and is not recorded elsewhere;
- formal communication and/or a transaction between officers (for example, a memorandum, report or briefing note) or between an officer and another party; or
- documents the rationale behind organisation policy, decisions or directives.

Record disposal - this action takes place following an appraisal decision that the record has been retained for a specific period in accordance with appropriate disposal authorities.

Recordkeeping - making and maintaining complete, accurate and reliable evidence of business transactions in the form of recorded information.

Substantive business activity - a determination of what is substantive business activity will be based on the core business function / activity of the facility / Unit. Generally, this will include all business transactions associated with an accountable decision, an authorisation or approval, policy development and approval.

Transaction - The smallest units of business activity - use of records are transactions.

5.   PROCEDURE

Management of emails should not occur in isolation from the management of other records.

Email messages which have intrinsic business value should be routinely captured into the approved and compliant electronic document and records management system (eDRMS) i.e. Content Manager, thereby enabling the appropriate security, classification, and retention periods to be applied.

Back-up stores of electronic mail within an e-mail system and ad-hoc saving of e-mails to directories or shared drives are non-compliant repositories which are not considered to be a form of recordkeeping system. They should not be used to save or store official records.
Emails older than 90 days will be removed from users Inbox but can be retrieved from Quest Archive Manager. As at May 2025, eHealth NSW have specified a time limit of 7 years for email retention in Quest Archive Manager. Therefore, Quest Archive Manager should not be relied on to save or store official records of continuing value or records that are required as State Archives.

5.2   What records to keep?
Electronic mail that is required as evidence of substantive business activity must be captured into a record keeping system.

Electronic mail, like all records, essentially falls into two broad categories:
- correspondence, which document substantive business activity (see definition)
- correspondence, which is ephemeral (see definition).

5.3   When and how to capture a record
Electronic mail needs to be captured into the recordkeeping system promptly after being received or sent, as this is the point at which the transaction takes place.

State Records NSW provides the following tips for deciding on whether a message is a record. An email should be saved if it:
- approves or authorises actions
- is a formal communication between staff relating to work
- signifies a policy change or development
- commits the organisation to an arrangement or to a business deal
- contains advice, provides guidance or constitutes formal communications with people inside or outside the organisation
- is required to be acted upon
- is external correspondence received relating to work
- is something that has been sent for a business purpose
- is something that has been used at work to make a decision
- is required for the ongoing management of a matter
- relates to a matter which may be reviewed or audited later

5.4   Determining who should capture information in emails
- if you sent an email, you should ensure it is captured
- if you are, or believe you are, the only one who received an email from someone outside the organisation, capture it
- if there are multiple recipients of an email from someone outside the organisation, the main recipient, or the person with prime responsibility for the business documented in the email, captures the message
- if in doubt, check with other recipients about who is capturing the message.

5.5   When information in emails should be captured
- users should routinely capture relevant email messages when they are received, or when the flow of correspondence documented in a series of messages has ceased.
- alternatively, for project based work, you could specify that all relevant email messages must be captured at a defined point in a business process. This may be at existing project review points, the completion of a tender process etc. Be aware though that this approach may limit information access because the email is not captured immediately. The risks associated with this approach must be fully considered.

5.6   Disposal of records
Email messages involving substantive business should not be deleted without proper authority.

State Records NSW general retention and disposal authorities are applied to the classification system and record containers in Content Manager which enables disposal action in accordance with *State Records Act 1998.*

6.   DOCUMENTATION
N/A.

7.   REFERENCES
- *State Records Act 1998*
- National Safety and Quality Health Service Standard – Standard 1 – Clinical Governance
- State Records NSW advice – Managing email records

8.   VERSION AND APPROVAL HISTORY

Date	Version No.	Author and approval notes
August 2002	0	Records Management Committee and approved by Area Finance & Administration Committee.
October 2004	1	Re-formatted with minor changes approved by Area Records Officer and re-issued by Systems Integration & Improvement Manager
September 2005	2	Minor changes made by Records Manager, Executive Support Unit following feedback from consultation with stakeholders. Approved by the Executive Management Committee 27 Sept 2005
March 2007	3	Manager Systems Integration, policy updated to reflect new EQuIP 4 referencing. Section 3.1
February 2011	4	Minor changes & an inclusion of tips from State Records made by Records Manager Executive Support Unit. Formatting changes due to change to Local Health Network
September 2012	5	Formatting changes due to change to Local Health District
October 2012	5	Approved by DET
November 2012	6	Minor changes by Manager Executive Services
June 2015	7	Updated by Executive Services Records Management Coordinator Reviewed Manager Executive Services & Chief Information Officer
July 2016	8	Updated by Records Management Coordinator

July 2016	8	Updates endorsed by Executive Sponsor
May 2020	9	Updated by Records Management Coordinator
May 2020	9	Minor review - update of terminology (eg Trim to Content Manager) and links. Endorsed by Executive Sponsor Processed by Executive Services prior to publishing.
18 December 2023	9.1	Minor review – update Senior Responsible Officer for Records management to Director, Digital Health (CIO) and update broken hyperlinks.
7 July 2025	9.2	Minor review – Update Senior Responsible Office for Records, Information and Data to Head, Office of Chief Executive. Update section 3 relating to decommissioning of systems.

COMPLIANCE WITH THIS DOCUMENT IS MANDATORY