POLICY: MOBILE AND SMART DEVICES

Purpose

This policy ensures that mobile and smart devices are used safely, respectfully and lawfully across all Barcoo Shire Council operations and services. It protects employees and contractors, the community and Council assets, while supporting safe and productive work practices.

Policy Statement

Mobile and smart devices may be used to support and enhance the operations and services of Barcoo Shire Council. Devices must be used safely and respectfully, in compliance with Queensland and Commonwealth laws. Use of devices must not breach privacy, confidentiality, or workplace health and safety obligations.

Council may restrict use of mobile or smart devices where it creates risk or disrupts work.

Scope

This policy will apply to Barcoo Shire Council employees, trainees, contractors and volunteers using mobile or smart devices while:

- In Council offices, facilities or sites
- Driving a Council vehicle or private vehicle for work
- Operating plant, machinery or tools
- Performing field or community work, or
- Accessing Council systems or information.

Definitions

Mobile Device: A portable computing device such as a laptop, tablet, smartphone, smart watch, smart glasses, drone or handheld gaming device. The key feature is mobility. A device does not need to be smart to be mobile – a basic mobile phone that makes only calls and texts is still a mobile device.

Smart Device: An electronic device that can process data, connect to the internet or other devices, and run software/apps. Its key features are intelligence and connectivity, not portability. Commonly used are desktop computers, laptops, smartphones, smart watches, ear pods or speakers that are connected to a mobile device. Smart devices also include smart cameras, drones, smart TVs, smart lights and thermostats.

Safe Zone: Area where vehicles or pedestrians do not interact, and which is outside of hazardous areas.

Responsibilities

Employees: have a responsibility to:

- Ensure that device use does not breach privacy, confidentiality, work health and safety, information security or any other legal or regulatory obligations;
- Device use does not create a safety risk
- Devices are not used in a manner that distracts from situational awareness, vehicle operation, or active response tasks
- Ensure that use of devices does not adversely affect others, or the performance of work;
- Ensure that work duties take priority over personal use of devices;
- Discuss with their manager when compliance with this policy may not be achievable.

Managers/ Supervisors: have a responsibility to:

- Make themselves and their employees aware of their obligations under this policy;
- Ensure ways of working that are safe, practical and lawful;
- Ensure that employees know where there are designated safe zones for use of mobile and smart devices;
- Where necessary, provide a designated area where the employee's mobile device and or smart device can be stored while performing their duties during their shift;
- Ensure that employees are provided with an Emergency Contact (usually their site supervisor) that can be shared with family or other key contacts to ensure that employees can be contacted in a timely way when their work requires that they cannot have a mobile or smart device with them (such as when operating plant or equipment);
- Monitor the work environment to ensure compliance is being achieved; and
- Raise with employees where instances on non-compliance are evident.

Use of mobile phones and smart devices in the workplace

Use in Council offices and indoor work areas

Mobile phones and smart devices may be used in the office provided that:

- They do not interrupt work or colleagues.
- Ringers are set to silent or vibrate.
- Personal calls are brief and taken away from shared or public areas.
- Devices are not used in meetings unless required for work.
- Recording (audio, video, or photography) must be authorised in advance.
- Devices must not be used to access or share inappropriate, offensive, or illegal content.

Use during field work

- Workers must remain aware of surroundings, hazards, and traffic.
- Device use must not interrupt work or colleagues, nor interfere with safe work practices.
- Recording (audio, video, or photography) must be authorised in advance.
- When working near roads, water, animals, or machinery, device use is restricted to designated safe zones.
- Devices must not be used to access or share inappropriate, offensive, or illegal content.

Mobile and smart devices and operating plant, machinery or tools

The use of mobile and smart devices while operating plant, machinery or tools is strictly prohibited because it creates a foreseeable and preventable safety risk. This includes operation of:

- Heavy plant or machinery
- Ride-on equipment
- Tools requiring two-handed operation
- Any equipment where distraction could cause injury.

Employees who wear a smart watch while operating plant and machinery must ensure they have notifications turned off and must not use the device for any purpose other than to read the time. All other devices must not be taken onto the equipment and must be stored in the relevant designated area.

Employees operating plant, machinery or tools will be provided with an Emergency Contact (usually their site supervisor) that can be shared with family or other key contacts to ensure that employees can be contacted in a timely way if needed, when their work requires that they cannot have a mobile or smart device with them.

In some circumstances, where there is a specific work requirement for use of a device on equipment, operational use of a mobile or smart device may be risk-assessed and approved by a supervisor, such as use of a camera, or job-specific safety or compliance system (such as Skytrust or Ezi Comply). In this case, a supervisor will provide an approved Barcoo Shire Council device (such as a tablet) to be used for the specific required purpose only. There will be appropriate technical restrictions on the device.

Mobile and smart devices when driving

Workers must comply with Queensland road rules and the conditions on their own drivers' licence, noting that there are specific rules that apply to any mobile or smart device with screens, apps, or internet access. The law focuses on distraction, not just mobile phones.

You must not:

- Hold a mobile or smart device in your hand or have it resting on your body while driving — even when stopped.
- Read, write, or send messages, emails, or social media content.
- Touch the device unless legally permitted (e.g., mounted hands-free for open licence holders).

Permitted use:

- Hands-free use via voice control when the device is in a cradle or pocket and not touched.

Consider the following suggestions for hands-free phone use whilst driving:

- Enable the hands-free, voice-controlled function before you start driving.
- Keep conversations short.
- Do not engage in complex or emotional conversations.
- Explain to your caller that you are driving and arrange a better time to speak with them.
- If it is distracting you from driving, end the call.
- Take special care in situations where there is traffic, inclement weather, known potential hazards such as stock crossings or unfamiliar areas.
- Use while safely parked (not stopped in traffic).

Fines

- An employee who is charged with traffic violations from the use of a mobile or smart device while driving will be solely responsible for all liabilities that result from such action.

Use of mobile and smart devices to support emergency services volunteering

Barcoo Shire Council recognises that mobile phones, smart devices and associated applications may be required for authorised operational use by Council employees or contractors who are emergency service volunteers, including State Emergency Service and Rural Fire Service members.

Authorised operational use includes:

- Receiving emergency notifications, tasking, and deployment instructions
- Operational communications approved by the organisation
- Use of mapping, weather, or incident management applications
- Capturing images or information for operational, reporting, or safety purposes where authorised.

Privacy, Security and Organisational Risk

Mobile and smart devices must be used in a way that protects the privacy of employees, contractors and community members, and must comply with privacy and surveillance laws. For example, prior consent must be obtained when taking photos or recordings of people.

Employees who use a mobile or smart device to access corporate networks and data systems must ensure the device is configured with secure access controls (such as passwords and authentication). In the event the device has been compromised or thought to have been the Director of Corporate and Community Services must be notified immediately.

Employees who use mobile or smart devices at work must not:

- Obtain photographic material or recordings of Council property without prior approval;
- Knowingly download from unknown sources that may have the ability to access Barcoo Shire Council programs or corrupt the integrity of our network;
- Share and or distribute any Barcoo Shire Council confidential information or data;
- Harm the reputation of Council, its employees or contractors, or the community;
- Retain Council property or data without prior approval;
- Misuse or tamper with a Council owned device for purposes other than it is intended for;
- Install unauthorised programs, games or personal email on Council owned devices;
- Use devices for any illegal activity.

Lost or stolen devices containing Council data must be reported immediately.

Inappropriate use

Mobile and smart devices must not be used to:

- Bully, harass, intimidate, or threaten others
- Send offensive, discriminatory, or inappropriate messages
- Access, store, or share explicit, violent, or illegal content
- Secretly record or photograph others
- Spread rumours, gossip, or confidential information
- Engage in online harassment, social media attacks, or group-chat bullying.

Any such behaviour may result in disciplinary action and may be referred to police.

Monitoring

To protect people and information, ensure systems are working properly, and investigate security incidents, Council may monitor the use of work-issued mobile and smart devices:

- Use of work email and messaging systems
- Internet and application use
- Access to work systems and files
- Security alerts and unusual activity
- Device location (if required for work or safety).

If you use your personal device for work, Council may monitor:

- Activity within work systems (for example, work email, shared drives, approved Apps)
- Access to Council networks (such as Wi-Fi or VPN)

Monitoring is limited to work-related purposes and handled confidentially and with respect to privacy.

Resignation or termination of employment

Upon resignation or termination, an approved personal mobile device will be required to be provided to the Director of Corporate and Community Services for safe removal of Barcoo Shire Council networks and other systems.

Breach of Policy

Failure to comply with this policy or any reasonable request provided by a manager enforcing this policy may result in disciplinary action and or termination. Illegal activity will be referred to police.

Governing Legislation and Regulations

Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld) — duty to ensure safe systems of work
Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995
Transport Operations (Road Use Management – Road Rules) Regulation 2009 — ss. 300–300A (mobile phone restrictions)
Criminal Code (Qld) s. 328A — Dangerous operation of a vehicle
Information Privacy Act 2009 (Qld)
Invasion of Privacy Act 1971 (Qld) — includes rules on listening devices
Surveillance Devices Act 2007 (Cth) (applies to certain device types)
Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld)
Criminal Code (Qld) — offences relating to stalking, threats, and harassment
Public Sector Ethics Act 1994 (Qld)

Policy Owner:	Office of the CEO – People and Culture
Policy Reference No.:	BSC - 065
Related Policies:	BSC – 012 Employee Code of Conduct BSC – 010 Workplace Health and Safety Policy BSC – 005 Motor Vehicle Policy BSC – 043 Internet and Email Usage Policy BSC – 042 Social Media Policy BSC – 045 Workplace Discrimination and Harassment Policy
Related Forms:	
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Review:	For annual review, or whenever there is a significant change to mobile and smart devices law, technology or services impacting on Council operations or services.