Australian Government Email Address Naming Standards and Implementation Guidance

I INTRODUCTION

Purpose

1. The purpose of this document is to detail the Australian Government Email Address Naming Standards and to provide guidance to assist agencies implement these standards.

Definitions

2. For the purposes of this document, a standard is defined as a specification, established by consensus and approved by a recognised body, and that provides for a common approach to email addressing. Agencies are expected to comply with the standards specified in this document.

3. A guideline is a suggested approach to the management of issues. Agencies are encouraged to consider such guidelines when managing these issues.

Authority

4. These standards have been produced by Australian Government Information Management Office (AGIMO) within the Department of Finance and Deregulation at the request of the Australian Government’s Business Process Transformation Committee (BPTC, see Attachment B). The standards have been endorsed by and are issued under the authority of the Australian Government's Chief Information Officer Committee (CIOC).

5. The BPTC requirement was for Email Address Naming Standards that defined a format for email address creation that:
   - Presents a consistent image of government accessibility;
   - Is intuitive to use; and
   - Provides a simple way to find or determine email addresses of Australian Government employees.

Structure

6. This document is in four parts:
   - I Introduction
   - II The Standards
   - III Guidance on Implementing the Standards
   - IV Guidance on Associated Email Addressing Issues
   - V Attachments
Scope

7. These standards apply to all agencies under the Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997 (FMA Act).

Development

8. These standards have been developed and refined through a range of agency consultations. They will be maintained and enhanced by the Australian Government Information Management Office (AGIMO) in consultation with agencies, subject to approval by BPTC.

9. AGIMO has established a workspace on the GovDex website to facilitate agency collaboration on these email address naming standards. The workspace on the GovDex website can only be accessed by nominated contacts in relevant agencies. This can be accessed at www.govdex.gov.au.

Contact Details

10. The AGIMO contact for feedback on the standards and associated documentation is Michelle Cristallo (phone: 02 6215 1533; email: michelle.cristallo@finance.gov.au).
II  THE STANDARDS

11. The Standards comprise three elements:
   • Standard 1: Published personal email addresses
   • Standard 2: Managing Duplicates
   • Standard 3: Functional Addresses

Standard 1: Published personal email addresses

12. Published personal email addresses must be in the form of:

   <preferredname>.<lastname>[<uid>]<@<agencyname>.gov.au

   (for example: joseph.bloggs1@finance.gov.au)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syntax</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;preferredname&gt;</td>
<td>User’s preferred name (may not necessarily be user’s given first name)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;lastname&gt;</td>
<td>User’s legal surname/family name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;uid&gt;</td>
<td>Numeric unique identifier used when duplicate preferredname, lastname combinations have been used in an agency. This may not be applicable to all users as denoted by the square brackets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;agencyname&gt;</td>
<td>Common term or abbreviation for the agency eg. finance, defence, ato, deewr, dfat etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gov</td>
<td>For Australian Government agencies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>au</td>
<td>Australian Country code ISO 3166</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. The email address must have the person’s names in all lowercase so that the email address is standardised, but is not stopped by any email system that is case sensitive.

14. The email address should as much as possible reflect the way an individual spells their name. For instance hyphenated names such as brown-smith should contain the hyphen in the email address and names with an apostrophe such as o’reilly should contain the apostrophe in the email address. The use of hyphens and apostrophes will also reduce cultural sensitivities where lack of punctuation may create offensive expressions. All other punctuation, including spaces and underscores must be excluded with the exception of a full stop being used as a syntax separator.
15. For example:

john.vandeberg@finance.gov.au
john.brown-smith@finance.gov.au
john.o’reilly@finance.gov.au

**Standard 2: Managing Duplicates**

16. Where more than one user has the same name within an agency, addresses must be allocated in accordance with the following procedure:

- The first user with that name must be allocated an address in accordance with the format: `<preferredname>.<lastname>[<uid>]<agencyname>.gov.au`

  This means that the address of the **first** user named Joseph Bloggs will be `joseph.bloggs@finance.gov.au`.

- Each subsequent user must be allocated an address with a numeric unique identifier `<uid>` in accordance with the format:

  `<preferredname>.<lastname>[<uid>]<agencyname>.gov.au`

  where `<uid>` is a numeric unique identifier used when a duplicate preferredname, lastname combination has previously been used in an agency.

  This means that the address of the **second** user named Joseph Bloggs must be `joseph.bloggs1@finance.gov.au`, with the `<uid>` in each subsequent Joseph Bloggs address being incremented accordingly (2,3,4,5, etc).

**Standard 3: Functional Addresses**

17. If an agency chooses to establish group email addresses for well-defined business groups or functions such as client services or recruitment, such addresses, defined as functional addresses, must be in the following format:

  `<functionalname>@<agencyname>.gov.au`

Where:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syntax</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><code>&lt;functionalname&gt;</code></td>
<td>Business group, function or service within an agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>&lt;agencyname&gt;</code></td>
<td>Common term or abbreviation for the agency eg. finance, defence, ato, deewr, dfat etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
18. Functional addresses with multiple words must be separated by a single separator. Only one separator is allowed on the left hand side.

19. Examples of the application of this standard are:

client.services@finance.gov.au; or
recruitment@finance.gov.au
III IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE

20. This guidance is presented as high level advice to assist agencies implement these standards. It presents a range of issues that may need to be managed as part of the transition process.

Planning

21. Agencies should consider preparing a plan outlining how the transition to the standards will be achieved. Such a plan could address:
   - Roles and responsibilities
   - Timeframes
   - Issues management
   - Costs
   - Reporting and communication arrangements.

22. Agency systems should be equipped to allow the use of hyphens and apostrophes. This could be done either by a retrofit or progressively with the addition of new starters.

23. Agency employees need to be adequately informed of the change. Other implications of the move to standardised email addressing need to be considered.

Cost

24. The cost implications to agencies of the transition to the new standards should be low. The major cost is likely to be the time involved for those staff implementing the standards and liaising with AGIMO to ensure the standards remain value-adding. There should be no additional hardware or software costs involved.

25. AGIMO would seek to monitor the cost implications of applying the standards through regular agency consultation.

Spam

26. While establishing a consistent naming convention for government email addresses has significant benefits for citizens contacting government, it may also make it easier for undesirable/unsolicited traffic be received by Australian Government employees.

27. The amount of any additional spam generated by application of these standards is unclear at present, and will need to be monitored as the standards are applied.

28. In implementing a standard for email addresses, agencies will need to review their security practices to ensure appropriate protection from spam and malicious emails.

Security

30. Correct email addresses are important in protecting the privacy and secrecy of official information, by ensuring the information contained goes to the right recipients.

31. Agencies should consult the Protective Security Manual (PSM) and the Australian Government Information and Communications Technology Security Manual (ACSI 33) to ensure that they comply with the appropriate minimum ICT security standards for the protection of email and email systems.


Privacy

34. The Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) regulates the handling of personal information by Australian and ACT government agencies, and personal information held by all large private sector organisations, health service providers and small businesses.

35. The Information Privacy Principles (IPPs) in the Privacy Act place specific obligations on agencies in relation to the collection, storage, use and disclosure of personal information. Information contained in emails, and in some instances, the email address where it contains an individual address or addresses, may fall within the definition of personal information and hence be regulated by the Privacy Act. Accordingly agencies should consult with their privacy contact officers when developing email policies to ensure that any personal information collected by the agency is handled in accordance with the Privacy Act.
IV GUIDANCE ON ASSOCIATED EMAIL ADDRESSING ISSUES

36. This part provides guidance to agencies on other email addressing issues. Agencies are encouraged to consider such guidelines when managing these issues.

Display name

37. The display name is the name a user wants the emails to appear from. When creating a display name agencies should display punctuation such as apostrophes and hyphens and capitals. For example:

Display name: Joseph O’Brien

Email address: (joseph.o’brien@finance.gov.au)

38. Some agencies may use the Global Address Book to show the display name. In some cases the surname will appear first. For example:

Display name: O’Brien, Joseph

Email address: (joseph.o’brien@finance.gov.au)

39. Where there are multiple employees with the same name, the unique identifier should be shown in the display name, for example the Display Name for joseph.bloggs1@finance.gov.au should be Joseph Bloggs 1 or Bloggs 1, Joseph.

Responding to misdirected email

40. Agency email systems, where possible, should include informative messages in bounced/undeliverable email responses to assist the sender find the correct address. A bounced/undeliverable email is generally a non-delivery notification sent to the sender’s address, for example, a notification to indicate that the recipient’s address is incorrect; or that the message size exceeds allowed limits etc.

41. Below are two examples of non-delivery notification emails:

Your message did not reach some or all of the intended recipients.

Subject: RE: Email Address Naming Standards [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]
Sent: 8/08/2007 3:58 PM

The following recipient(s) could not be reached:

joseph.bloggs@finance.gov.au on 8/08/2007 3:53 PM
The e-mail system was unable to deliver the message, but did not report a specific reason. Check the address and try again. If it still fails, contact your system administrator.
Consistent and intuitive addresses

42. The use of consistent and intuitive naming standards assists in the checking, remembering and guessing of an email address.

43. Providing the ability for citizens to easily find or discover an email address is facilitated through a number of strategies that work in combination. Two of these are outlined below.

Stable addresses

44. Email addresses, like other forms of addresses, need to be relatively stable so customers can find addresses by referring to old emails or business cards. Major and minor changes in agency names and movement of business units and services between agencies require specific strategies to ensure old email addresses still work. Retention of old addresses should also be required.

45. The .gov.au domain is managed by the AGIMO. Advice on selecting and managing domain names, including the advantages and disadvantages of possible domain names, is available at:


Directories

46. Directories such as the Government Online Directory (http://www.directory.gov.au), are useful tools to assist external parties understand the structure of government and find the relevant contact within an agency. The Department of Finance and Deregulation is responsible for the ongoing operation and development of the Government Online Directory. Information within directories must be kept up-to-date and relevant by administrators to ensure useability.
### GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The following table presents a glossary of acronyms used in this document:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACSI 33</td>
<td>Australian Government Information and Communications Technology Security Manual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGIFT</td>
<td>Australian Government Interactive Functions Thesaurus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGIMO</td>
<td>Australian Government Information Management Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPTC</td>
<td>Business Process Transformation Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and communications technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPP</td>
<td>Information Privacy Principle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSM</td>
<td>Protective Security Manual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uid</td>
<td>Unique identifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gov</td>
<td>Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>au</td>
<td>Australian country code ISO 3166</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BACKGROUND

The Business Process Transformation Committee (BPTC) coordinates the redesign and reform of agency business processes as part of the implementation of the e-government strategy, Responsive Government – A New Service Agenda. The BPTC supports and reports to the Secretaries’ Committee on ICT (SCICT) and will be a companion body to the Chief Information Officer Committee (CIOC).

PURPOSE AND ROLE

The BPTC will oversee the identification of opportunities for service delivery reform and early examples of candidate areas for business process reform. The CIOC will provide technical advice and collaborate on initiatives with the BPTC to achieve this reform.

The BPTC will:

• identify a small number of common business processes across agencies and identify opportunities for these to be combined, shared or standardised; and
• in collaboration with the CIOC, initiate and oversee projects to improve whole-of-government business processes and service delivery.

Business processes considered by BPTC must:

• be generally whole-of-government in nature;
• have a clear and material impact on either the broader public (or significant sections of it), the operations of government, or both;
• have an impact that will be maximised through cross-agency collaboration;
• be achievable in a reasonable timeframe; and
• align with whole-of-government priorities identified by the SCICT, such as simplified sign-on.

SPECIFIC PRIORITIES

• Simplified / single sign-on;
• Shared agency business services, common agency business systems.

OPERATING ARRANGEMENTS

The BPTC will operate as follows:

• The Committee will be responsible to the SCICT, support the work of the SCICT and seek the endorsement of the SCICT on issues and initiatives it is considering.
The SCICT will be the arbiter on issues where there is a divergence of views within the BPTC.

The Committee will be chaired by the Australian Government Chief Information Officer, Australian Government Information Management Office (AGIMO), with membership at deputy secretary level.

BPTC meetings will be held bi-monthly, or as required.

The BPTC will report to at least every second SCICT meeting, or more frequently as required by the SCICT, including seeking the SCICT’s views out-of-session.

The BPTC Terms of Reference will be reviewed after two years.

Secretariat services will be provided by AGIMO, including through the SCICT secure website.

**Membership**

Senior officers, at deputy secretary level or equivalent, from the following service delivery and coordination agencies:

- Australian Government Information Management Office (Chair)
- Australian Bureau of Statistics
- Australian Public Service Commission
- Australian Taxation Office
- Centrelink
- Department of Defence
- Department of Immigration and Citizenship
- Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research
- Department of Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
- Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
KEY REFERENCES

The following are key documents referenced in this document:

Responsive Government: A New Service Agenda, March 2006

Protective Security Manual

Australian Government Information and Communications Technology Security Manual

Australian Government Interactive Functions Thesaurus (AGIFT)