

# GARFIELD MEDICAL CENTRE



## INTERNET AND EMAIL USE POLICY

Current as of : Nov 2025

### Introduction

Garfield Medical Centre recognises the practice team requires access to email and the internet to assist in the efficient and safe delivery of healthcare services to our patients. Garfield Medical Centre supports the right of staff to have access to reasonable personal use of the internet and email communications in the workplace using the devices and networks provided by the practice.

### Purpose

This policy sets out guidelines for acceptable use of internet and email by the practice team, contractors and other staff of Garfield Medical Centre. Internet and email is provided primarily to assist the team carry out their duties of employment. To also uphold the professional standards of Garfield Medical Centre and its Management.

### Definition

#### **INTERNET**

The **Internet** is the global system of interconnected computer networks that use the Internet protocol suite (TCP/IP) to link devices worldwide. It is a network of networks that consists of private, public, academic, business, and government networks of local to global scope, linked by a broad array of electronic, wireless, and optical networking technologies. The Internet carries a vast range of information resources and services, such as the inter-linked hypertext documents and applications of the World Wide Web (WWW), electronic mail, telephony, and file sharing.

*(Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet> as at 10th July 2018)*

#### **EMAIL**

**Electronic mail (email or e-mail)** is a method of exchanging messages ("mail") between people using electronic devices. Invented by Ray Tomlinson, email first entered limited use in the 1960s and by the mid-1970s had taken the form now recognized as email. Email operates across computer networks, which today is primarily the Internet. Some early email systems required the author and the recipient to both be online at the same time, in common with instant messaging. Today's email systems are based on a store-and-forward model. Email servers accept, forward, deliver, and store messages. Neither the users nor their computers are required to be online simultaneously; they need to connect only briefly, typically to a mail server or a webmail interface, for as long as it takes to send or receive messages.

*(Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Email> as at 10th July 2018)*

#### **EMPLOYEES**

In this policy, employees include permanent staff and executives, contractors, temporary staff, trainees and students on placements.

## COMPANY

In this policy, 'the company' may be used interchangeably with the employers trading name :

**Garfield Medical Centre**

## Scope

This internet and email policy applies to the practice team, contractors and other staff of Garfield Medical Centre who access the internet and email on practice owned devices, including, but not limited to PC Terminals, internet and network access devices including desk phones, smart phones, laptops, desktop computers to perform their work.

Use of the internet by the practice team, contractors and other staff is permitted and encouraged where this supports the goals and objectives of Garfield Medical Centre. Access to the internet is a privilege and the practice team, contractors and other staff must adhere to this policy.

Violation of these policies could result in disciplinary action may include employment termination for serious breaches.

All employees are required to confirm they have understood and agree to abide by this email and internet policy.

## Policy

The practice team, contractors and other staff may use the internet and email access provided by Garfield Medical Centre for any work and work-related purposes.

No images, content or confidential information from within Garfield Medical Centre or Management is to be sent via email without explicit permission of Garfield Management Team. Employees should not respond to requests for personal and/or clinical information via email or other forms of communication via the internet without prior authorisation from the management team.

Computer and Internet usage assigned to an employee's computer or telephone extensions are solely for the purpose of conducting Company business. Some job responsibilities at the Company require access to the internet and the use of software in addition to the Microsoft Office suite of products. Only people appropriately authorized, for Company purposes, may use the internet to access and download additional software. This authorization is generally exclusive to decisions that the IT department makes in conjunction with Human Resources.

Where an employee sends outgoing correspondence via email or similar methods, the employee:

- Must ensure any online communication is consistent with the company's Code of Conduct, values, policies and applicable laws
- Must not make any comment or forward any material that might otherwise cause damage to Garfield Medical Group's reputation or bring it into disrepute.
- Must not send any material that includes confidential/proprietary information or trade secrets, or information that is offensive, obscene, defamatory, libellous, threatening, harassing, bullying, discriminatory, hateful, racist, or sexist.
- Must not send any personal or clinical details of patients, employees and contractors.
- Must not use a Garfield Medical Group logos or insignia without written permission from a line manager.
- Can only disclose and discuss publicly available information.
- Must adhere to the Terms of Use of the relevant email platform, as well as copyright, privacy, defamation, contempt of court, discrimination and other applicable laws, and Garfield Medical Centre's Privacy of Health Records and Personal Information policies.

## Unacceptable internet and email use

The practice team, contractors and other staff may not use internet or email access provided by Garfield Medical Centre to:

- creating or exchanging messages that are offensive, harassing, obscene or threatening
- visiting web sites containing objectionable (including pornographic) or criminal material
- exchanging any confidential or sensitive information held by your general practice
- creating, storing or exchanging information in violation of copyright laws
- using internet-enabled activities such as gambling, gaming, conducting a business or conducting illegal activities
- creating or exchanging advertisements, solicitations, chain letters and other unsolicited or bulk email
- playing electronic or online games in work time.
- Forward or post material that is offensive, obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, bullying, discriminatory, hateful, racist, sexist, infringes copyright, constitutes a contempt of court, breaches a Court suppression order, or is otherwise unlawful
- Imply that they are authorised to speak as a representative of the company, nor give the impression that the views expressed are those of the company
- Use the identity or likeness of another employee, contractor or other member of the company
- Use their practice email address or any practice logos or insignia that may give the impression of official support or endorsement of their personal comment
- Use or disclose any confidential information or personal information obtained in their capacity as an employee or contractor of the company
- Post material that is, or might be construed as, threatening, harassing, bullying or discriminatory towards another employee or contractor of the Practice
- Comment or post any material that might otherwise cause damage to the practice's reputation or bring it into disrepute
- When accessing the internet and email while at work, you must do so in accordance with Garfield Medical Centre's Code of Conduct and Use of Computers policies, which requires you to use these resources reasonably, in a manner that does not interfere with your work, and is not inappropriate or excessively accessed.

## Personal use

This policy does not discourage nor unduly limit employees using the internet or email for personal expression or other online activities in their personal life. It does not apply to staff members' personal use of internet and personal email where they make **no real or perceived** reference to Garfield Medical Centre, it's staff, it's clients/patients, services, business partners, government, suppliers or other stakeholders.

Garfield Medical Centre recognises employees use internet across all aspects of life and that the lines between work and home are becoming increasingly difficult to identify with the use of mobile devices. Employees should be aware of and understand the potential risks and damage to Garfield Medical Centre that can occur, either directly or indirectly from their personal use of the internet and email and should comply with this policy to ensure that the risk is minimised.

Employees are personally responsible for content published in their personal capacity on any form of email or online communication platform. When in doubt, employees can seek guidance from the Practice Manager on how to comply with the following obligations.

To avoid breaching this policy, employees must:

- Only disclose and discuss publicly available information
- Ensure that all content published is accurate and not misleading and complies with all relevant practice policies and other legal and professional requirements

- Expressly state that stated views are personal and are not representative of the practice
- Behave politely and respectfully
- Adhere to the terms of use for using the email or alternative communication platform, and adhere to legislation including copyright, privacy, defamation, contempt of court, discrimination, harassment and any other applicable laws, and the Practice's Privacy Policy.

## Disclosure of Inappropriate Use

Where an employee becomes aware of inappropriate or unlawful online content that relates to Garfield Medical Centre, or content that may otherwise have been published in breach of this policy the situation and circumstances should be reported immediately to the Practice Manager or Management team.

## Breach of Policy

- Garfield Medical Centre reserves the right to initiate action against any staff member, in accordance with the organisation's Disciplinary Procedure, who uses social media in a manner that could be considered inappropriate or not consistent with this policy or any other Garfield Medical Centre policy.
- Management will consider the nature and severity of the post, the source of the post, whether a Garfield Medical Centre or management team was named, if the post is public, if other workers have seen the post, if the Garfield Medical Centre's name has been damaged or the Health Industry has been damaged, and or if the comment was impulsive or deliberate when considering any disciplinary action.
- All staff are legally responsible for their online activities, and if found to be in breach of this policy disciplinary action may include termination of employment or disengagement of external contractors.

## References and Associated Documents

- Privacy Policy
- Code of Conduct Policy
- Bullying & Harassment Policy
- Data and Security Breach Protocol
- Confidentiality Agreement
- Social Media Policy
- Use of Computers Policy

## Legislation

- Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth)
- Fair Work Act 2009 (Commonwealth)

## Standards / Codes of Practice / Industry Guidelines

- Social Media and the Medical Profession: guidelines for medical staff and medical students, Australian Medical Association
- Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) Social Media Policy

Garfield Medical Centre has taken all reasonable steps in the development of this policy, to make its content consistent with the proper discharge of its obligations under the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 and all related state and federal laws.

## Feedback

Garfield Medical Centre is committed to listening and responding to feedback from our patients. This enables us to further improve the quality of services we deliver. If you have any feedback you would like to share with us, please email us at [info@garfieldmedicalcentre.com.au](mailto:info@garfieldmedicalcentre.com.au)

Please note that this process can take up to 30 working days depending on the subject matter of your feedback.

Alternatively, you can phone us on:  
02-9128 3465

**or**

Write to us at:  
Patient Feedback  
2 / 19-25 Garfield Street  
Wentworthville NSW 2145

## Policy review statement

- The date the policy is due for review no greater than two years from the date of endorsement.
  - The Garfield Management team is responsible for reviewing this policy regularly and the practice staffs will be notified of any update or changes during team meetings or via work emails.
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