

JANUARY 2023



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

## GUIDANCE NOTE

### CAPTURING AND RETAINING ELECTRONIC MESSAGES

Pursuant to the Records Management Policy (RMP) 2018, this guidance note sets out staff obligations in relation to the capturing and retention of electronic messages, including electronic messages exchanged via third party electronic messaging services (e.g. WhatsApp, Signal, Viber, Telegram). Staff are reminded that **only** unclassified information can be transmitted on third party electronic messaging services.

2. Section 6.1 of the RMP 2018 notes that all staff are responsible for keeping a record of **business transactions conducted as part of their duties for the department**. Examples of business transactions include documenting actions, events, conversations or other transactions where they provide evidence of **formal advice, directions or significant decisions**.
3. All staff are obliged to capture any electronic messages on either departmental or personal devices which evidence business transactions conducted as part of their duties for the department (e.g. formal advice, directions or significant decisions). The means of capturing electronic messages on such devices include, but are not limited to, screen capture tools (e.g. Snipping Tool, screenshots) or copying message text into an email or other word document. The captured record should then be retained in an appropriate EDRMS container and be clearly titled to ensure accuracy in searchability. Having done so, such messages should be removed from individual devices.
4. There is no obligation for staff to capture and retain any other electronic messages that do not evidence business transactions conducted as part of their duties for the department. Such messages should therefore be removed from individual devices.