



## LINKAGES – Edition 31

### Cost Effective “Access Anywhere” Email - Don't waste money on a 1990's email solution!

Email communication is heavily used by modern organizations (including Local Governments) as an effective means of non-realtime communications. Benefits include the ability to communicate with a number of recipients without having to co-ordinate a convenient time for a phone conference or physical meeting, and the ease with which an electronic record of conversation “threads” can be maintained. More advanced uses include electronic calendar events and notifications, including meeting requests, etc.

One of the aims of the LCC project was to ensure that all councils, regardless of size, were able to use their .wa.gov.au domain space for email addresses, rather than an assortment of Internet Service Provider (ISP) addresses. To this end, a highly reliable and secure whole-of-government mail system was established in 2002, and currently provides encrypted mail, tightly enforced virus-scanning, and encrypted (secure) webmail for Local Governments right across WA.

Of course, some councils were already quite advanced anyway, and had their own mail servers operating... but these servers must now be nearing end of life, and councils should be evaluating options for upgrade or replacement. It is therefore a timely opportunity to remind all councils that they are entitled to use the central mail services, and that the central services will provide a far more cost-effective means of email communications, compared to the 1990's traditional “own-hardware” approach. The whole-of-government mail system is also more tightly managed, maintained and secure.

#### Points to Consider:

1. **Remote Access.** Can you check emails using your normal email software from home, or another council's offices?
2. **Webmail.** Can you access and send emails from anywhere in the world, via a standard web browser? Is the webmail encrypted, to protect confidentiality and password security?
3. **Confidence.** Is all inbound and outbound email virus scanned, thus protecting the council from receiving emails with viruses, as well as protecting the council from accidentally sending infected emails to ratepayers and peers, undetected? Are the virus definition files updated on an hourly basis?
4. **Confidentiality.** Is all inbound and outbound mail encrypted, to provide “reasonable effort” protection against eavesdropping?
5. **Maintenance.** How is the system backed up? What is the service restoration time?
6. **Physical Environment.** What happens if your email server is stolen, or is physically affected by a power spike or water damage? How will this affect your operations?
7. **Network Security.** Is an “own hardware” solution compromising your internal network's security (by allowing inbound connections from anywhere in the world in order to receive emails)?
8. **Password Security.** Is the existing solution sending usernames and passwords in clear text each time mail is retrieved? Are these passwords also used for important other services?
9. **Backup.** Are your emails backed up?
10. **Return on Investment (ROI).** How does a replacement candidate stack up against the whole-of-government solution in terms of value for money? Can it deliver most of the above, for less than even twice the price?

Most replacement candidates for ageing “own hardware” mail server solutions, cost literally thousands of dollars, and can only satisfy some of the above selection criteria.

If your email system is getting a bit long in the tooth, please contact the LCC team to further explore taking advantage of the same system that is already in widespread use.

### Welcome Aboard

The LCC team would like to extend a warm welcome and congratulations to the Shire of Westonia who are now benefiting from the security, functionality and cost benefits of an LCC Gateway. We also welcome the Shires of Broomehill and Cue, who are due to come online in the next fortnight.

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