

## Electronic Signature Policy

### Background

In the era of electronic communications, the use of digital and/or electronic/scanned signatures is common and a widely accepted business practice.

Digital signatures are generally encrypted with password protection and limited to a small number of applications; hence they are used in a relatively controlled environment. By contrast, scanned signatures are widely and increasingly used in business communications.

A scanned electronic signature can be easily copied from a document and applied to another – and because it is very accepted practice to send around/rely on PDF-type documents, their authenticity is usually not questioned by the recipient. It is possible for staff or unauthorised persons to inappropriately apply the signature of a Board Member or executive manager to a document without authority through use of the computer, scanned documents etc.

It is therefore incumbent on Healthy Living NT, as a standard part of good practice and corporate governance, to establish rules or protocols governing the use of electronic signature practices in the workplace.

### Policy Framework

Healthy Living NT's policy framework governing the use of electronic signatures seeks to:

- Clearly define which documents/ types of documents that can have electronic signatures routinely applied and under what circumstances
- Nominate those persons/positions authorised to apply an electronic signature, and whose signature they are authorised to use
- Restrict access to the file where electronic signatures are stored on the server
- Identify where prior agreement is required to affix an electronic signature and the nature of this agreement.
- Record usage of electronic signatures in a register and
- Identify which documents or class of documents that electronic signatures may never be used on.

The following rules regulate the use of electronic signatures by Healthy Living NT:

1. Healthy Living NT's *Electronic Signature Delegations Register* forms part of this policy. It governs and records the permissible and authorised uses of electronic signatures and the conditions under which they can be applied.
2. All instances of electronic signature usage where a third party is authorised to use another officer's electronic signature will be recorded in this register. The CEO and the Finance and Administration Manager are authorised to update the register as necessary.

3. A file of electronic signatures comprising Board Members, CEO, Manager Finance and Administration and Manager Education Services will be maintained on the G drive which is accessible only by Executive Managers. The *Electronic Signature Delegations Register* will also be maintained on the G drive.
4. All authorisations to apply an electronic signature should be in writing, by email, SMS, or fax, unless otherwise stipulated in the delegations. A soft copy of the authorisation must be provided to the Finance and Administration Manager for retention in a separate folder in the G drive for audit/validation purposes.
5. When electronic signatures are applied to a:
  - Word document, it may only be further distributed externally by hard copy e.g. post or hand delivery, or by fax;
  - PDF document, it may be further distributed electronically.
6. The following types of documents are generally not endorsed for use of electronic signatures. Original signatures are required at all times on documents that are once-off/unique documents, particularly those of a commercial or financial nature.
  - Leases and commercial documents
  - Banking and finance instruments
  - Service Level Agreements and Deeds (\*)
  - Letters of thanks/receipting donations

**(\*) Electronic scanned signatures may be applied to Service Level Agreements and Deeds where it is:**

- **Deemed acceptable by the funder and**
- **Where acceptance has been clearly approved by a decision of the Board or the Executive Board**

### **Breaches**

Breaches of this policy that relate to unauthorised use of electronic signatures will generally be managed under HLNT's employment agreements and/or Ethical Practice and Ethical Relationships Policy, resulting in disciplinary action and where appropriate, referral to external authorities. However serious breaches that are prima facie fraudulent, carried out for personal benefit or gain, will be immediately referred external authorities and may result in criminal proceedings.

**Responsibility for Policy**

The Board of Healthy Living NT is responsible for ensuring this policy is up to date and complied with.

**Approval**

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Circulation: All HLNT Board Members and staff.

Sign off by: Chair of the Board



Signature: William De Decker