Privacy – Your Responsibilities

Charles Sturt University collects and retains considerable personal data regarding its students and staff during the course of their candidature and employment.

The collection and retention, use and disposal of personal private information are governed by a number of legislative processes. There is Commonwealth legislation the Privacy Act 1988, and there is State legislation the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998. The State Records Act 1998 (NSW) identifies record keeping and disposal processes.

The ‘Privacy’ Acts both list a number of Principles that apply to the collection, use, retention and disposal of personal information and they are worth looking at if you handle personal information on a day to day basis; but the main thrust of the legislations and the Principle can be presented as a summary:

- We must tell an individual we are collecting their information and what we are using it for, and we mustn’t collect more detail than we need.
- We must have the consent of an individual to retain their information.
- We must not use that information for any purpose other than that for which it was collected – there is no ‘data mining’ at a later stage.
- We must not communicate the information to another party without the individual’s consent – there are some exceptions and these are listed in the Acts.
- We must retain the information securely – not in flies laying about the office
- We must dispose of the information securely – not leave the files on the local tip

So where does this leave us in our daily activities?

It is appropriate to communicate within our organisation for the purposes of managing a student’s, or an employee’s, relationship with the organisation. For example if a School wants the private phone number of a student to advise them of an issue relating to their study this is reasonable use of the personal information. However, if someone wants the private telephone number of a staff member to advise them of a barbeque next weekend then this is not a reasonable use of the personal information.

The University has a Privacy Management Plan and if you have any enquiries please do not hesitate to contact the University Privacy Officer/ University Ombudsman, Miriam Dayhew on ext 34259 or email mdayhew@csu.edu.au.