

NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA
ELECTRONIC TRANSACTIONS (NORTHERN TERRITORY) ACT 2000

No. 71 of 2000

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NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA

No. 71 of 2000

AN ACT

to facilitate electronic transactions, and for other purposes

[Assented to 14 December 2000]

[Second reading 17 October 2000]

The Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory enacts as follows:

PART 1 – PRELIMINARY

1. Short title

This Act may be cited as the *Electronic Transactions (Northern Territory) Act 2000*.

2. Commencement

This Act comes into operation on the date fixed by the Administrator by notice in the *Gazette*.

3. Object

The object of this Act is to provide a regulatory framework that –

- (a) recognises the importance of the information economy to the future economic and social prosperity of Australia;
- (b) facilitates the use of electronic transactions;
- (c) promotes business and community confidence in the use of electronic transactions; and

- (d) enables business and the community to use electronic communications in their dealings with government.

4. Outline of Act

The following is an outline of this Act intended as a guide to the general scheme and effect of the Act:

- (a) for the purposes of a law of the Territory, a transaction is not invalid because it took place by means of one or more electronic communications;
- (b) the following requirements imposed under a law of the Territory may generally be met in electronic form:
 - (i) a requirement to give information in writing;
 - (ii) a requirement to provide a signature;
 - (iii) a requirement to produce a document;
 - (iv) a requirement to record information;
 - (v) a requirement to retain a document;
- (c) for the purposes of a law of the Territory, provision is made for determining the time and place of the dispatch and receipt of an electronic communication;
- (d) the purported originator of an electronic communication is bound by it for the purposes of a law of the Territory only if the communication was sent by or with the authority of the purported originator.

5. Definitions

In this Act, unless the contrary intention appears –

"consent" includes consent that can reasonably be inferred from the conduct of the person concerned but does not include consent given subject to conditions unless the conditions are complied with;

"data" includes the whole or part of a computer program within the meaning of the *Copyright Act 1968* of the Commonwealth;

"data storage device" means any article or material (for example, a disk) from which information is capable of being reproduced, with or without the aid of any other article or device;

"electronic communication" means —

- (a) a communication of information in the form of data, text or images by means of guided or unguided electromagnetic energy, or both; or
- (b) a communication of information in the form of sound by means of guided or unguided electromagnetic energy, or both, where the sound is processed at its destination by an automated voice recognition system;

"information" means information in the form of data, text, images or sound;

"information system" means a system for generating, sending, receiving, storing or otherwise processing electronic communications;

"information technology requirements" includes software requirements;

"law of the Territory" means a law in force in the Territory, whether written or unwritten, but does not include a law of the Commonwealth;

"non-profit body" means a body that is carried on for purposes other than for profit or gain to its individual members and is, by the terms of the body's constitution, prohibited from making any distribution, whether in money, property or otherwise, to its members;

"place of business", in relation to a government, an authority of a government or a non-profit body, means a place where operations or activities are carried out by the government, authority or body;

"transaction" includes a transaction in the nature of a contract, agreement or other arrangement and a transaction of a non-commercial nature.

6. Crown to be bound

This Act binds the Crown in right of the Territory and, to the extent that the legislative power of the Legislative Assembly permits, the Crown in all its other capacities.

**PART 2 – APPLICATION OF LEGAL REQUIREMENTS TO
ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS**

***Division 1 – General rule about validity of transactions for purposes of laws of
the Territory***

7. Validity of electronic transactions

(1) For the purposes of a law of the Territory, a transaction is not invalid because it took place wholly or partly by means of one or more electronic communications.

(2) The general rule in subsection (1) does not apply in relation to the validity of a transaction to the extent to which another, more specific, provision of this Part deals with the validity of the transaction.

(3) The regulations may provide that subsection (1) does not apply to a specified transaction or specified class of transactions.

(4) The regulations may provide that subsection (1) does not apply to a specified law of the Territory.

Division 2 – Requirements under laws of the Territory

8. Writing

(1) If, under a law of the Territory, a person is required to give information in writing, the requirement is taken to have been met if the person gives the information by means of an electronic communication where –

- (a) at the time the information was given, it was reasonable to expect that the information would be readily accessible so as to be useable for subsequent reference; and
- (b) the person to whom the information is required to be given consents to the information being given by means of an electronic communication.

(2) If, under a law of the Territory, a person is permitted to give information in writing, the person may give the information by means of an electronic communication where –

- (a) at the time the information was given, it was reasonable to expect that the information would be readily accessible so as to be useable for subsequent reference; and
- (b) the person to whom the information is permitted to be given consents to the information being given by means of an electronic communication.

(3) This section does not affect the operation of any other law of the Territory that makes provision for or in relation to requiring or permitting information to be given, in accordance with particular information technology requirements –

- (a) on a particular kind of data storage device; or
- (b) by means of a particular kind of electronic communication.

(4) This section applies to a requirement or permission to give information whether the expression "give", "send" or "serve", or any other expression, is used.

(5) For the purposes of this section, "give information" includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- (a) make an application;
- (b) make or lodge a claim;
- (c) give, send or serve a notification;
- (d) lodge a return;
- (e) make a request;
- (f) make a declaration;
- (g) lodge or issue a certificate;
- (h) make, vary or cancel an election;
- (j) lodge an objection;
- (k) give a statement of reasons.

9. Signatures

(1) If, under a law of the Territory, the signature of a person is required, the requirement is taken to have been met in relation to an electronic communication if –

- (a) a method is used to identify the person and to indicate the person's approval of the information communicated;
- (b) having regard to all the relevant circumstances at the time the method was used, the method was as reliable as was appropriate for the purposes for which the information was communicated; and

- (c) the person to whom the signature is required to be given consents to the requirement being met by the use of the method referred to in paragraph (a).
- (2) This section does not affect the operation of any other law of the Territory that makes provision for or in relation to requiring –
 - (a) an electronic communication to contain an electronic signature (however described);
 - (b) an electronic communication to contain a unique identification in an electronic form; or
 - (c) a particular method to be used in relation to an electronic communication to identify the originator of the communication and to indicate the originator's approval of the information communicated.

10. Production of document

(1) If, under a law of the Territory, a person is required to produce a document that is in the form of paper, an article or other material, the requirement is taken to have been met if the person produces, by means of an electronic communication, an electronic form of the document where –

- (a) having regard to all the relevant circumstances at the time the communication was sent, the method of generating the electronic form of the document provided a reliable means of assuring the maintenance of the integrity of the information contained in the document;
- (b) at the time the communication was sent, it was reasonable to expect that the information contained in the electronic form of the document would be readily accessible so as to be useable for subsequent reference; and
- (c) the person to whom the document is required to be produced consents to the production, by means of an electronic communication, of an electronic form of the document.

(2) If, under a law of the Territory, a person is permitted to produce a document that is in the form of paper, an article or other material, then, instead of producing the document in that form, the person may produce, by means of an electronic communication, an electronic form of the document where –

- (a) having regard to all the relevant circumstances at the time the communication was sent, the method of generating the electronic form of the document provided a reliable means of assuring the

maintenance of the integrity of the information contained in the document;

- (b) at the time the communication was sent, it was reasonable to expect that the information contained in the electronic form of the document would be readily accessible so as to be useable for subsequent reference; and
- (c) the person to whom the document is permitted to be produced consents to the production, by means of an electronic communication, of an electronic form of the document.

(3) For the purposes of this section, the integrity of information contained in a document is maintained only if the information has remained complete and unaltered, apart from –

- (a) the addition of an endorsement; or
- (b) an immaterial change,

which arises in the normal course of communication, storage or display.

(4) This section does not affect the operation of any other law of the Territory that makes provision for or in relation to requiring or permitting electronic forms of documents to be produced, in accordance with particular information technology requirements –

- (a) on a particular kind of data storage device; or
- (b) by means of a particular kind of electronic communication.

11. Retention of information and documents

(1) If, under a law of the Territory, a person is required to record information in writing, the requirement is taken to have been met if the person records the information in electronic form where –

- (a) at the time of the recording of the information, it was reasonable to expect that the information would be readily accessible so as to be useable for subsequent reference; and
- (b) if the regulations require that the information be recorded on a particular kind of data storage device – the requirement has been met.

(2) If, under a law of the Territory, a person is required to retain, for a particular period, a document that is in the form of paper, an article or other material, the requirement is taken to have been met if the person retains, or causes

another person to retain, an electronic form of the document throughout that period where —

- (a) having regard to all the relevant circumstances at the time of the generation of the electronic form of the document, the method of generating the electronic form of the document provided a reliable means of assuring the maintenance of the integrity of the information contained in the document;
- (b) at the time of the generation of the electronic form of the document, it was reasonable to expect that the information contained in the electronic form of the document would be readily accessible so as to be useable for subsequent reference; and
- (c) if the regulations require that the electronic form of the document be retained on a particular kind of data storage device — the requirement of the regulations has been met throughout that period.

(3) For the purposes of subsection (2), the integrity of information contained in a document is maintained only if the information has remained complete and unaltered, apart from —

- (a) the addition of an endorsement; or
- (b) an immaterial change,

which arises in the normal course of communication, storage or display.

(4) If, under a law of the Territory, a person ("the first person") is required to retain, for a particular period, information that was the subject of an electronic communication, the requirement is taken to have been met if the first person retains, or causes another person to retain, in electronic form, the information throughout that period where —

- (a) at the time of commencement of the retention of the information, it was reasonable to expect that the information would be readily accessible so as to be useable for subsequent reference;
- (b) having regard to all the relevant circumstances at the time of commencement of the retention of the information, the method of retaining the information in electronic form provided a reliable means of assuring the maintenance of the integrity of the information contained in the electronic communication;
- (c) throughout that period, the first person also retains, or causes the other person to retain, in electronic form, the additional information obtained by the first person that is sufficient to enable the identification of the following:

- (i) the origin of the electronic communication;
 - (ii) the destination of the electronic communication;
 - (iii) the time when the electronic communication was sent;
 - (iv) the time when the electronic communication was received;
 - (d) at the time of commencement of the retention of the additional information referred to in paragraph (c), it was reasonable to expect that the additional information would be readily accessible so as to be useable for subsequent reference; and
 - (e) if the regulations require that the information be retained on a particular kind of data storage device – the requirement of the regulations has been met throughout that period.
- (5) For the purposes of subsection (4), the integrity of information that was the subject of an electronic communication is maintained only if the information has remained complete and unaltered, apart from –
- (a) the addition of an endorsement; or
 - (b) an immaterial change,

which arises in the normal course of communication, storage or display.

12. Exemptions from this Division

- (1) The regulations may provide that this Division, or a specified provision of this Division, does not apply to a specified requirement.
- (2) The regulations may provide that this Division, or a specified provision of this Division, does not apply to a specified permission.
- (3) The regulations may provide that this Division, or a specified provision of this Division, does not apply to a specified law of the Territory.

Division 3 – Other provisions relating to laws of the Territory

13. Time and place of dispatch and receipt of electronic communications

(1) For the purposes of a law of the Territory, if an electronic communication enters a single information system outside the control of the originator, then, unless otherwise agreed between the originator and the addressee of the electronic communication, the dispatch of the electronic communication occurs when it enters that information system.

(2) For the purposes of a law of the Territory, if an electronic communication enters successively 2 or more information systems outside the

control of the originator, then, unless otherwise agreed between the originator and the addressee of the electronic communication, the dispatch of the electronic communication occurs when it enters the first of those information systems.

(3) For the purposes of a law of the Territory, if the addressee of an electronic communication has designated an information system for the purpose of receiving electronic communications, then, unless otherwise agreed between the originator and the addressee of the electronic communication, the time of receipt of the electronic communication is the time when the electronic communication enters that information system.

(4) For the purposes of a law of the Territory, if the addressee of an electronic communication has not designated an information system for the purpose of receiving electronic communications, then, unless otherwise agreed between the originator and the addressee of the electronic communication, the time of receipt of the electronic communication is the time when the electronic communication comes to the attention of the addressee.

(5) For the purposes of a law of the Territory, unless otherwise agreed between the originator and the addressee of an electronic communication —

- (a) the electronic communication is taken to have been dispatched from the originator's place of business; and
- (b) the electronic communication is taken to have been received at the addressee's place of business.

(6) For the purposes of the application of subsection (5) to an electronic communication —

- (a) if the originator or addressee has more than one place of business, and one of those places has a closer relationship to the underlying transaction — it is to be assumed that the place of business having the closer relationship to the underlying transaction is the originator's or addressee's only place of business;
- (b) if the originator or addressee has more than one place of business, but paragraph (a) does not apply — it is to be assumed that the originator's or addressee's principal place of business is the originator's or addressee's only place of business; and
- (c) if the originator or addressee does not have a place of business — it is to be assumed that the originator's or addressee's place of business is the place where the originator or addressee ordinarily resides.

(7) The regulations may provide that this section does not apply to a specified electronic communication or specified class of electronic communications.

(8) The regulations may provide that this section does not apply to a specified law of the Territory.

14. Attribution of electronic communications

(1) For the purposes of a law of the Territory, unless otherwise agreed between the purported originator and the addressee of an electronic communication, the purported originator of the electronic communication is bound by the communication only if the communication was sent by, or with the authority of, the purported originator.

(2) Subsection (1) does not affect the operation of a law of the Territory that makes provision for —

- (a) conduct engaged in by a person within the scope of the person's actual or apparent authority to be attributed to another person; or
- (b) a person to be bound by conduct engaged in by another person within the scope of the other person's actual or apparent authority.

(3) The regulations may provide that this section does not apply to a specified electronic communication or specified class of electronic communications.

(4) The regulations may provide that this section does not apply to a specified law of the Territory.

PART 3 — MISCELLANEOUS

15. Regulations

The Administrator may make regulations, not inconsistent with this Act, prescribing matters —

- (a) required or permitted by this Act to be prescribed; or
 - (b) necessary or convenient to be prescribed for carrying out or giving effect to this Act.
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