

## **POLICYI027 ELECTRONIC SIGNATURE**

---

<b>Manual:</b>	Policies	<b>Document ID:</b>	PI027	<b>Date Created:</b>	Jan 10
<b>Section:</b>	Investigators	<b>No. Pages:</b>	1	<b>Review Date:</b>	May 16
				<b>Future Review Date:</b>	May 18

---

### **Purpose**

To allow the use and acceptance by Bellberry of e-Signatures to assist in conducting day to day business in a practical and secure way.

### **Background**

The Electronic Transactions Act 1999 (Cth) allows entities to conduct business electronically. Bellberry does this via the following methods;

- email
- facsimile
- eProtocol – electronic software system

“The Electronic Transactions Act 1999 (Cth) allows a person to satisfy a legal requirement for a manual signature by using an electronic communication. The Electronic Transactions Act is ‘technologically neutral’ so it does not set out a particular electronic signature technology to be used, providing flexibility for people and businesses to determine the signature technology that is appropriate to their particular needs. However, the choice of a particular method must be as ‘reliable as appropriate in the circumstances’”. (1)

**eSignature** is defined as an automated function which replaces a handwritten signature with a system generated signature. It is considered legally binding i.e. having the same intent, affect and authority as the use of a manual (written or facsimile) signature. The use of an e-signature confirms the accuracy and completeness of the content.

Bellberry e-signature approved methods include;

- scanned signatures (actual signatures converted to electronic images)
- eProtocol - pressing the “I accept” button on the Declarations page 6 of the Application form is equivalent to an electronic signature.
- email correspondence

Once an entry in eProtocol has been electronically signed, the system prevents deletion or alteration of the entry and its related electronic signature unless edit access is authorised by Bellberry. All further alterations are tracked until the review decision has been finalised. Once finalised the record including the electronic signature is kept as per the Bellberry Data Record Retention Policy.

### **Bellberry Authentication**

Bellberry HREC’s utilise scanned signature images from authorised persons e.g. Chairs (which are converted to electronic images) for use within eProtocol.

Only authorised Bellberry staff are allowed to affix an electronic signature to documentation. Authentication is the process used to verify the identity of a Committee member providing an electronic signature. Bellberry does this by using a 100 point verification checklist and Authorisation Form.

## **eProtocol User Authentication**

eProtocol has a role based access control mechanism, with encrypted passwords that are saved in the system with a one way direction encryption mechanism. Bellberry has implemented a verification process prior to allowing new users access to the eProtocol system. Once verified, registration is granted.

## **Related Policies & Procedures**

- Information Security Policy PA003
- Electronic Information Security Policy PA004
- Employee Information Security Policy PA005
- Data Management and Retention Procedure SOPA013
- eprotocol User Validation and Researcher Details SOPA010
- e-Signature Process SOPA034

## **References**

- (1) <https://www.ag.gov.au/Search/Results.aspx?k=electronic%20signatures>
- (2) Australian Government – Attorney’s General Department  
CFR Code of Federal Regulations Title 21- Electronic Records; Electronic Signatures