

Social Media Policy

(Policy Number – L-COMPOL001)
(Policy Type – Council)

1 Aim

This Policy details what is an appropriate and productive use of social media.

The Policy seeks to minimise miscommunication and prevent the inappropriate use of social media platforms by ensuring councillors and staff understand their respective responsibilities and obligations to the Council.

Council acknowledges social media is a communication aid which when used correctly can be an effective communication and engagement tool.

2 Policy Statement

Social media is strongly embedded in the Australian culture as a personal tool for networking and communication and is now being used as an integral part of marketing and communications strategies for all levels of governments.

Social media expands upon previous traditional media methods used by the Council to provide information to the community. Social media is a channel for the community to ask questions, share ideas and give feedback, as well as learn about Council projects, initiatives, and events.

Council may use social media to engage with the community and provide information in a timely and focused manner. Targeted social media activity by Council will usually be used in conjunction with some form of:

- communications strategy/plan.
- media strategy/plan.
- marketing or promotions strategy/plan.
- community engagement/consultation strategy/plan.
- attraction and engagement strategy/plan.

The engaging and interactive nature of social media empowers the community to talk to Council about what matters to them in an open, consultative, and constructive way. Effective use of social media enables the Council to improve its performance by listening to the community, engaging with them, and responding in a timely manner.

3 Policy Detail

Purpose	Description
Intent	<p>This Policy applies to councillors, the General Manager and staff as it directly relates to how the Council's social media presence and the representation of the Council on social media platforms will be managed.</p> <p>The intent of the Policy is to provide an understanding of, and guidance for, the appropriate use of social media by councillors and staff.</p>
Objectives	<p>The objectives of this Policy are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enhance communication and community engagement through effective use of social media to build trust and confidence in Council information. • make councillors and staff aware of the risks associated with social media, and their obligations when using it. • protect and enhance the reputation of Council in the use of social media.
Council's involvement in social media	<p>There is a large range of social media platforms available to Council, however, to ensure it is achieving best value from its social media efforts the focus will be on platforms which have the greatest reach for targeted audiences.</p> <p>Social media allows Council to be open and engaging, transparent and accountable, and to provide better and faster service and communications to its community.</p> <p>Council will use social media to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deliver efficient and effective services. • promote, inform, and educate the community on policies, projects, services, and the activities of Council. • develop strong relationships within the community. • provide an informal, timely, and accessible way for the community to contact and communicate with Council. • support traditional media methods by broadening Council's reach and supporting key messages. • seek input into Council's decision-making processes.

Purpose	Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide essential updates during a crisis or emergency.
Management of Social Media	Council will strive to efficiently manage and monitor its social media presence during normal office hours.
Responsibility of all Council Social Media Users	<p>Social media users have the following responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure any information is developed, approved, and shared in accordance with this Policy. ensure any information about Council is accurate and factual. reference only publicly available information such as information that is already found on Council's website or in authorised publications. ensure any information about Council is not disparaging of the organisation, its councillors, its staff, or others. ensure material that is obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, discriminatory or hateful to another person or entity is not posted, or is removed if posted by a user. be polite, professional, and ethical in all social media interactions. be respectful when there are differences of opinion. be accountable for what you say and do when using social media.
Councillors engaging on social media	<p>Councillors have a responsibility to ensure their use of social media is appropriate. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> making it clear they are expressing their personal opinion and not purporting to represent Council, unless they have been authorised to do so by the Mayor or General Manager. not using Council platforms as a forum for political debate or making comments that may impact on the Council's reputation. actively sharing Council posts for the purposes of promoting initiatives and projects.

Purpose	Description
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> not releasing information before the Council has distributed it through its official channels.
Staff engaging on social media	<p>Staff representing Council on social media are required to have the appropriate authority to do so.</p> <p>Council recognises that staff may wish to use social media in a personal capacity. Staff are personally responsible for content they publish on any form of social media.</p> <p>Everyone should ensure their personal comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> cannot be mistaken for the official view of Council, does not impact on Council's reputation, do not offer views on councillors or other staff members, or affect a staff member performing their role with Council.
Posting	<p>Content on Council's social media sites will where appropriate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> also be available on Council's website, include links directing users back to the Council website for in depth information, documents, forms, or online services necessary to conduct business with Council. include posts to third party sites for information, promotion, or service delivery activity or to provide factual clarification in response to third party information as it relates to the Council. <p>For reasons of transparency, it must be clear to the reader the person is posting on behalf of the Council. This is to protect both the person posting and the Council. Users must not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> represent themselves as another Council employee or councillor. damage the reputation of Council, its councillors, or staff. disclose any confidential information.
Promoting external content	<p>Information shared from another source is to be clearly linked to the purpose of Council's social media account or it has been determined to be in the community's interest. This may include, but is not limited to posts:</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relating to emergency events, • from Council partners, • by local, state, or federal government bodies, • about community events and initiatives, • recognised national events, and • other items as directed or approved by the Mayor or the General Manager.
Responding	<p>Council will monitor all posts on its social media sites and respond where it determines it is appropriate to do so. It is acknowledged that not all posts on Council’s social media sites are a direct enquiry to Council or necessarily seeking a response.</p> <p>Complaints will be managed in accordance with Council’s Customer Service Charter.</p>
Moderation	<p>Council will not tolerate content that is offensive, obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, bullying, discriminatory, hateful, racist, sexist, infringes copyright, constitutes a contempt of court, breaches a court suppression order, or is otherwise unlawful. Such content when identified will be removed.</p> <p>Posts that make specific mention of confidential material about Council or individuals or mention staff by name on Council’s social media sites may also be removed.</p>
Privacy and confidentiality	<p>Social media users are legally required to respect the privacy of residents, for example by refraining from publishing personal details.</p> <p>Users should not publish or report on conversations or information that is deemed confidential or commercial-in-confidence.</p> <p>Council will monitor its social media sites for the publication of potentially private or confidential information by visitors.</p>
Defamation	<p>Social media users should not publish material which may cause injury to another person/s, organisation/s, association/s or a company/s reputations.</p> <p>Any potential defamatory comments identified will be removed.</p>

Purpose	Description
Copyright	Council will respect copyright, privacy and other applicable laws when publishing on social media platforms. Social media users should attribute work to the original author/source wherever possible.

4 Responsibility

Role	Responsibilities
Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and comply with the provisions of this policy. • Seek training and development for using social media. • Seek advice from the General Manager if unsure about applying the provisions of this policy. • Seek approval before using any Council branding on any social media platform.
General Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures that the Council's use of social media complies with the intent and requirements of this policy. • Educate councillors and staff about this policy and their responsibilities when using social media. • Seek legal advice as appropriate where an issue is likely to be contentious and/or may create legal risk for Council.
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek advice and approval from relevant Team Leader to incorporate social media in communication strategies/plans. • Understand and comply with the requirements of this policy. • Maintain records of use of social media related to Council activities to the extent practicable. • Seek advice from Team Leaders if unsure about applying any of the provisions of this policy. • Be familiar with the End User Licence Agreements of any external social media tools being used.
Team Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide advice and assist with the development of communication strategies/plans using social media. • Approve any business strategies/plans which incorporates the use of social media. • Ensure staff consult and obtain appropriate approvals for their planned use of social media.

Role	Responsibilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer regular training and updates for staff who are using social media. • Monitor social media accounts/tools/sites registered for conducting Council business.
IT Resourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the Council IT Network remains secure. • Regularly back up and archive internally hosted social media sites.
Business Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise appropriate precautions e.g. disclaimers. • Assist staff to retain some record which explains the context or purpose of social media, and a sample of posts where it is impractical to retain large volumes of screen grabs.

5 Associated Documents and References

5.1 Local Government Act 1993 Reference

There are no specific social media references in the *Local Government Act 1993*. However, the Act provides a Council is to communicate with its community in an open and transparent manner. Using social media is one tool which allows Council to meet its obligations.

5.2 Other Legislation Reference

The following State and Federal Legislation may be deemed as relevant to this policy:

Defamation Act 2005

Right to Information Act 2009

Public Interest Disclosures Act 2002

Personal Information Protection Act 2004

Anti-Discrimination Act 1998

Disability Discrimination Act 1992

Age Discrimination Act 2004

Sex Discrimination Act 1984

Racial Discrimination Act 1975

5.3 Strategic Plan Reference

Program Objective	1	Governance
	1.2	Provide consistent, accountable, transparent and effective governance
Activity	1.2.7	Communicate the rationale and outcome of Council's decisions, policies and activities through appropriate communication channels

APPROVED BY COUNCIL: 10 July 2023 Minute: 12.1

EFFECTIVE DATE: 10 July 2023

ADMINISTERED BY: Team Leader Community & Economic Development

This policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure its relevance in terms of community needs and expectations and Council goals, targets, budget and statutory requirements.