



Policy No. 2025 - 67

Social Media Policy

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide understanding and guidance for the appropriate use of social media and applies to Councillors, employees, contractors, agents and volunteers of Council when acting in an official capacity and / or representing Council on social media platforms and in digital spaces.

This policy applies to the use of social media for:

- the purpose of conducting council business and when representing Council; and
- personal use where reference is made to Councillors, staff, policies and services, suppliers or other stakeholders or council-related issues.

The intent of this policy is to provide guidance on the appropriate use of social media platforms and tools in order to enable and encourage its use by Councillors, employees, contractors, agents and volunteers for the purpose of conducting council business.

The policy aims to:

- Promote effective and productive community engagement through social media;
- Provide guidance about the appropriate use of social media tools;
- Reduce the likelihood of miscommunication or inappropriate communications;
- Help manage new challenges associated with social media such as speed and immediacy, record keeping, artificial intelligence (AI), privacy and security;
- Provide clarity about roles and responsibilities in relation to use, approval and monitoring.

2. Scope

This policy applies to Councillors, employees, contractors, agents and volunteers of Council who purport to use social media on behalf of Council. This policy will also apply to agencies and individuals who provide services to Council and will be included in all relevant external supplier contracts.

The policy applies to all current and future social media tools and channels where people comment, view, contribute, create, forward, post, upload and share content, such as:

- Blogs, forums, discussion and bulletin boards, and citizen journalism and news sites which facilitate public comment;
- Social networking sites (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Pinterest);
- Podcasts, video podcasts and video sharing sites (Flickr, YouTube, Vimeo);

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- Instant messaging tools (Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp);
- Online encyclopaedias (e.g. Wikipedia);
- Online and internal collaboration platforms (e.g. Yammer, Wiki, Slack);
- Any other websites that allow individuals to use simple publishing tools or new technologies emerging from the digital environment.

As it is not possible to expressly refer to or list all specific sites or kinds of social media activity, the absence of a reference does not limit the application of this policy.

Limited personal use of social media is permitted during paid working hours provided it is incidental. Use must not affect the expected levels of performance and productivity, output and work responsibilities, and must comply with relevant policies.

3. Legislative and Policy Framework

Councillors and staff are expected to demonstrate standards of conduct and behaviour that are consistent with relevant legislation, regulations and policies. A list of relevant legislation which may be used as a guide is included in Appendix A.

This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies and procedures of Council. Policies and guideline provisions which must be adhered to in relation to the use of social media include the following:

- 2014 - 20 Media Policy
- 2014 - 30 Privacy (Personal Information) Policy
- 2015 – 37 Information Management (Recordkeeping) Policy
- 2016 – 42 Model Code of Conduct
- 2017 – 51 Staff Code of Conduct Policy
- 2018 – 55 Code of Conduct for Members of the Audit Panel
- 2019 – 56 Cyber Security Policy
- 2024 – 64 Respectful Relationship Policy

4. Policy Statement

Council encourages the appropriate and professional use of social media to aid the efficient and effective conduct of Council business.

Social media is recognised as an important channel, used in conjunction with traditional methods, to communicate, listen to, engage and collaborate with the community and enhance the delivery of services.

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At all times, use of social media by Councillors and staff should be done in a professional manner, in accordance with relevant policies and legislation, and consistent with the values of Council.

5. Social Media Standards and Expectations

Staff will have access to Council social media platforms for business purposes as per responsibilities within their position descriptions or by approval of the General Manager.

When using social media, ensure that you:

- Adhere to Council's codes of conduct, policies and procedures;
- Behave with courtesy, honesty and respect;
- Comply with relevant laws and regulations;
- Reinforce the integrity, reputation and values of Council;
- Ensure communications are professional, accessible and demonstrate a standard of conduct and behaviour that is consistent with the code of conduct, relevant legislation, regulations and policies.

5.1. Use

Speak how you would like to be spoken to

- Be courteous, patient and respectful of others' opinions, including detractors;
- Use your own voice, but be mindful of language and expression;
- Don't make statements or forward, share or upload content that is malicious, defamatory or may negatively impact the reputation of another;
- Be mindful of anti-discrimination laws and do not publish statements or information which may be discriminatory.

Refer to Appendix B for guidance on how to respond to social media comments.

Stick to the facts

- Only comment about matters within your area of expertise;
- Be accurate, constructive, helpful and informative, and correct any errors as soon as practicable;
- Only publish content and statements that you know are true, clear and not likely to mislead or deceive;
- If you make an error, be up front and correct it quickly.

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Keep your opinion, beliefs and political views separate from Council business

- Only publish content on Council's social media channels that is apolitical, in line with official Council positions and Council values, and free from personal opinions, beliefs and political views;
- Council staff using private social media channels outside of work hours to comment about Council-related matters should clearly identify their comments as their own personal opinions, be accurate and factual and not disparage Council, councillors, employees or contractors etc;
- Councillors should use social media in accordance with Policy No. 2016 – 42 Model Code of Conduct. All Councillors social media accounts should have a prominent statement that clearly identifies they are not speaking on behalf of Council. In expressing individual views, Councillors must do so in a way that does not undermine the community's trust or confidence in Council and maintains respectful relationship with fellow Councillors and staff.

Stay within your level of authorisation

- Only use social media channels in the manner for which you have been authorised and do not commit Council to actions or undertakings beyond your delegation;
- Leave formal statements and announcements to the official spokespeople and if you are unsure, check with your manager;
- Refer any media enquiries via social media or posts about potentially sensitive/political issues to the General Manager for a response in line with Council's Media Policy.

Be fair and transparent

- Be clear about your professional identity and any vested interests and refrain from covert, anonymous or deceitful representation including via a third party;
- Encourage open, honest and transparent engagement and feedback by the online community;
- Refrain from any behaviour which could be seen as biased, showing undue favour or in response to real or perceived compensation or reward.

Maintain confidentiality and respect the privacy and property of others

- Only discuss publicly available information and maintain the confidentiality of internal discussions, confidential decisions of Council, and personal or private information about Councillors, employees or third parties;

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- Seek permission from anyone who appears in any photographs, video or other footage before sharing via any form of social media and, if asked to remove materials, do so as soon as practicable;
- Only use or reproduce copyright material, or the intellectual property of others, including applications, sound recordings (speeches, songs), footage (video), graphics (graphs, charts and logos), images, artwork, photographs, publications or music if you have permission from the creator or owner and ensure they are acknowledged.

Be responsible, accessible and responsive

- Appropriately monitor any social media sites created and ensure they can be easily edited, improved or removed. Ensure that inappropriate content is removed in a timely manner;
- Specify the type of comments and feedback that will receive a response and clearly communicate a target response time. Refer to Appendix B for guidance on how to respond to social media comments;
- Make it easy for audiences to reach Council via other methods by publishing Council's phone number, generic email, address and other social media contact methods
- Ensure information on social media meets government web standards for accessibility and/or is available in another form where practical;
- Do not use social media when inebriated, irritated, upset or tired;
- Protect your personal privacy and guard against identity theft.

Uphold acceptable content standards

Under no circumstances is the following content permitted on Council social media channels. If found, you must formally report, record and then delete it immediately:

- Abusive, profane or sexual language;
- Discriminatory material in relation to a person or group based on age, colour, creed, disability, family status, gender identity, nationality, marital status, parental status, political opinion / affiliation, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, race or social origin, religious beliefs/activity, responsibilities, sex or sexual orientation;
- Illegal material or materials designed to encourage law breaking;
- Materials that could compromise council, employees or system safety;
- Materials which would breach applicable laws (defamation, privacy, trade practices, copyright, financial rules and regulations, fair use, trademarks);
- Confidential information about council or third parties;

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- Material that would offend contemporary standards of taste and decency;
- Material which would bring the council into disrepute;
- Personal details or references to Councillors, staff or third parties, which may be inconsistent with Policy No. 2014 - 30 Privacy (Personal Information) Policy;
- Spam, meaning the distribution of unsolicited bulk electronic messages;
- Statements which may be considered to be bullying or harassment.

If you have any doubt about applying the provisions of this policy, check with the General Manager before using social media to communicate. Depending upon the nature of the issue and potential risk, it may also be appropriate to consider seeking legal advice in accordance with Policy No. 2013 - 11 Legal Opinions Policy.

5.2. Management

Approval

The establishment of new social media sites must be approved by the Department Manager. Approval of new social media sites should consider the identified business objective, audience, proposed use in line with this policy, resourcing requirements and ensure alignment with Council's branding and style guidelines.

Security

To protect from unauthorised use of Council's social media channels, login information should be kept secure and changed at regular intervals:

- Choose a strong password of at least 12 characters long, includes a mix of uppercase and lowercase letters, numbers, and special symbols, and is unique to each account. Avoid using easily guessable information like names or common words;
- Store login information in a secure location;
- It's recommended to change passwords every 60 to 90 days for standard user accounts, while highly privileged accounts may require more frequent changes;
- Remove administrator access to any Council social media channels immediately when the relevant staff member ceases employment with the organisation.

Monitoring

Council's social media channels should be regularly monitored and maintained to ensure appropriate use. Ensure that inappropriate content is removed in a timely manner. Where

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necessary keep formal records of social media activity in line with Policy No. 2015 – 37 Information Management (Recordkeeping) Policy.

Council and non-council social media channels should be monitored for information, research and insight into issues circulating in the community and/or matters that impact on the municipality, its operations or reputation.

Evaluation and continuous improvement

Use of council's social media channels should be reviewed at regular intervals to ensure they are achieving business objectives and to seek opportunities for further improvement. This includes review of qualitative (feedback, comments) and quantitative data (engagement, audience composition, click throughs to Council websites etc.).

6. Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Councillors	• Understand and comply with the provisions in this policy and Policy No. 2016 – 42 Model Code of Conduct; • Seek training and development for using social media; • Seek advice from the General Manager if unsure about applying the provisions of this policy; • Ensure appropriate records management practices are in line with Policy No. 2015 – 37 Information Management (Recordkeeping) Policy; • Seek approval before using any Council branding on social media; • Familiarise yourself with the End User Licence Agreements of any external social media tools being used.
General Manager	• 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 or may create legal risk for Council.
Managers	• 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; • Ensure contractors are provided with a copy of the social media policy and access revoked at the cessation of the contract;

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	• Include social media responsibilities in staff position descriptions if relevant; • Offer training for staff using social media; • Monitor social media accounts/tools/sites registered for conducting Council business; • Ensure processes are in place to remove access to Council's social media channels for relevant staff at the end of their employment.
Staff, contractors and volunteers	• Seek approval from your manager for business strategy incorporating social media; • Seek authorisation from General Manager on using social media and developing a communications plan to support business strategy; • Seek approval before using any Council branding on social media; • Seek training and development for using social media; • Understand and comply with the provisions in this policy; • Ensure appropriate records management practices are in line with Policy No. 2015 – 37 Information Management (Recordkeeping) Policy; • Seek advice from Department Manager if unsure about applying the provisions of this policy; • Ensure contractors are provided with a copy of this policy; • Familiarise yourself with the End User Licence Agreements of any external social media tools being used.
IT Contractor	• Facilitate secure access to support delivery of Council business via social media; • Regularly back up and archive internally hosted social media sites;

7. Adherence to Policy

Council reserves the right, for legal compliance purposes, to monitor social media usage on its systems without advance notice and consistent with any applicable state, federal or international laws.

Council will actively monitor social media for relevant contributions that impact on the Council, its operations and reputation, and remove, where possible, content that violates this policy or any associated policies.

Any staff found breaching this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, performance management and/or review. Serious breaches may result in suspension or termination of employment or association in accordance with Council policies. Any content that breaches the policy guidelines will be recorded and kept on personnel records.

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For Councillors, breaching this policy may result in a code of conduct complaint.

If Councillors or staff become aware of any comments that breach these guidelines they should report them to the General Manager and include a link or reference to the offending material.

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Appendix A – Relevant Legislation

Councillors and staff are expected to demonstrate standards of conduct and behaviour that are consistent with relevant legislation, regulations and policies.

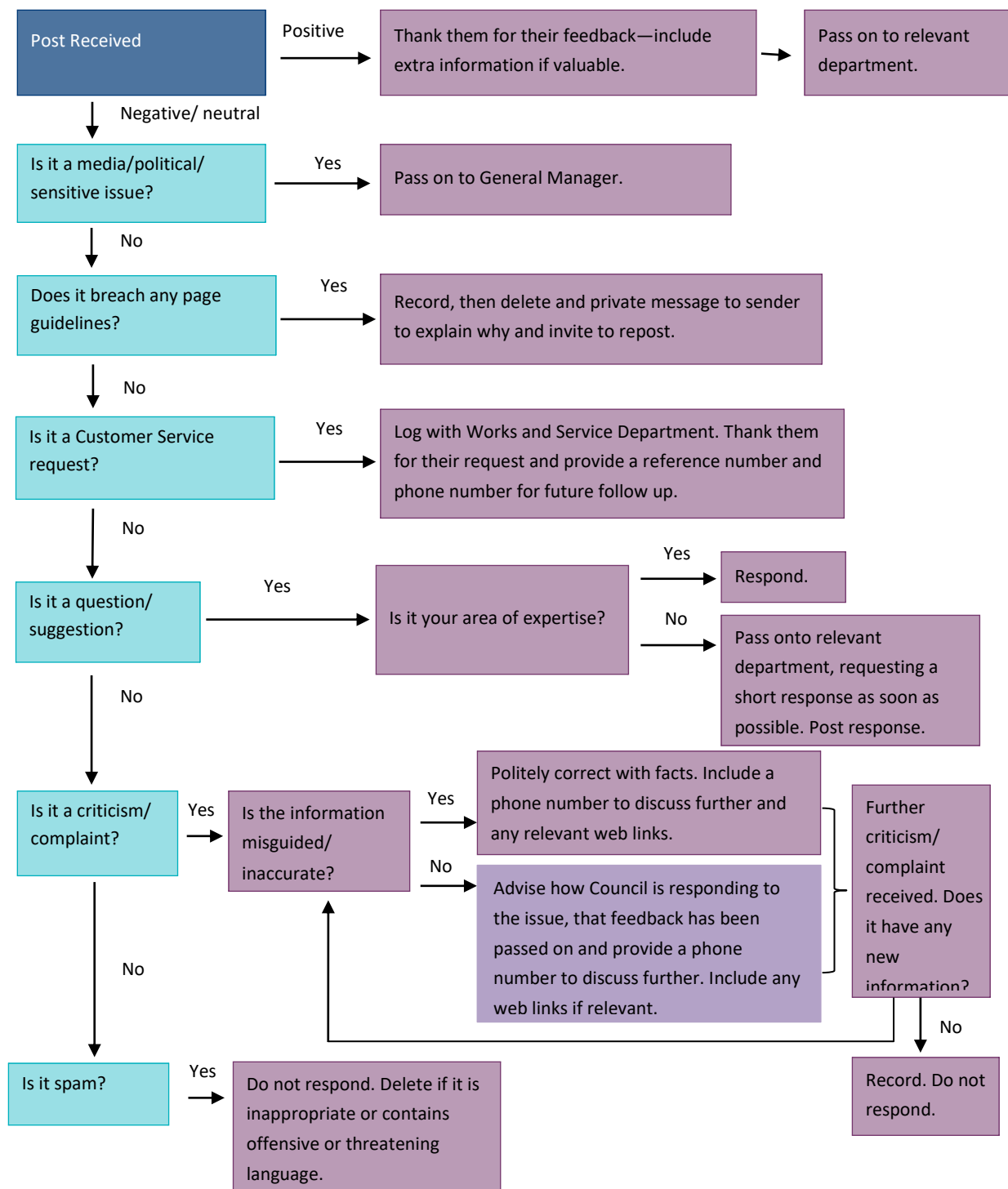
Relevant legislation includes, but is not limited to the following:

- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1998*
- *Australian Consumer Law Act 2010*
- *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)*
- *Archives Act 1983*
- *Civil Liability Act 2002*
- *Copyright Act 1968 (Cth)*
- *Criminal Code Act 1995*
- *Defamation Act 2005*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*
- *Fair Work Act 2009*
- *Local Government Act 1993*
- *Online Safety Act 2021*
- *Personal Information Protection Act 2004*
- *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)*
- *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2002*
- *Right to Information Act 2009*
- *Spam Act 2003 (Cth)*

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Appendix B – Response Guide

A guide for deciding which posts need a response and in what manner.



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