
Social Media Policy

Administration Policy

July 2022






Northern Grampians Shire Council
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Social Media Policy

Administration Policy

Responsible director	Director Corporate and Community Services
Responsible officer	Manager Governance
Functional area	Media and Communications
Date adopted by ELT	28 March 2018
Review date	1 July 2026

Purpose

The policy and associated *Social Media Guidelines* will provide understanding and guidelines for appropriate and consistent use of Northern Grampians Shire Council (Council) social media platforms and tools across the organisation for the purpose of conducting business, promoting effective and productive community engagement, and minimising miscommunication, reputational risk and legal action.

Background

Council recognises that social media provides opportunities for dynamic and interactive two-way communications which can complement existing communication and further improve access to information, and delivery of services.

The principles that underpin our social media engagement align with other Council communication channels including email, website, media and public presentations.

Social media also presents new opportunities, challenges and risks for Council, specifically:

- new opportunities to engage directly with interested stakeholders and community members
- rapid distribution of council messages to council's social accounts followers and then widespread dissemination of these messages via a multiplier effect, enabling information to be viewed in very short timeframes
- potential for misinformation, privacy breaches, circulation of information without consent and potential for defamation and misrepresentation of Council by staff, councillors or general public commenting or posting on our social media feeds
- unhelpful or insensitive political commentary that could harm our working relationships with all tiers of government or any of our stakeholders.

Policy

The policy applies to any stakeholder who elects to make personal comment regarding Council business via their personal social media platforms.

Only the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) are authorised to use their personal social media accounts to comment on behalf of the organisation in an official capacity.

Before using social media for work purposes stakeholders must undertake basic social media training provided by the Media and Communications Officer.

All enquiries by the media for comment are to be directed to the Media and Communications Team.

All social media content published must be appropriate as directed by this policy and the following principles determine appropriate content for publishing on social media platforms.

- **Authorisation** - Approval from the CEO or Media and Communications Officer must be obtained prior to using social media, including but not limited to uploading content and acting as a spokesperson on behalf of the Council.
- **Defamation** - Stakeholders must not contribute, create, forward, post, upload or share content that is malicious or defamatory or which may negatively impact the reputation of Council or another.
- **Expertise** - Stakeholders must not
 - comment outside their area of expertise
 - commit Council to actions or undertakings
 - issue statements or make announcements unless authorised
 - respond directly if approached by media for comment through social media.
- **Disclosure** - Only publicly available information must be discussed. Confidential information, internal discussions and decisions made by Councillors, employees or third parties must not be disclosed or published without approval.
- **Accuracy** - Content must be accurate, constructive, helpful and informative and relate to the subject matter. Information or statements known to be false, misleading or deceptive must not be published.
- **Identity** - Fictitious or misleading names must not be used and unsolicited bulk electronic messages (Spam) must not be distributed.
- **Opinion** - Personal opinion must be clearly separate from professional opinion.
- **Privacy** - Privacy of others must be protected and stakeholders must not release personal details or references to Councillors, Council staff or third parties, which may breach privacy laws.
- **Intellectual property** - Copyright or trademark protected materials are not permitted, except where allowed through fair usage.
- **Reward** - Content must not be published in exchange for reward of any kind.
- **Transparency** - Favourable social media commentary must not be bought or recompensed.
- **Political bias** - Stakeholders must not endorse any political affinity or allegiance.
- **Respect** - Always be cautious, courteous, honest and respectful of others' opinions, including detractors. If any situation makes you feel uncomfortable, eg someone disagrees with your views or becomes hostile towards you, seek advice.
- **Discrimination** - Be mindful of anti-discrimination laws and statements or information which may be discriminatory must not be published.
- **Language** - Be mindful of language and expression. Abusive, profane or sexual language or statements which may be considered to be bullying or harassment must not be used.
- **State of Mind** - Social media must not be used when irritated, upset or tired.
- **Be safe** – Protect your personal privacy and guard against identity theft. Materials that could compromise the Council, employee or system safety must not be posted.

- **Modification and moderation** - Social media sites created or contributed must be easily edited, improved or removed and appropriately moderated. The CEO reserves the right to remove, where possible, content that violates this policy or any associated policies.
- **Access** - Refer all requests for access to information posted on social media to the Media and Communications Officer.
- **Be Responsive** - Specify the type of comments and feedback that will receive a response and clearly communicate a target response time. Make it easy for audiences to reach the Council via other methods by publishing the Council's phone number, generic email and social media accounts.

Additional information for these principles is detailed in the *Social Media Guidelines*.

Council Plan Objective/Strategy

Council Plan 2021-2025 Improve Organisational Effectiveness – Being a better council

Legislation and Standards

The policy outlines requirements for confidentiality, governance, legal, privacy and regulatory parameters when using social media and is consistent with standards of conduct and behaviour within relevant legislation, regulations and policies.

Responsibilities

Responsibility for the policy is overseen by the Manager Governance.

All stakeholders are responsible for their own actions and any content they publish. When using Council social media stakeholders must:

- Seek prior authorisation
- Participate in basic social media training
- Adhere to Council policies and procedures
- Behave with caution, courtesy, honesty and respect
- Comply with relevant laws and regulations
- Reinforce the integrity, reputation and values of the Council.

Specific roles and responsibilities are further outlined in the table below.

Role	Responsibilities
Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register social media account/tools/site (Mayor) with the Media and Communications Officer • Undertake training before commencing use • Seek advice on social media content from the Media and Communications Officer • Understand and comply with the provisions in this policy • Seek advice from Director Corporate and Community Services if unsure about applying the provisions of this policy • Mayor to investigate and take action if reported breach of policy relates to the CEO
CEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive and take decisive action for breaches of the policy.
Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve business strategy incorporating use of social media • Ensure staff discuss their planned use of social media with their Manager and Media and Communications Officer • Ensure contractors are provided with a copy of this policy.
Employees / Contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek approval from relevant manager and support from the Media and Communications Officer for business strategy incorporating social media • Seek advice from the Media and Communications Officer on using social media and undertake training before commencing use

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask Media and Communications Officer to register social media account/tools/site and seek approval for Council branding • Seek advice on social media content from the Media and Communications Officer • Understand and comply with the provisions in this policy • Seek advice from the Media and Communications Officer if unsure about applying the provisions of this policy • Ensure questions and feedback requests are acknowledged and attended to where delays to responses are expected • Determine if a response is more appropriately handled outside social media (via email, phone, etc.) • Register official Council posts into the EDRMS • Report alleged or actual breach of the policy to the Manager People and Culture as it becomes an alleged or actual breach of the Code of Conduct for Staff.
BT Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate secure access to support delivery of Council business via social media
Media and Communications Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide assistance or advice with the setup, administration, training, monitoring or statistical analysis of a social media account • Provide advice and assist with the development of communication plans and social media content • Educate stakeholders about their responsibilities when using social media • Advise appropriate precautions eg disclaimers and privacy collection statements • Maintain a record of social media being used for conducting Council business including administrator, URL, login and password details (with the exception of LinkedIn) • Monitor social media accounts/tools/sites registered for conducting Council business • Monitor social media for references to the Northern Grampians Shire Council • Support staff to develop appropriate social media responses • Liaise with Manager Governance regarding legal advice as appropriate where an issue is likely to be contentious or may create legal risk for Council.
Manager People and Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive and investigate alleged or actual breaches of the Policy and refer them to the CEO to take decisive action.

Stakeholders

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

Review

Monitoring and regular assessment of the policy are necessary to ensure the policy remains current with the Council's goals, processes, aims and requirements.

Assessment of the policy will be undertaken every four years to ensure it remains current with the Council's goals, processes, aims and requirements and as a means by which to reduce Council's exposure to risk. Triggers for an earlier assessment include legislative changes and introduction of new systems or procedures.

Communication and implementation

The policy will be published and communicated to stakeholders and made available in the EDRMS, induction and social media training.

References

Social Media Guidelines

Staff Code of Conduct

Councillor Code of Conduct

ICT Acceptable Use Policy

Privacy & Data Protection and Health Records Policy

Occupational Health & Safety Policy

Records Management Policy

Compliance

- ✓ *Local Government Act 2020*
- ✓ *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*
- ✓ *Freedom of Information Act 1982*

Privacy and Data Protection compliance

The policy has considered the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* and the *Victorian Protective Data Security (VPDSS) Standards* which adopt a risk-based approach to protective data security. The policy includes identified privacy risks and governance arrangements in place to protect unlawful disclosure of personal information.

Charter of Human Rights compliance

It is considered that this policy does not impact on any human rights identified in the *Charter of Human Rights & Responsibilities Act 2006*.

Gender Equality Act 2020

There are no gender equality implications identified in this policy. Councils must consider where relevant gender equality principles, workplace gender equality of rights, opportunities, responsibilities and outcomes and the promotion of gender equality in the policies, programs and services it delivers.

Charter of Human Rights compliance

It is considered that this policy does not impact on any [human rights](#) identified in the *Charter of Human Rights & Responsibilities Act 2006*.

Definitions

Social media describes applications and other tools that people can use to build online profiles and share content, opinions, insights, experiences and perspectives in the online environment. These tools allow people to comment, contribute, create, forward, post, upload and share content. People use *social media* to interact online and for instant messaging and sharing content. Examples of social media content includes blogs, videos, photography, web links and podcasts. There is a plethora of social media networking sites available and the way in which people can interact on these sites is evolving constantly. Council uses Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Instagram.

Review history

Date	Review details	Action
28.3.2018	ELT review	ELT adoption
July 2022	Four yearly review, included GEA	Minor changes only, N/A