

Social Media Policy

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1. Purpose

To support Council's use of social media and ensure that it remains a tool which compliments traditional communication channels and fosters two-way communication between Council and the community.

The key objectives of this policy are:

- To ensure the effective utilisation of social media channels to communicate with residents and visitors.
- To clearly identify the roles and responsibilities of an Administrator, Councillors, Council staff and volunteers in respect to their use of social media.
- To support a proactive approach to Council's communication activities.

2. Background

Federation Council recognises the importance of providing information to the community relating to Council activities, programs, events, services and initiatives.

The use of social media is becoming an increasingly popular way of connecting with the community and providing information in a timely and cost effective way.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all Administrators, Councillors, Council staff, Section 355 committee members and Council volunteers when engaging in the use of social media.

4. Definitions

The following definitions are provided for the purpose of this policy.

Communications team - This team includes the Communications Officer & General Manager.

Social Media - A collection of internet based tools that facilitate conversations. Social media can take many forms, including;

- Social networking sites (such as Facebook and LinkedIn, Google+).
- Video and photosharing (YouTube, Flickr, Instagram).
- Blogs.
- Micro-blogging (Twitter).
- Forums, discussion boards and groups (Google groups, hangout).
- Wikis (Wikipedia, wikispaces).
- Vodcasts and Podcasts.
- Instant messaging and chat services.

Officer of the Council - All staff (including volunteers, contractors, casual and part time employees), Administrators and Councillors.

5. References & Associated Document

5.1 Relevant Legislation:

- Defamation Act 2005
- Privacy Act 1988

5.2 Relevant Council Policies:

- Code of Conduct
- Business Ethics Policy
- Delegations of Authority Policy
- Computer Internet Use Policy
- Media Policy and Protocols

6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 Authorised social media officers

Communications Team

The communications team is responsible for the management of Council's social media activities (with the exception of the Corowa Visitor Information Centre accounts) in accordance with the relevant guidelines developed for each platform.

The communications team will support staff who wish to promote their activities, services, programs or events to the community through social media.

Visitor Information Centre staff

The Visitor Information Centre staff are responsible for the management of all tourism social media accounts, however must adhere to the relevant guidelines developed for each platform.

Council staff

All Council staff (including volunteers, contractors, casual and part time employees) are required to comply with this policy and related Council policies and legislation.

This policy does not apply to the personal use of social media when no reference or inference is made to Federation Council. However, staff must ensure their personal comments cannot be seen as an official comment of Council.

Staff should not respond in an official capacity to comments or questions raised on Council's social media accounts.

Administrator or Councillors

This policy does not apply to an Administrator or Councillors who wishes to present their personal views or political position using social media. However, they must clearly identify their comments do not represent the official position of Council.

An Administrator or Councillor should not respond in an official capacity to comments or questions raised on Council's social media accounts.

7. Social Media Management Procedures

Only authorised social media officers may post content or comment on behalf of Federation Council via official social media platforms.

7.1 Content

Council's social media accounts can be utilised by all departments within the organisation to inform the community about the activities of Council.

Social media accounts will be used to communicate the following;

- public notices.
- construction works, including notifications when these works would impact on residents.
- council events and programs.
- outcomes of Council meetings and decisions (where appropriate).
- community meetings and opportunities to provide input into decision making processes.
- emergency alerts and information.

They will not be used;

- to promote individual businesses.
- to post general community information not related to the activities of the Council.
- to lodge customer requests or complaints.

7.2 Content development

- The information required to be communicated should be drafted by the responsible officer and provided to the Communications Officer where possible, 5 working days in advance of the required release date.
- A call to action should be provided for each post.
- The responsible officer is required to ensure that the relevant Director is aware of their intention to utilise social media to communicate information relevant to the department.
- Social media posts will approved by the Communications Officer and/or General Manager. This will depend on the nature of the post and the content.
- The communication team will provide the responsible officer with a summary of the interactions that result from the post. This summary must be filed in accordance with Council's record management practices.

7.3 Inappropriate content or behaviour

Federation Council will not permit content on its social media accounts that;

- includes language or remarks that are racist, sexist, abusive, obscene or otherwise offensive.
- is defamatory towards a member of staff, Administrator, Councillor, individual or group within the community.

- contains information that is inaccurate, deceptive or misleading.
- is potentially unlawful or violates the intellectual property right of another.
- includes advertising materials or any content that sells any good or services, any surveys, contents, chain letters, spam or other unsolicited commercial messages.

Council reserves the right to remove inappropriate material and block users who breach any of the above guidelines.

7.4 Customer requests and complaints

Council's social media accounts are not considered a primary method of contact and as such, should not be used to lodge customer requests or complaints.

To ensure that customer requests or complaints are lodged and actioned appropriately in accordance with Council's Customer Service Charter, social media accounts will stipulate the following methods for lodging customer requests or complaints:

- Lodge a request or issue online via Council's [website](#).
- Call Council on (02) 6033 8999.
- Email council@federationcouncil.nsw.gov.au
- Use the free **Snap Send Solve** app on your iPhone or Android device.

Customer requests or complaints detailed on Council's social media accounts will not be actioned.

8. Personal Use of Social Media

An officer of the Council should at all times be aware that their personal use of social media and comments made regarding Council and the community are connected to the organisation and can be perceived as an official comment of Council. Council's Code of Conduct applies to the use of Social Media.

Officers should be mindful that their personal use of social media can be associated with their employment at Council and as such, can impact on the image and reputation of the organisation.

Personal use of social media during work hours should be kept to a minimum and should never interfere with the performance of duties.

Generally, when using social media staff should:

- Take measures to ensure personal comments are not perceived as official comments.
- Not disclose confidential information relevant to their role.
- Act lawfully.
- Not post defamatory, disrespectful or deliberately misleading comments.

Failure to adhere to Council's Code of Conduct and Computer Users Policy may result in disciplinary action. Please refer to these policies separately for further guidelines.

9. Defamation

Council staff, Administrator, Councillors and users (including the public) of Federation Council social media channels should be aware of defamation laws when commenting in social media.

As a guide, under Defamation Act 2005, published material that identifies a person (not necessarily by name) and meets any of the below criteria may be considered defamatory:

1. Exposes a person to ridicule, or
2. Lowers the person's reputation in the eyes of members of the community, or
3. Causes people to shun or avoid the person, or
4. Injures the person's professional reputation.

Council will apply a 'no tolerance' approach to material that is defamatory.

10. Privacy

Council's Privacy Management Plan applies to the use of social media. Please refer to this document separately for further guidelines.

11. Records Management

Comments and interactions that take place on Council's social media accounts are deemed to be official records, as per the State Records Act 1998.

As such, it is the responsibility of all staff to ensure that content relevant to their respective area is appropriately recorded in Council's record management system.

12. Policy History

Version	Date	Changes / Amendments
Version 1	13 May 2016	Development of policy (Council Resolution 02/16FC).
Version 2	9 August 2017	Update responsible department details.

13. Reviews

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis or as deemed necessary by Council, the communications team or Manex.

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