



SHIRE COUNCIL
Blayney

Social Media Policy

Policy	8B
Officer Responsible	Director Corporate Services
Last Review Date	16/04/2018

Strategic Policy

Objective

To provide guidance to employees, Councillors and other representatives of the Blayney Shire Council when using social media platforms. This policy will outline responsibilities and outline associated risks to Council in the use of social media in a professional environment and the potential impact of adverse personal use of social media on Council.

Definitions

In this policy the following definitions apply:

Social media internet-based tools for sharing or discussing information. It relates to user-generated information, opinion or other content shared over open digital networks.

Social media may include (although is not limited to):

- social networking sites (eg: Facebook, Twitter)
- video and photo sharing websites (eg: Flickr, Youtube)
- blogs, including corporate blogs and personal blogs
- Wikipedia and other online collaborations (e.g. wiki's)
- forums, discussion boards and groups (eg: Google and Yahoo groups)
- podcasting

Public Domain the state of belonging or being available to the public as a whole, especially through not being subject to council confidentiality, copyright or other legal restrictions.

Authorised Representative a person who is otherwise empowered under law or delegation to exercise any functions as an agent of or in the best interests of Council.

PROFESSIONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Becoming authorised to comment

- To be authorised to comment or be an authorised spokesperson, employees must have the explicit approval of the General Manager.
- To be authorised to comment or be an authorised spokesperson Councillors will be guided by Council's Media Spokesperson Policy.

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

Authorised representatives must:

- Disclose that they are a councillor / employee / contractor of the council, and use only their own identity, unless authorised to use an approved official account
- Disclose and comment only on information classified as public domain information

- Ensure that all content published is accurate and not misleading and complies with all relevant council policies and other relevant requirements
- Ensure comments are respectful of the community in which they are interacting online
- Adhere to the terms of use for using the social media platform or website, and adhere to legislation including copyright, privacy, defamation, contempt of court, discrimination, harassment and any other applicable laws.

Authorised representatives must not:

- Post or respond to material 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
- Use or disclose any confidential or secure information
- Comment or post any material that might otherwise cause damage to council's reputation or bring it into disrepute.

PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

This policy does not discourage nor unduly limit councillors or employees using social media for personal expression or other on-line activities in their personal life.

Users should be aware of and understand the potential risks and damage to council that can occur, either directly or indirectly from their personal use of social media and should comply with this policy to ensure that the risk is minimised.

Users are personally responsible for content published in their personal capacity on any form of social media platform. When in doubt, councillors or employees can seek guidance from council on how to comply with the following obligations.

To avoid breaching this policy councillors and employees must:

- Only disclose and discuss publicly available information
- Ensure that all content published is accurate and not misleading and complies with all relevant council policies
- Expressly state that stated views are personal and are not representative of council
- Behave politely and respectfully
- Adhere to the terms of use for using the social media platform or website, and adhere to legislation including copyright, privacy, defamation, contempt of court, discrimination, harassment and any other applicable laws.

Councillors and employees must not:

- Post material 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

- Imply that they are authorised to speak as a representative of council, nor give the impression that the views expressed are those of council
- Use their council email address or logos or insignia that may give the impression of official support or endorsement of their personal comment
- Use or disclose any confidential information or personal information obtained in their capacity as an employee or contractor of council
- Post material that is, or might be construed as, threatening, harassing, bullying or discriminatory towards another employee or contractor of council
- Comment or post any material that might otherwise cause damage to council's reputation or bring it into disrepute.

Reasonable and unreasonable personal use

- When accessing social media via the council's Internet, employees must do so in accordance with the council's Email and Internet Policy, which requires employees to use these resources 'reasonably', in a manner that does not interfere with work, and is not inappropriate or excessively accessed.
- Usage is acceptable during break times
- Council resources should not be used to access or post any material that is fraudulent, harassing, threatening, bullying, embarrassing, sexually explicit, profane, obscene, racist, sexist, intimidating, defamatory or otherwise inappropriate or unlawful.
- Employees should not use council's Internet and computer resources to provide comments to journalists, politicians and lobby groups other than as authorised in the course of their official duties.
- It is not acceptable to spend time using social media that is not related to your work unless it occurs in your own time (for example during meal breaks) or at times acceptable to your manager.

POLICY BREACHES

Breaches of this policy by employees, Councillors and other representatives will be dealt with under the Council's Code of Conduct.

Related Policies

Policy 1B: Council Code of Conduct

Policy 1D: Communication between Councillors and Staff

Policy 2B: Media Spokesperson Policy

Policy 11B: Records Management

Legislative Context

Local Government Act 1993

Local Government (General) Regulations 2005

State Records Act 1998 No 17

State Records Regulations 2010
Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW)
Privacy and Personal Information Protection Regulation 2005

Adopted:	Date: 08/12/2014	Minute: 1412/004
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