

Policy Title: Social Media

Classification: Communications

Date Adopted by Council

08 February 2017

Council Minute Number

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Effective Date

08 February 2017

Review Date

08 February 2018

Responsible Officer

Communications and Marketing Manager

Responsible Department

Communications and Marketing Department

Revokes:

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NOTE: This cover page is not to be included when submitting a report to a Council meeting

1. Policy Objectives

Council engages in Social Media to provide information on Council initiatives, facilities, services, events and programs. Social Media is considered an important tool for Council to actively engage with our community, providing a place for discussion and active exchange of ideas.

Council also acknowledges that its Staff may use Social Media for professional and Personal Use.

The objectives of this policy are to establish:

- 1.1. a culture of openness, trust and integrity in Council's online activities;
- 1.2. responsibilities and expectations for:
 - (a) professional use of Social Media on behalf of Council.
 - (b) Personal Use of Social Media by Council Staff.

2. Scope and Application

- 2.1. This Policy applies to, and establishes responsibilities and expectations for, Council Staff in their professional and Personal Use of Social Media to the extent stated in the Policy.
- 2.2. Staff should be aware of their responsibilities under this Policy and comply with them.

3. Responsibility

This Policy will be managed by the Communications and Marketing Department.

Queries about the meaning or application of this Policy can be raised with the Communications and Marketing Manager and/or the CEO.

4. Related Documents and Laws

4.1. Creative Commons Licence

The Whitsunday Regional Council Social Media policy is derived from the Department of Justice Social Media Policy which is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported licence. For more information on the licence terms, visit Creative Commons Australia.

<http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/utility/social+media/social+media+policy>

4.2. Relationship with Other Policies

Council also has other policies that may relate to the appropriate use of Social Media including (but not limited to):

- (a) Media Relations Policy;
- (b) Councillor Code of Conduct;

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- (c) Staff Code of Conduct;
- (d) Confidentiality Policy for Councillors;
- (e) Whitsunday Regional Council Corporate Communications Strategy (being developed);
- (f) Harassment Policy;
- (g) ICT Facilities User Policy; and
- (h) IT Access Control Policy.

Staff should ensure that they are also aware of their obligations under and comply with those related policies.

4.3. Legislation

Further, legislation also imposes responsibilities that affect the appropriate use of Social Media, including:

- (a) *Right to Information Act 2009*;
- (b) *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991*; and
- (c) *Work, Health and Safety Act 2011*.

5. Authority and Directions

5.1. Becoming Authorised to Comment

Before engaging in Social Media as a representative of Council, you must become authorised, expressly in writing, to comment by the Communications and Marketing Manager or the CEO.

You may not comment as a representative of the Council unless you have been authorised in accordance with this Policy.

5.2. Primary Responsibility for Council Social Media

The Communications and Marketing Department is generally responsible for all public Social Media platforms on behalf of Council and members of that team are hereby authorised to distribute information and respond to comments and feedback posted on these platforms.

Should a situation arise where Staff are requested to disclose information externally, please consult with an authorised member of the Communications and Marketing Department or the CEO.

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5.3. Directions

The Communications and Marketing Manager or the CEO may issue directions to persons who are authorised to comment as a representative of the Council, addressing issues such as:

- (a) service standards (including turnaround times for responses);
- (b) replying to comments or queries received on Council's Social Media sites;
- (c) when and how content (including comments and queries) is redacted or removed; and
- (d) such other matters as they see fit.

6. Policy Statement - Use of Council Social Media

6.1. Rules of Engagement

Staff who have been expressly, in writing, authorised to comment on behalf of Council (in accordance with this Policy) must adhere to the following guidelines:

- (a) Only publish content that is classified as public information. Staff must not disclose Confidential Information. This includes, but is not limited to, reporting on conversations or information that are deemed confidential, classified or deal with matters of an internal nature;
- (b) All content posted must be accurate and have been approved by the CEO or a member of the Communications and Marketing Department and comply with all relevant Council policies;
- (c) Comments must be respectful of the community and portray the Whitsunday local government area in a positive manner;
- (d) Media releases issued by Council will be posted on appropriate Social Media pages at the discretion of the Communications and Marketing Department, unless authorised by the CEO;
- (e) All content must be evenly distributed, impartial and apolitical. It must not over-promote or bias one service, facility, event etc. over others or promote elected members, specific Staff or projects in a bias manner;
- (f) Not publish announcements that have not received Council approval;
- (g) Engaging in Social Media on behalf of Council on Social Media sites not owned by Council is not permitted, except as approved by the Communications and Marketing Manager or the CEO;
- (h) The CEO and/or authorised members of the Communications and Marketing Department, reserve the right to approve or reject (as they see fit) requests from Staff in relation to content to be posted or promoted on Council's Social Media

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sites. Social Media should be one component of an overall marketing and communication campaign;

- (i) At all times adhere to the terms of use and guidelines associated with the relevant Social Media platform/website and other laws relevant to the use of and/or information being posted on the Social Media site;
- (j) Council's Social Media sites must expressly state that any references or links to other websites, other Social Media pages or the like, on/from the Council Social Media sites (including if they are "liked", "tagged" or "shared") does not constitute publication (or re-publication), endorsement of, or particular affiliation with those sites or any content thereon by the Council. The Council's Social Media site must disclaim Council's responsibility in respect of any content published on such referenced or linked external websites or Social Media pages;
- (k) Ensure that content does not otherwise cause damage to Council's representation or bring it into disrepute (including, indirectly); and
- (l) Council supports the Facebook Statement of Rights and Responsibilities (www.facebook.com/terms.php) and related Facebook policies, and we request that visitors to our page to do the same.

6.2. Comments and Replies

- (a) Comments can be posted by the public on Council's Social Media pages at any time and will be monitored by the Communications and Marketing Department.
- (b) Although Council considers Social Media such as, for example Facebook, to be an informal communication channel, we will endeavour to reply to comments that ask a question about Council, or a matter related to Council.
- (c) Where possible, a response should be coordinated with the relevant department and answered within 24 – 48 hours. However, should a person have a formal request or enquiry, they are encouraged to contact Council on the below:

info@whitsundayrc.qld.gov.au or
Bowen - 4961 6300
Collinsville - 4985 5366
Proserpine - 4945 0200
- (d) Comments received outside of normal business hours (e.g. after-hours, weekends, public holidays) will be acknowledged on the following working day.
- (e) When assessing comments, the following guidelines must be adhered to:
 - (i) Comments by the public are subject to deletion if they are deemed to be offensive, obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, bullying, discriminatory, hateful, racist, sexist, mentions a person by name, reveals any personal or sensitive information about others, infringes copyright,

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constitutes a contempt of court, breaches a court suppression order or is otherwise unlawful;

- (ii) Other comments that may potentially jeopardise Council's financial, legal or operational capacity may be removed on approval by the CEO or the Communications and Marketing Manager; and
- (iii) Comments or posts that are not Council-related may be removed. This includes promotion of commercial services, products or entities.

Users found to be repeatedly engaging in the above activities will be banned from Council's Social Media sites.

6.3. Disaster Management

The Communications and Marketing Department will be actively involved in the Whitsunday Disaster Coordination Centre at all times during activations to monitor and inform the community during times of natural disasters or other disaster event via social media.

Life threatening emergencies and disaster related enquiries received on the Council's Social Media pages will be referred to the relevant agencies within the Whitsunday Disaster Coordination Centre during activation.

6.4. Commenting on Social Media Pages not owned by Council

- (a) Council will not respond to general commentary made by residents on Social Media pages not owned by Council.
- (b) However, Council will respond indirectly through addressing the issue on its own Social Media site/s when the post is considered to:
 - (i) contain defamatory information;
 - (ii) contain incorrect or inaccurate information about Council and/or its services and facilities;
 - (iii) is a matter of high community interest; or
 - (iv) in such other circumstance as considered appropriate by the CEO or the Communications and Marketing Manager.

7. Policy Statement - Personal Use of Social Media by Staff

Council recognises that Staff may wish to use Social Media for Personal Use and this Policy is not intended to discourage or unduly limit your personal expression or online activities.

However, it is important for Staff to recognise the potential for damage to be caused (either directly or indirectly) to Council in certain circumstances – especially via their Personal Use of Social Media when they can be identified as Staff.

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Staff are personally responsible for the content published in a personal capacity on any form of Social Media.

7.1. Guidelines

When using Social Media for Personal Use, Staff must adhere to the following guidelines:

- (a) do not criticise Council or any of its Staff or stakeholders;
- (b) do not disclose or use any Confidential Information (whether obtained in your capacity as Staff or otherwise). Only disclose or discuss publicly available information;
- (c) ensure all content is accurate, not misleading and complies with all relevant Council policies;
- (d) be polite and respectful to all people you interact with;
- (e) do not imply that you are authorised to speak as a representative of Council or give the impression that the views expressed are those of Council. Further, you must not use your Council email address or any Council logos or insignia that may give the impression of official support by Council of your personal comments;
- (f) in any post that identifies you as Staff, you must expressly state that any content is personal views/preferences only and that they do not represent the views of Council;
- (g) do not use the identity or likeness of another Staff member;
- (h) do not post anything which may, in Council's reasonable opinion, affect Council's or the public's trust and confidence in you as Staff;
- (i) do not make comments, use location based services (e.g. check-in), like, 'tag' or share certain pages, 'tag' others or allow others to 'tag' you in photographs, or post any material that might otherwise cause damage to Council's reputation or bring it into disrepute (including indirectly). If Staff are 'tagged' in any such photographs, then they must immediately contact the person who has tagged them and do all things reasonable to be 'untagged';
- (j) when accessing Social Media via Council's internet or intranet (including on Electronic Devices), in a manner that does not interfere with work, and is not inappropriate or excessively accessed;
- (k) it is not acceptable to spend time using Social Media (including from personal or Council Electronic Devices) that is not related to your work unless it occurs in your own time (e.g. during lunch/meal breaks and after work);
- (l) adhere to applicable laws such as copyright, privacy, defamation, contempt of court, discrimination, harassment and other applicable laws as detailed in this Policy, and any other applicable Council policies;

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- (m) adhere to the terms of use and guidelines associated with the relevant Social Media platform/website and other laws relevant to the use of and/or information being posted on the Social Media site;
- (n) Councillors must respect the democratic process and publicly represent Council decisions when speaking on behalf of Council. Reference must be made to the Council's Media Relations Policy; and
- (o) Councillors must not make announcements through Social Media prior to the announcement being made through official corporate channels unless prior approval is sought by the CEO or the Communications and Marketing Department.

Please note that this conduct extends to actions such as "liking" or promoting data or information on Social Media platforms that offends this Policy.

7.2. Security Settings

It is expected that Staff use the highest available level of privacy settings to control access to content on their Social Media sites and always check privacy settings when a Social Media site is redesigned.

8. Photographs

In this clause, a reference to "posting" or 'uploading' or similar includes 'tagging', 'linking', 'sharing' etc.

- (a) Staff should not upload work-related photographs or videos on Council's or personal Social Media sites unless permission is sought from the Communications and Marketing Department. This includes uploading images of Staff wearing council-branded uniforms, such that the activities being engaged in in the photograph could be perceived to have taken place during work hours or on behalf of Council;
- (b) Staff should choose photographs and videos, particularly on their personal page, with care, as inappropriate photographs on Social Media sites are a risk to both the Staff and Council and could cause a breach of this Policy;
- (c) No images of any Staff in a work capacity should be posted on any Social Media sites without their prior consent, or they have signed a waiver declaration form;
- (d) Any photographs or video taken by a Council-owned device remain the property of Council and can only be used with express approval by the relevant Director or Department Manager;
- (e) Consent must be sought by a third party before posting a photo of the third party on Social Media sites; and
- (f) In relation to taking or posting photos of children, express permission from the child's parents must be sought and the parents must have a full understanding of what the photo will be used for.

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9. Compliance and Enforcement Matters

9.1. General Non-Compliance

Depending on the circumstances, non-compliance with this Policy may constitute a breach of employment or contractual obligations, misconduct, sexual harassment, discrimination, or some other contravention of the law.

Those who fail to comply with this Policy may face disciplinary action and, in some cases, termination of their employment or engagement with Council.

9.2. Copyright

When posting on Council or personal Social Media sites, Staff must take care to ensure that they respect copyright laws and attribute work to the original author/source wherever possible.

9.3. Harassment and bullying

- (a) Council's Workplace Bullying/Harassment Policy applies online, including on Social Media sites, and in the physical workplace.
- (b) Abusive, harassing, threatening or defaming postings are in breach of Council's Workplace Bullying/Harassment Policy, and may result in disciplinary action being taken, and in breach of Council's Code of Conduct.
- (c) Workplace bullying and harassment includes any bullying or harassing comments staff make online, including on their own private social networks and when out of office hours.

9.4. Defamation

Staff must not post material that may cause damage to another person, organisation, association or company's reputation. If thought necessary to do so, then approval should be obtained from the CEO or the Communications and Marketing Manager.

9.5. Contempt of Court

Staff must exercise care if referring to pending court proceedings (particularly if related to Council) to avoid posting material that may prejudice those proceedings, in particular, material that will not be part of the evidence in those proceedings.

Staff should make enquiries as to any applicable court suppression orders prior to commenting on any court proceeding (whether past or pending).

9.6. Duty to Inform

If on a Council Social Media site or another site, you notice inappropriate or incorrect content, or content that may otherwise breach this Policy, you should report the circumstances to the Communications and Marketing Manager and/or the CEO.

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10. DEFINITIONS

In this Policy, unless the contrary intention appears:

- 10.1. “**CEO**” means the Chief Executive Officer of Council;
- 10.2. “**Confidential Information**” includes:
- (a) information derived from any source (including, without limitation and for example, government departments or ministers) that has been classified as confidential or which Staff should reasonably know ought be kept confidential;
 - (b) commercial-in-confidence information — including where the release of information would affect a company’s competitive advantage;
 - (c) information of a personal nature or about personal affairs, for example the personal details;
 - (d) terms of contracts or arrangements (including proposed) involving Council or any other party (including its divisions, related entities, contractors, suppliers, Staff);
 - (e) information relating to a matter which is under investigation by the CEO or another agency;
 - (f) financial, business, product, analysis or strategic information of Council or its divisions, related entities, residents, Staff, contractors or suppliers;
 - (g) information contained in correspondence to or from Council marked “private and confidential” or featuring like words;
 - (h) information relating to residents or clients of Council;
 - (i) information not owned or controlled by Council;
 - (j) information that could result in any legal action being taken against Council, including for defamation;
 - (k) information involving legal advice to Council or a legal issue or a matter before the courts;
 - (l) information that is expressly given to Staff in confidence; and
 - (m) information discussed in a closed session of a Council meeting;
 - (n) technological products, ideas and concepts of Council or its divisions, related entities, clients, contractors, suppliers;
 - (o) research and development information; and
 - (p) business, marketing, strategic and other plans of Council for its business, products or services.

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- 1.2. “**Council**” means Whitsunday Regional Council;
- 1.3. “**Communications and Marketing Manager**” means the Manager of the Communications and Marketing Department within Council;
- 1.4. “**Electronic Devices**” includes any electronic devices such as mobile phones, electronic notebooks, electronic tablets and laptops), Staff must use these resources reasonably;
- 1.5. “**Personal Use**” is an individual or private user using an individual’s own Social Media platforms for purposes or reasons not reasonably attributable to corporate or professional use;
- 1.6. “**Staff**” includes the Mayor, Councillors, employees, officers and contractors of Council;
- 1.7. “**Social Media**” means web-based technology allowing an exchange of dialogue between organisations, communities and individuals. Social media may include (but is not limited to:
 - (a) Social networking websites (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+);
 - (b) Video and photo sharing platforms (e.g. Instagram, Snapchat, Flickr, Youtube);
 - (c) Blogs, including corporate blogs and personal blogs;
 - (d) Blogs hosted by media outlets (e.g. ‘comments’ on news articles etc.);
 - (e) Micro-blogging (e.g. Twitter);
 - (f) Wikis and online collaborations (e.g. Wikipedia);
 - (g) Forums, discussion boards and groups (e.g. Google groups);
 - (h) Vod and podcasting;
 - (i) Online multiplayer gaming platforms;
 - (j) Instant messaging (including SMS); and
 - (k) Geospatial tagging (e.g. Foursquare, Facebook, Check-in).

DATE REVIEWED

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NEXT REVIEW

February 2018

This policy will be reviewed every year.

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