



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

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Department Media & Communication
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CEO Approved
(Signature)

1. POLICY OBJECTIVE

To guide how Council will use social media to engage with the South Gippsland community. The policy applies to all Councillors, employees, contractors and volunteers who use social media on behalf of Council. It also applies to personal use of social media when referring to Council-related topics and/or people online.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

Social media refers to all social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Blogs, Snapchat or any new services where the Internet is used to connect socially. Social media provides a platform for increasing our engagement with the community. Benefits of social media include immediacy, convenience and the ability to reach a large cross section of people with relative ease.

This policy outlines the responsibilities of employees, Councillors and volunteers when using social media to minimise the risk to Council and to help ensure a high standard of customer service is maintained.

3. POLICY GUIDELINES

Employees, councillors, contractors and volunteers posting on social media should be mindful of Council's Code of Conduct and only post information that is not in breach of their responsibilities under the Code. Furthermore, they are expected to adhere to the following.

DO:

- 3.1 Engage with people respectfully and ethically.
- 3.2 Remember that content uploaded to social media grants the social media platform (eg: Facebook) with a licence to use anything that is posted.
- 3.3 Ensure that information posted is accurate and factual.
- 3.4 Ensure that information posted is in the community's interest.
- 3.5 Make it clear to all readers who you are representing and clearly separate personal from professional opinion.
- 3.6 Keep in mind the case of former Bendigo Councillor, Elise Chapman, who was found guilty of misconduct by VCAT for posts made on her personal Facebook page, even though she had stated they were her personal views and not her views at a Councillor.
- 3.7 Notify your manager if you become aware of any inappropriate use of social media.

**DO NOT:**

- 3.8 Make defamatory comments or posts that are malicious, misleading or untrue.
- 3.9 Disclose information which may personally identify a client or customer of Council.
- 3.10 Disclose information which is confidential or could reasonably be perceived to be confidential in nature. For more information, please refer to the C22 Information Privacy Policy.
- 3.11 Use social media to discriminate, bully, harass, defame, victimise, abuse or threaten others.
- 3.12 Use social media to disparage Council activities, including performance management processes.
- 3.13 Damage the reputation of South Gippsland Shire Council including Councillors or employees.
- 3.14 Engage in excessive use of non-work social media during work time.
- 3.15 Post anything which contravenes the intellectual property rights of any person or organisation.
- 3.16 Represent yourself as another employee or Councillor.
- 3.17 Post on behalf of Council without authorisation.
- 3.18 Give your social media account details to any third party. You are responsible, and accountable, for content posted to your social media accounts.

South Gippsland Shire Council social media platforms will be administered by authorised employees only. No new accounts will be established without written approval from the Manager Executive Support and Community Information.

Employees will not assist with the implementation or administration of personal social media pages for Councillors. Councillors' social media operation should be carried out in accordance to the Councillor Code of Conduct.

If you have any doubt about applying the provisions of this policy, please check with Communications.

4. RISK ASSESSMENT

Social media activity has risks for the organisation. Social media posts are in electronic form and have the potential to be shared more widely than a personal discussion. The nature of social media platforms means that comments might easily be forwarded on to others, increasing the audience for their publication.

Considerable care should be used in using social networking sites and an awareness that making comments or conducting conversations that relate to the organisation can affect the reputation of Council. Social media platforms leave an often permanent written record of statements and comments made by people. These can be read at any time in the future until they are taken down. Given the nature of the Internet, it can be difficult (if not impossible) to remove information.

This Social Media Policy provides guidance for employees, volunteers and councillors using social media and minimise the risk to Council through incorrect usage.



5. IMPLEMENTATION STATEMENT

Staff receive training on the Social Media Policy. Training occurs on induction to Council and via other forms of communication, including intranet.

6. POLICY BREACHES

A breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action, which may include the termination of employment. Anyone found to be in breach of this policy may be required to delete the offending information from any social media platform. Access to South Gippsland Shire Council social media may be restricted while suspected breaches are investigated.

Council may access any information posted and publicly available on the social media accounts of employees, Councillors, volunteers and contractors for the purposes of investigating potential breaches.

7. MONITORING

Council's IT department will collect and retain information about the use of social media on Council IT systems. This information will be collected to ensure that Council and its employees will not be adversely affected by the actions of any individual using social media in a manner not in keeping with this policy. The information will be secure and will only be disclosed to persons within the organisation as is necessary to ensure compliance with this policy.

All staff have an obligation to act immediately when questionable material is identified by informing Communications or People and Culture of the incident/issue and by looking after the wellbeing of any individual adversely affected.

8. POLICY DEFINITIONS

Council	South Gippsland Shire Council
Employee	Any person, including Councillors, employed by South Gippsland Shire Council (as defined by the Workplace Injury Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2013)
Social Media	Online platforms which are used by people to share opinions, information, experiences, images, audio and video clips. Common social media platforms include (but are not limited to) Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, message boards and blogs.
Users	Applies to all employees, contractors, vendors, third parties who use the organisations hardware and software directly or remotely.



9. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Council Policy and Guidelines

- Information Privacy Policy
- Anti-Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment Policy
- Communication and Engagement Policy
- Community Engagement Plan and Toolkit
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Councillor Code of Conduct
- Grievance Policy
- Supervisors Guide – Disciplinary Action

Legislative Provisions, Standards, Guidelines and Principles

- Copyright Act 1968 (Commonwealth)
- Local Government Act 1989 (Vic)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Commonwealth)
- Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 (Vic)
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Commonwealth)
- Human Rights Policy
- Information and Communications Technology Policy
- Information Privacy Policy
- Information Technology Acceptable Use & Security
- Intellectual Property Policy
- Internal Communications Strategy
- Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)
- Defamation Act 2005 (Vic)
- Fair Trading Act 1999 (Vic)
- Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)
- Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Vic)
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth) Information Privacy Act 2000 (Vic)
- Spam Act 2003 (Cth)
- OHS Act 2004
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Public Records Act 1973 (Vic)