

Social Media Policy 2021

POL056



Policy No:	POL056
Policy Title:	Social Media Policy
Section Responsible:	Communications
Minute No/Ref:	562438
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1. INTENT

This policy outlines protocols for using social media to undertake Council business and provides guidance for employees in their personal use of social media.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all Councillors, Council employees, agents and contractors (including temporary contractors), administrators appointed under Section 256 of the Local Government Act 1993 (NSW), members of council committees, conduct reviewers, delegates of Council, work experience employees and volunteers of the Council.

3. OBJECTIVE

- To provide guidelines for Councillors, Council staff and all other Council officials on business and individual use of social media.
- To specify who is authorised to speak on behalf of Council in a social media context; and to provide guidance on the use of personal social media accounts in relation to Council matters.
- To provide guidance on the establishment, management and use of all social media platforms at Narrandera Shire Council.
- To outline the acceptable use of the social media platforms during ordinary work hours.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

Social media platforms are an open communication tool for Council and Council representatives to engage with the public, providing a level of immediacy for sharing public information. Council's use of social media is under the direction of the General Manager and is monitored, updated and resourced through the Communications Officer.

5. PROVISIONS

5.1 PURPOSE OF OFFICIAL COUNCIL SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

- Direct people to Council information, services and Council's website.
- Rapid sharing of information that is coordinated, accurate and up to date to a wide targeted audience.
- Enhance Council's reputation online (with respect, responsibility and transparency).
- Deal openly and effectively with controversial, crisis and sensitive information, while maintaining confidentiality where appropriate.
- Create a platform for community engagement and interaction.
- Low-cost marketing of services and events.

5.2 USERS OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES AND SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Users of social media must not publish any material which identifies themselves as being associated with Council or a related entity of Council. This includes making comments about Council policies, decisions or activities. This applies to both making disparaging comments about Council and/or defending Council, Council staff and Council representatives.

If you do see inaccurate or disparaging comments about Council, Council staff and/or Council representatives on social media, please bring this to the attention of the Communications Officer who will inform management. Authorised officers of Council will then determine the appropriate way to respond to inaccurate information being portrayed about Council, Council employees and/or Council representatives.

5.3 USERS

Users:

1. must ensure that any information he or she posts about Council, or a related entity of Council, is informed and factually accurate.
2. may only disclose publicly available information and must not disclose, or cause to be disclosed, confidential information.
3. must use a disclaimer when referring to Council or a related entity of the Council or a Council official. Such a disclaimer is "*the views expressed in this post are mine only and do not necessarily reflect the views of Council.*"

Users must not:

4. disparage or make any adverse comment about Council, any policy or decision of Council or any of Council's related entities, employees, contractors and other Council Officials or any other person or organisation providing services to or on behalf of Council that relate to that person's employment or relationship with Council.
5. harass, bully, intimidate or threaten another employee, contractor or other Council Official (or a person the User knows to be a relative or associate of a Council Official) when contributing to a social networking site or accessing a social media platform.

- transmit or send Council's documents, emails or text messages (in any format) to any external parties or organisations unless expressly authorised to do so.

5.4 CORRECTIONS

If a User subsequently discovers a factual inaccuracy or error in their blog or social networking entry, they are required to immediately notify the General Manager of the error and include a plan to correct the error. All alterations should indicate the date on which the alteration was made.

5.5 PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES & SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS DURING ORDINARY WORK HOURS

Council's ordinary work hours are generally 8:15am to 4:30pm for indoor employees and 7:00am to 4:15pm for outdoor employees. All Users are permitted to have access to social networking sites and social media platforms during ordinary work hours for a limited and reasonable personal use.

Using social networking sites and social media platforms for personal use must not impact upon the User's work performance or Council resources or violate this policy or any other Council policy.

Users must not inappropriately use social networking sites and social media platforms. Inappropriate use includes, but is not limited to, using social networking sites and social media platforms to send, post or otherwise publish:

- obscene messages
- racially and/or sexually harassing messages
- sexually explicit material

5.6 WARNING

Apart from the potentially damaging effects a blog or social networking entry may have on the Council, inappropriate blogs on internal or external sites can also have adverse consequences for a user in terms of future career prospects, as the material remains widely and permanently accessible to other site users.

5.7 ENFORCEMENT

Users must comply with the requirements of this policy. Any breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action which may include termination of employment (or, for persons other than employees, the termination or non-renewal of contractual arrangements).

Other disciplinary action that may be taken includes, but is not limited to, issuing a warning, suspension or disconnection of access to all or part of the Council's computer network whether permanently or on a temporary basis.

5.8 STANDARDS APPLYING TO BLOGS AND SITES OPERATED BY COUNCIL

Users must not engage in prohibited conduct. Further:

- only Users who are authorised by the General Manager are permitted to publish a blog or social network entry on any sites operated by Council, and the content of any such blog or entry must first be approved by the General Manager.
- public communications concerning Council must not violate any provisions of any applicable Council policy, procedure or contract.
- a User may participate in Council-related public communications during normal work time. However, if doing so interferes with any of the user's normal work responsibilities, Council reserves the right to withdraw the User's access to the communication facilities.
- a User must not communicate any material that violates the privacy or publicity rights of another party.
- a User must not cite or refer to clients, rate payers, business partners, suppliers, other users etc without their prior approval.
- Users will be personally legally responsible for any content they publish and need to be aware of applicable laws.

5.9 GENERAL ENQUIRIES

Sites need to be actively administered during working hours and responses to comments need to be within 24 hours (or within two hours of the first day back following a weekend, RDO or public holiday).

If an issue is reported eg: a pothole, the request must be screenshot or copied and registered into MagiQ, a Customer Service Request created, and an appropriate officer assigned to the task. Note that the request has come through social media and that the administrator requires a response to the enquiry.

All administrators should seek advice and written approval from the relevant manager prior to posting a response to a comment that is critical of Council (including Councillors, staff, services, etc). Refer to the "Guidelines for NSC Social Media Administrators" when formulating responses.

5.10 NEGATIVE COMMENTS OR SERIOUS MATTERS

The Communications Officer has overarching oversight of the social media sites and is authorised to remove or hide any defamatory posts or inappropriate Council supplied posts.

Via the Communications Officer, an authorised administrator may recommend to their manager or the General Manager that a User be banned from a platform where that User continually displays abusive behaviour, makes vexatious complaints or consistently unsubstantiated negative comments that unfairly compromise the reputation of Narrandera Shire, its Council or its staff.

Responses should encourage the issue to be taken off-line and handled via social media inbox messages, phone, email or in person.

All discussions are to be approved by the General Manager and recorded into MagiQ.

No political associations are to be accepted nor political posts be placed on any Narrandera Shire Council social media platform.

6. DEFINITIONS

- **Authorised administrator:** Council staff member who has been given authority in accordance with their delegations to represent Council on social media.
- **Confidential information:** includes but is not limited to trade secrets of Council; non-public information about the organisation and affairs of Council: pricing information such as internal cost and pricing rates, production scheduling software, special supply information; marketing or strategy plans; exclusive supply agreements or arrangements; commercial and business plans; contractual arrangements with third parties; tender policies and arrangements; financial information and data; training materials; technical data; schematics; proposals and intentions; designs; policies and procedures documents; concepts not reduced to material form; information which is personal information for the purposes of privacy law; and all other information obtained from Council or obtained in the course of working or providing services to Council that is by its nature confidential.
- **Council official:** includes Councillors, employees, agents and contractors (including temporary contractors), administrators appointed under Section 256 of the *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW), members of council committees, conduct reviewers, delegates of council, work experience employees and volunteers of the Council.
- **Intellectual property:** all forms of intellectual property rights throughout the world including copyright, patent, design, trademark, trade name, and all Confidential Information and including know-how and trade secrets.
- **Social media:** a page or profile created within a social media channel to promote a brand or service.
- **Social networking site and social media platform:** includes Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Yahoo Groups, Google Groups, Snap Chat and all similar sites defined as social media platforms.
- **User:** anyone who is directly interacting with a computer system in real time.

7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

7.1 MAYOR AND COUNCILLORS

- Council's Mayor and Councillors have the right to establish their own social media presence as a member of the governing body and as a representative of the community.
- When speaking publicly, including on social media platforms, Mayor and Councillors must clarify if they are acting in an official capacity or as a private individual.

- Mayor and Councillors using social media in an official capacity to represent Council and Council matters must do so using their official title, eg: Councillor John Smith for Narrandera Shire Council.
- Mayor and Councillors using a social media platform as a private individual must state they are expressing their own opinion and not representing the official position of Council. Such a disclaimer is *“the views expressed in this post are mine only and do not necessarily reflect the views of Council.”*
- A level of qualified privilege applies to Councillors under the law, which recognises that Councillors may need to speak freely and publicly in the discharge of their civic duties. However, this should be treated with caution. Qualified privilege covers only statements made at Council or committee meetings in the discharge of a Councillor’s duties which are pertinent to the business of Local Government. Such statements also need to be made in good faith and must not be made maliciously.
- Councillors are subject to defamation law, and it is contrary to law to injure another person’s reputation in the eyes of society through the written word, pictorially or in speech.
- If a Councillor becomes aware of a media interest in a particular aspect of Council business that could be contentious, they should bring it to the attention of the General Manager.

7.2 AUTHORISED ADMINISTRATORS

Authorised administrators are only permitted to contribute to blogs and social network entries on Council’s website and social media accounts in order to share information and knowledge, obtain constructive feedback, interact directly with rate payers or clients, collaborate over projects and solve problems, promote our organisation, and raise Council’s profile, or in the pursuit of the relevant departments of their tourism and marketing and/or economic development work.

When contributing to a Council-managed social networking site or accessing a social media platform, an authorised administrator must not identify him or herself on a public page or forum as representing Council or any of Council’s related entities unless specifically authorised to do so in writing by the General Manager.

When responding to a social media inbox message, authorised administrators must disclose that he or she is an employee, contractor or other Council official of the Council or a related entity and what the User’s role is eg: *“Hi – this is (name), (position) at Narrandera Shire Council.”*

Authorised administrators must ensure that:

- Any content published is factually accurate and complies with relevant policies of Council.
- He or she only comments on topics that fall within his or her area of responsibility at Council.

- He or she does not post material that is obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, discriminatory or hateful to another person or entity or which causes (or could cause) insult, offence, intimidation or humiliation.
- He or she does not disclose another person's personal information.
- He or she respects copyright, privacy, financial disclosure, work health and safety, employment and other applicable laws.
- He or she does not create any legal or contractual obligations on behalf of Council unless expressly authorised by Council.
- The use of Council's Facebook page is in accordance with the electoral act, particularly in relation to individual Councillors.
- He or she does not send or cause to be sent chain or SPAM emails or text messages in any format.
- As ambassadors for Narrandera Shire Council, he or she reflects the organisation in a professional and appropriate manner at all times.

7.3 SET UP OR DISESTABLISHMENT OF A NSC SOCIAL MEDIA SITE AND/OR SPECIFIC PURPOSE GROUP PAGE

The General Manager must formally approve the set up or disestablishment of any social media site and approve who are the administrators for each specific site.

- Any proposals to set up or disestablish a social media site must be presented in the first instance to the Communications Officer who will prepare – in partnership with the recommending officer – a recommendation to the Executive Leadership Team for consideration.
- Any proposal for a new site or group page should consider purpose, suitability, audience fit, strategy, administration and sustainability (including whole of life costings). It should be noted that NSC's preference is to have fewer, quality and well administered sites.
- Council's current social media platforms are listed in Attachment 1.

8. RELATED LEGISLATION

- Copyright Act 1879
- Defamations Act 2005
- Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009
- Local Government Act 1993
- Privacy and Personal Information Act 1988
- NSW State Records Act 1998

9. RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

- Code of Conduct

- Email and Internet Usage Policy
- Guidelines for NSC Social Media Administrators
- Media and Public Relations Policy

10. VARIATION

Council reserves the right to review, vary or revoke this policy in accordance with legislation, regulation and award changes, where applicable. Council may also make changes to this policy and the relevant procedures from time-to-time to improve the effectiveness of its operation.

11. PREVIOUS VERSIONS

Reference to a superseded policy number and/or name is also considered a reference to the new policy number. This policy was previously named:

- ES340 Social Media Policy
- HRS017 Social Media Policy

POLICY HISTORY

Responsible Officer	Communications Officer		
Approved by	General Manager		
Approval Date	21 June 2021		
GM Signature (Authorised staff to insert signature)			
Next Review	1 June 2024		
Version Number	Endorsed by ELT	Endorsed by Council	Date signed by GM
1 Adopted	2/04/2014	-	30/04/2014
2 Reviewed	1/05/2017	16/05/2017	24/05/2017
3 Reviewed	2/10/2018	-	14/09/2018
4 Reviewed	15/04/2019	16/07/2019	5/08/2019
5 Reviewed	8/06/2021	-	21/06/2021

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Attachment 1: Current Social Media Platforms

Social Media Site	Administrators
Narrandera Shire Council Facebook page	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications Officer • Road Safety Officer • Community Liaison Officer • Community Support Manager • Library Officer • Community Development Library Manager • Executive Assistant to General Manager and Mayor • General Manager
Narrandera Shire Council Instagram Page	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications Officer • Road Safety Officer • Community Liaison Officer • Community Support Manager • Library Officer • Community Development Library Manager • Executive Assistant to General Manager and Mayor • General Manager
Narrandera Tourism Facebook page	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing Tourism Economic Development Coordinator • Events and Visitor Services Team Leader • Visitor Services Staff
Narrandera Tourism Instagram page	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing Tourism Economic Development Coordinator • Events and Visitor Services Team Leader • Visitor Services Staff
Narrandera Shire Council LinkedIn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications Officer • Human Resources Manager • Human Resources Officer • Road Safety Officer • Community Liaison Officer • Community Support Manager • Library Officer • Community Development Library Manager

12. Acknowledgement of Training Received

I hereby acknowledge that I have received, read and understood a copy of Council's Social Media Policy.	
Employee Name	
Position Title	
Signature	
Date	