

SOCIAL MEDIA

Policy | Strategy and Engagement

This policy sets the protocols for Council's use and management of social media platforms across all business units for Councillors and Council workers.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with Council's Media Policy.

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Service Unit:	Communication and Engagement		
Responsible Officer:	Coordinator Communication and Engagement		
Responsible Director:	Director Organisation and Community Capacity		
Authorisation Date:	17 August 2020	Review Date:	17 August 2022
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Table of Contents

1	Background.....	3
	1.1 Title of the Policy and Commencement Date	3
	1.2 Purpose of the Policy	3
2	Objective	3
	2.1 Objectives and Coverage of the Policy	3
3	Application of this Policy.....	3
4	Definitions	3
5	Principles/Body	4
	5.1 Procedural Statement	4
6	Relevant Legislation.....	6
7	Document Information	6
	7.1 Related Documents.....	6
8	Responsible Officer / Policy Owner	7
9	Responsibilities	7
10	Approval	9
11	Monitoring	9
12	Review Date	9
13	Last Review Date	9
14	Record Keeping, Confidentiality and Privacy	9
15	Breaches and Sanctions	9



1 Background

1.1 Title of the Policy and Commencement Date

The Social Media Policy takes effect upon adoption by Council.

1.2 Purpose of the Policy

To guide the creation of consistent and proactive content, facilitate respectful community discussion and feedback and the approach to responses to comments made across Council-managed social media platforms. The Policy also outlines the responsibilities of Councillors and Council staff when using social media.

2 Objective

2.1 Objectives and Coverage of the Policy

- Guide the use and management with a “one Council approach” to all Council-managed social media platforms.
- Ensure Council’s social media presence appropriately reflects Council’s brand and image.
- Ensure Council’s social media channels provide relevant, appropriate, high-quality and appropriately branded content for the information and engagement of the community.
- Ensure Council’s social media channels provide a respectful platform for members of the community to engage in public discussion and provide feedback on Council matters.
- Outline the responsibilities of Councillors and Council workers to uphold Council’s reputation when using social media.

3 Application of this Policy

This Policy applies to Councillors and all Council workers including permanent, casual and temporary employees, volunteers, contractors, or consultants in relation to the use of social media.

4 Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

Term	Meaning
Worker	Any person engaged by Singleton Council as defined in the <i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011</i> .
Councillor	Elected representatives of Singleton Council, including the Mayor.



Term	Meaning
Delegated spokesperson	Any worker of Singleton Council with delegations to manage and post to social media platforms in an official capacity on behalf of Council.
Social media	Any website or application that enables users to create and share content or to participate in social networking, including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social networking sites (Facebook, LinkedIn) • Video and photo sharing (Instagram, YouTube) • Blogs and microblogging (Twitter) • Forums, discussion boards and groups • Wikis (Wikipedia) • Podcasts • Instant messaging
User	Any person who engages in social media including but not limited to posting, commenting, tagging or liking content.

5 Principles/Body

5.1 Procedural Statement

Council recognises the importance of social media to connect and engage with the community, provide relevant information and encourage feedback and community discussion.

Council also recognises that particular business units of Council have niche audiences that require platforms for targeted engagement, content and information.

However, any comments made on social media do not constitute a formal submission, complaint or customer request, which must follow appropriate Council processes. This notification is provided on Council's Facebook pages and provided via automated response to those people contacting Council via Facebook Messenger.

The following principles underpin Council's involvement with social media:

- Council's Communications and Engagement team will oversee all Council-managed social media platforms to ensure consistency of content and branding.
- Council workers conducting official communication through social media must have relevant delegations to act as spokespeople on behalf of Council.
- Those Council workers delegated to communicate on social media sites for particular business units of Council must provide content on operations and activities related to their particular business unit only.
- Delegated spokespeople must ensure that all content published is accurate and in keeping with Council's Media Policy and Brand Identity Style Guide.
- Delegated spokespeople must not use or disclose any confidential or secure information.



- Delegated spokespeople must not publish or respond to material that is offensive, obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, bullying, discriminatory, hateful, racist, sexist, infringes copyright, constitutes a contempt of court or is otherwise unlawful.
- Delegated spokespeople must avoid any comment or content that may bring Council into disrepute and must not commit Council to any action or initiative without appropriate authority.
- Council's social media platforms must not be used to promote or endorse private interests, businesses or individuals, for the purposes of commercial advertising except in accordance with Council initiatives or programs (for example tourism, economic development, events or capital works projects).
- Council's social media platforms must not be used to promote or endorse any candidate or party for public office.
- Delegated spokespeople must refer any contentious issues, debate or comments arising from social media to the Coordinator Communications and Engagement in the first instance as soon as possible.
- Where issues and inaccurate information are raised, Council's Communications and Engagement Team will liaise with the appropriate business unit to provide a response if required. Council will only issue formal statements or comments through its managed platforms and has no jurisdiction over commentary about Council on platforms outside of its control.
- Council's Communications and Engagement team will oversee all Council-managed social media platforms to identify opportunities for content sharing to expand Council's social media audience and reach.
- Council encourages all members of the community to connect with Council via social media and to engage in feedback, commentary and discussions in a way that is respectful to all users, Councillors and Council workers.
- Council reserves the right to moderate content on its social media platforms that is offensive, obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, bullying, discriminatory, hateful, racist, sexist, infringes copyright, constitutes a contempt of court or is otherwise unlawful. Users who engage in such behaviour and those who seek to monopolise or dominate sites for their own purposes will have their access restricted.
- Council-managed social media platforms are not formal channels for submissions, complaints or customer requests which must be referred to Council's Customer Service Team or online services portal for appropriate action.
- Councillors are entitled to engage with the community on social media. However, they must ensure they do not post comments or content (including images) that:
 - compromises their capacity to perform their official duties in an unbiased manner
 - has the potential to have a negative impact on working relationships within Council or with external parties
 - is offensive, humiliating, bullying, threatening or intimidating to other Councillors, Council workers or those who deal with Council
 - has the capacity to damage Council's reputation or contains content about Council that may be misleading or deceptive



- divulges confidential Council information
 - breaches the privacy of other Council officials or those who deal with Council
 - contains allegations of suspected breaches of the Code of Conduct or information about the consideration of a matter under the Code of Conduct
 - could be perceived to be an official comment on behalf of Council where they have not been authorised to make such comment.
- Councillors must also ensure their comments do not commit Council to any action or initiative without appropriate authority and refer anyone who makes comment to them via social media regarding submissions, complaints or customer requests to the appropriate Council processes.
 - Councillors must not release information independently before Council's official distribution through official channels.
 - Council workers may engage in social media as private citizens. However, they must ensure any posts or comments (including images) cannot be mistaken as an official view of Council, impact Council's reputation, offer views on Councillors, other Council workers or policies of Council, or affect the worker performing their role within Council. Council workers must ensure material is not offensive, humiliating, bullying, threatening or intimidating to Council workers or those who deal with Council.

6 Relevant Legislation

- *Copyright Act 1968*
- *Spam Act 2003*
- *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*
- *Local Government Act 1993*
- *Defamation Act 2005*
- *State Records Act 1998*
- *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (GIPA)*
- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991*
- *Work Health & Safety Act 2011, NSW*

7 Document Information

Related documents and reference information in this section provides a single reference point to develop and maintain site compliance information.

7.1 Related Documents

Related documents, listed in **Table 7-1** below, are internal documents directly related to or referenced from this document.

Number	Title
POL/1011	Code of Conduct Policy
POL/8055	Information Management (Recordkeeping) Policy
19/87488	Information Communication Technology Security Procedure



Number	Title
18/8772	Singleton Council Brand Identity Style Guide
	OLG – Local Government Filming Protocol
POL/40006	Media Policy
POL/1016	Interactions Between Councillors and Staff Policy
14/41181	Delegations Register

Table 7-1 – Related documents

8 Responsible Officer / Policy Owner

Ownership of this policy rests with the Coordinator Communications and Engagement.

9 Responsibilities

Parties or Persons	Responsibilities
Delegated spokespeople	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all content posted to Council's social media platforms is accurate, relevant, high-quality and consistent with Council's communications objectives, brand and identity Monitor all comments and content posted to Council's social media platforms for offensive and unacceptable material Notify Coordinator Communications and Engagement in the first instance where contentious issues or debate are raised that may damage Council's reputation is raised
Communications and Engagement Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and design content in keeping with Council's communications and engagement objectives for Council's corporate social media platforms Oversee all Council-managed social media platforms to ensure consistency of Council-developed content and branding Identify opportunities for content sharing across business unit platforms to expand Council's audience and reach Monitor social media platforms for offensive, inaccurate contentious or other material that may be damaging to Council or contravenes this Policy Work with appropriate business units to provide a response on contentious issues or misinformation as required
Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May engage in social media provided they do not post or share content that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * compromises their capacity to perform their official duties in an unbiased manner



Parties or Persons	Responsibilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * has the potential to have a negative impact on working relationships within Council or with external parties * is offensive, humiliating, bullying, threatening or intimidating to other Councillors, Council workers or those who deal with Council * has the capacity to damage Council’s reputation or contains content about Council that may be misleading or deceptive * divulges confidential Council information * breaches the privacy of other Council officials or those who deal with Council * contains allegations of suspected breaches of the Code of Conduct or information about the consideration of a matter under the Code of Conduct * could be perceived to be an official comment on behalf of Council where they have not been authorised to make such comment • Refer all submissions, complaints and customer requests made to them via social media to appropriate Council Officer in accordance with the Interactions Between Councillors and Staff Policy
Council Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May engage in social media as private citizens provided they do not post or share content as outlined in this Policy.



10 Approval

As per cover sheet.

11 Monitoring

This policy will be monitored by the Coordinator Communications and Engagement to ensure compliance.

12 Review Date

This policy, once adopted, is to remain in force until it is reviewed by Council. This policy is to be reviewed approximately every two (2) years to ensure that it meets legislative requirements.

13 Last Review Date

This policy was last reviewed July 2018.

14 Record Keeping, Confidentiality and Privacy

This policy is to be made available for public viewing as required under the *Government Information (Public Access) 2009, NSW*.

15 Breaches and Sanctions

Any breaches of this Policy will be referred to the General Manager for appropriate action.

