

SOCIAL MEDIA

Policy | Strategy & 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:	15 November 2022	Review Date:	15 November 2022
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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.

5.2 Platforms

Council will maintain a presence on the following social media platforms:

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter
- LinkedIn

A new Council social media platform, or a social media platform proposed by a council related entity (eg a Council committee), can only be established with the written approval of the General Manger or their delegate.



5.3 Authorised Users

- Council workers conducting official communication through social media must have relevant delegations to act as spokespeople on behalf of Council.
- The General Manager may revoke a staff member's status as an authorised user if:
 - the staff member makes such a request
 - the staff member has failed to comply with this policy

5.4 Management of Social Media Platforms

- Council's Communications and Engagement team will oversee all Council-managed social media platforms to ensure consistency of content and branding.
- 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.
- 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.

5.5 Councillors' social media platforms

- Councillors are responsible for the administration and moderation of their own social media platforms. 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
 - commits Council to any action or initiative without appropriate authority
 - 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.
- A councillor's social media platform must include a disclaimer to the following effect: "The views expressed and comments made on this social media platform are my own and not that of Council".
 - Councillors must 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. However, Councillors may upload news releases, other Council communications and publicly available Council information onto their social media platform.

5.6 Moderation of social media platforms

- 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 at Council's discretion.
- 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.
- Where issues and inaccurate information are raised during discussions or comments by external users on Council's sites or other sites, 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.



5.7 Use of social media in emergencies

During emergencies, such as natural disasters or public health incidents, the Incident Response Team (IRT) will be responsible for the management of content on Council's social media platforms immediately when the IRT takes effect.

5.8 Private use of social media

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, 2018 (GIPA)*
- *Anti-Discrimination Act, 1977*
- *Work Health & Safety Act, 2011*

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
18/8772	Singleton Council Brand Identity Style Guide
	OLG – Local Government Filming Protocol
	OLG – Model Social Media Policy
POL/40006	Media Policy
POL/1016	Interactions Between Councillors and Staff Policy
	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 ○ 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



Parties or Persons	Responsibilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consideration of a matter under the Code of Conduct <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 four (4) years to ensure that it meets legislative requirements.

13 Last Review Date

This policy was last reviewed on 17 August 2020.

14 Record Keeping, Confidentiality and Privacy

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

15 Breaches and Sanctions

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



16 Document History

The below table provides a summary of changes and amendments to this document.

Version.	Date Amended	Author	Comments (e.g. reasons for review)
6	27/07/2022	B O'Hara	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated dates, reference numbers and legislation as relevant. • Change review period to four years. • Added Document History. • Clearer requirements from Councillors in keeping with the LGNSW Model Social Media Policy. • Formalise authority of the General Manager to approve the creation of further Council social media pages or channels. • Formalise the authority over social media (in particular Facebook) by Council's Incident Response Team during an emergency event.



Appendix A - Social Media House Rules

We encourage you to be respectful of other community members, adhere to the appropriate social media channel posting guidelines (eg the guidelines of Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, YouTube etc.) and understand that Singleton Council reserves the right to remove any content, including posts, comments, photos, videos, electronic recordings or other information, that:

- is harassment and/or bullying or unlawfully discriminatory
- is inaccurate, misleading, fraudulent or deceptive
- is defamatory, offensive, humiliating, threatening or intimidating
- contains profane language or is sexual in nature
- is discriminatory in any way (eg racist, sexist, homophobic, ageist)
- involves trolling or deliberate disruptions to conversations
- is spam, junk mail, or files that contain viruses or programs that could damage the operation of other people's electronic devices
- contains any personal details, like phone numbers, email address etc
- is anything that promotes, incites or instructs in matters of crime or violence
- violates the intellectual property rights of another
- violates any law or regulation
- advertises, endorses or solicits commercial products or business
- or is otherwise deemed offensive or inappropriate.

Keeping this in mind, we reserve the right to address factual errors. Inappropriate or offensive comments will not be tolerated, and we reserve the right to remove comments at our own discretion. Users who repeatedly breach the page guidelines will be removed from the page.

Our rights

We reserve the right to:

- remove any content that breaches the guidelines above and block any user that repeatedly violates these rules
- change these house rules at any time without prior notice
- use your comments, ideas and images.

By engaging with us on our social media channels, you agree that any material posted belongs to you and does not infringe the intellectual property rights of anyone else. You also grant us the right to use, develop, modify, adapt and publish your comments, materials and ideas in any format and on any channel, without obligation to you.

Comments and feedback

We value your comments and feedback, however this Facebook page is not an official channel for customer requests or submissions. For all service requests, incident reporting, comments and feedback, please contact our Customer Service team on 02 6578 7290 or send your enquiry to council@singleton.nsw.gov.au.

