



POLICY NO.	CPCG2
POLICY TITLE	Social Media Policy
STATUS	Council
SERVICE	Governance
DOCUMENT ID	558323

POLICY STATEMENT

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to employees on acceptable ways to use and promote social media for council business.

SCOPE

The Policy has effect in all situations where staff and the community use social media as a means of communication. It applies to all council employees (including permanent, temporary and casual employees as well as volunteers and contractors to council) that make use of social media:

- In a work-related capacity.
- When reference is made on behalf of council or representing the Council; or in a personal capacity where the employee chooses to make references to Hunter's Hill Council, its people, customers or business related individuals or organisations.

DEFINITIONS

authorised user members of council staff who are authorised by the General Manager or SMC to upload content and engage on the Council's social media platforms on the Council's behalf

council official Councillors, members of staff and delegates of the council (including members of committees that are delegates of the council)

minor for the purposes of clause 4.4(b) of this policy, is a person under the age of 18 years

personal information information or an opinion (including information or an opinion forming part of a database and whether or not recorded in a material form) about an individual whose identity is apparent or can reasonably be ascertained from the information or opinion

SMC is a council's social media coordinator appointed under clause 2.7 of this policy

social media online platforms and applications - such as social networking sites, wikis, blogs, microblogs, video and audio sharing sites, and message boards - that allow people to easily publish, share and discuss content. Examples of social media platforms

include, but are not limited to Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Yammer, YouTube, Instagram, Flickr and Wikipedia

POLICY

1. Principles

1.1 We, the councillors, staff and other officials of Hunter's Hill Council, are committed to upholding and promoting the following principles of social media engagement:

- Openness - Our social media platforms are places where anyone can share and discuss issues that are relevant to our Council and the community we represent and serve.
- Relevance - We will ensure our social media platforms are kept up to date with informative content about our Council and community.
- Accuracy - The content we upload onto our social media platforms and any other social media platform will be a source of truth for our Council and community and we will prioritise the need to correct inaccuracies when they occur.
- Respect - Our social media platforms are safe spaces. We will uphold and promote the behavioural standards contained in this policy and our Council's code of conduct when using our social media platforms and any other social media platform.

2. Administrative Framework for Council's Social Media Platforms

Platforms

2.1 Council may maintain a presence on social media platforms including, but not limited to:

- Facebook
- YouTube
- LinkedIn
- Instagram

2.2 Council's social media platforms must specify or provide a clearly accessible link to the 'House Rules' for engaging on the platform.

Establishment and Deletion of Social Media Platforms

2.3 A new council social media platform, or a social media platform proposed by a council related entity (for example, a council committee), can only be established or deleted with the written approval of the General Manager or their delegate.

2.4 Where a council social media platform is established or deleted in accordance with clause 2.3, the General Manager or their delegate may amend clause 2.1 of this policy without the need for endorsement at a Council Meeting.

Appointment and Role of the Social Media Coordinator

- 2.5 The General Manager will appoint a member of council staff to be the council's social media coordinator (SMC). The SMC should be a senior and suitably qualified member of staff.
- 2.6 The General Manager may appoint more than one SMC.
- 2.7 The SMC's role is to:
- a) approve and revoke a staff member's status as an authorised user
 - b) develop and/or approve the training and/or induction to be provided to authorised users
 - c) maintain a register of authorised users
 - d) maintain effective oversight of authorised users
 - e) moderate the Council's social media platforms in accordance with Part 5 of this policy
 - f) ensure the Council complies with its record keeping obligations under the *State Records Act 1998* in relation to social media
 - g) ensure the Council adheres to the rules of the social media platform(s)
 - h) ensure the Council's social media platforms are set up and maintained in a way that maximises user friendliness and any technical problems are resolved promptly.
- 2.8 The SMC may delegate their functions under paragraphs (e) and (f) of clause 2.7 to authorised users.
- 2.9 The SMC is an authorised user for the purposes of this policy.

Authorised Users

- 2.10 Authorised users are members of council staff who are authorised by the SMC to upload content and engage on the Council's social media platforms on the Council's behalf.
- 2.11 Authorised users should be members of council staff that are responsible for managing, or have expertise in the events, initiatives, programs or policies that are the subject of the social media content.
- 2.12 When uploading content, an authorised user must identify that this is content from Council. They are not obliged to disclose their name or position within the Council.
- 2.13 Authorised users must not use Council's social media platforms for personal reasons.

Administrative Tone

- 2.14 Authorised users upload content and engage on social media on the Council's behalf. Authorised users must use language consistent with that function and avoid expressing or appearing to express their personal views when undertaking their role.

- 2.15 Authorised users may use more personal, informal language when engaging on the Council’s social media platforms, for example when replying to comments. Abbreviations (for example: ‘CU L8r’, ‘How RU’, ‘lol’) are not to be used.

Register of Authorised Users

- 2.16 The SMC will maintain a register of authorised users. This register is to be reviewed annually to ensure it is fit-for-purpose.

Ceasing to be an Authorised User

- 2.17 The SMC may revoke a staff member’s status as an authorised user, if:
- a) the staff member makes such a request
 - b) the staff member has not uploaded content onto any of the Council’s social media platforms in the last year
 - c) the staff member has failed to comply with this policy
 - d) the SMC is of the reasonable opinion that the staff member is no longer suitable to be an authorised user.

3. Administrative Framework for Councillors’ Social Media Platforms

- 3.1 For the purposes of this policy, councillor social platforms are not council social media platforms. Part 2 of this policy does not apply to councillors’ social media platforms.
- 3.2 Councillors are responsible for the administration and moderation of their own social media platforms (in accordance with Parts 3 and 5 of this policy) and ensuring they comply with the record keeping obligations under the *State Records Act 1998* in relation to social media.
- 3.3 Clause 3.2 also applies to councillors in circumstances where another person administers, moderates, or uploads content onto their social media platform.
- 3.4 Councillors must comply with the rules of the platform when engaging on social media.

Induction and Training

- 3.5 Councillors who engage or intend to engage on social media must receive induction training on social media use. Induction training can be undertaken either as part of the councillor’s induction program or as part of their ongoing professional development program.

Identifying as a Councillor

3.6 Councillors must identify themselves on their social media platforms in the following format:

Councillor "First Name and Last Name".

3.7 A councillor's social media platform must include a profile photo which is a clearly identifiable image of the councillor.

3.8 If a councillor becomes or ceases to be the mayor, deputy mayor, or the holder of another position (for example, chairperson of a committee), this must be clearly stated on the councillor's social media platforms and updated within 30 days of a change in circumstances.

Other General Requirements for Councillors' Social Media Platforms

3.9 Councillor social media platforms must specify or provide a clearly accessible link to the 'House Rules' for engaging on the platform.

3.10 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 the Council".

3.11 Despite clause 3.11, mayoral or councillor media releases and other content that has been authorised according to the Council's media and communications protocols may be uploaded onto a councillor's social media platform.

3.12 Councillors may, in consultation with the General Manager, upload publicly available Council information onto their social media platforms.

3.13 Councillors may use more personal, informal language when engaging on their social media platforms.

Councillor Queries Relating to Social Media Platforms

3.14 Questions from councillors relating to their obligations under this policy or technical queries relating to the operation of their social media platforms may be directed to the General Manager in the first instance.

Other Social Media Platforms Administered by Councillors

3.15 A councillor must advise the General Manager of any social media platforms they administer on which content relating to the Council or council officials is, or is expected to be, uploaded. The councillor must do so within:

- a) 30 days of becoming a councillor, or
- b) 30 days of becoming the administrator.

4. Standards of Conduct on Social Media

- 4.1 This policy only applies to council officials' use of social media in an official capacity or in connection with their role as a council official. The policy does not apply to personal use of social media that is not connected with a person's role as a council official.
- 4.2 Council officials must comply with the Council's code of conduct when using social media in an official capacity or in connection with their role as a council official.
- 4.3 Council officials must not use social media to post or share comments, photos, videos, electronic recordings or other information that:
- a) is defamatory, offensive, humiliating, threatening or intimidating to other council officials or members of the public
 - b) contains profane language or is sexual in nature
 - c) constitutes harassment and/or bullying within the meaning of clauses 3.7 and 3.9 of the *Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW*, or is unlawfully discriminatory
 - d) is contrary to their duties under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* and their responsibilities under any policies or procedures adopted by the Council to ensure workplace health and safety
 - e) contains content about the Council, council officials or members of the public that is misleading or deceptive
 - f) divulges confidential Council information
 - g) breaches the privacy of other council officials or members of the public
 - h) contains allegations of suspected breaches of the Council's code of conduct or information about the consideration of a matter under the *Procedures for the Administration of the Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW*,
 - i) could be perceived to be an official comment on behalf of the Council where they have not been authorised to make such comment,
 - j) commits the Council to any action
 - k) violates an order made by a court
 - l) breaches copyright
 - m) advertises, endorses or solicits commercial products or business
 - n) constitutes spam
 - o) is in breach of the rules of the social media platform.

4.4 Council officials must:

- a) attribute work to the original author, creator or source when uploading or linking to content produced by a third party
- b) take reasonable steps to obtain appropriate permissions before uploading content in which a minor can be identified.

4.5 Council officials must exercise caution when sharing, liking, or retweeting content as this can be regarded as an endorsement.

4.6 Council officials must not incite or encourage other persons to act in a way that is contrary to the requirements of this Part.

4.7 Councillors must uphold and accurately represent the policies and decisions of the Council but may explain why they voted on a matter in the way that they did (see section 232(1)(f) of the *Local Government Act 1993*).

5. Moderation of Social Media Platforms

5.1 Council officials who are responsible for the moderation of the Council's or councillors' social media platforms may remove content and 'block' or ban a person from those platforms. Such actions must be undertaken in accordance with this Part.

5.2 For the purposes of this Part, 'social media platform' and 'platform' means both the Council's and councillors' social media platforms.

House Rules

5.3 Social media platforms must state or provide an accessible link to the 'House Rules' for engaging on the platform.

5.4 At a minimum, the House Rules should specify:

- a) the principles of social media engagement referred to in clause 1.1 of this policy
- b) the type of behaviour or content that will result in that content being removed or a person being blocked or banned from the platform
- c) the process by which a person can be blocked or banned from the platform
- d) a statement relating to privacy and personal information (see clause 7.4 of this policy)
- e) that the social media platform is not to be used for making complaints about the Council or council officials (including information about, or a link to, Council's complaints handling policy).

5.5 For the purposes of clause 5.4(b), third parties engaging on social media platforms must not post or share comments, photos, videos, electronic recordings or other information that:

- a) is defamatory, offensive, humiliating, threatening or intimidating to council officials or members of the public,
- b) contains profane language or is sexual in nature
- c) constitutes harassment and/or bullying within the meaning of clauses 3.7 and 3.9 of the *Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW*, or is unlawfully discriminatory
- d) contains content about the Council, council officials or members of the public that is misleading or deceptive
- e) breaches the privacy of council officials or members of the public
- f) contains allegations of suspected breaches of the Council's code of conduct or information about the consideration of a matter under the *Procedures for the Administration of the Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW*,
- g) violates an order made by a court
- h) breaches copyright
- i) advertises, endorses or solicits commercial products or business,
- j) constitutes spam
- k) would be in breach of the rules of the social media platform.

Removal of Content

- 5.6 Where a person uploads content onto a social media platform that is of a kind specified under clause 5.5(a) – (k), the moderator may remove that content.
- 5.7 Prior to removing the content, the moderator must make a record of it (for example, a screenshot).
- 5.8 If the moderator removes content under clause 5.6, they must, where practicable, notify the person who uploaded the content that it has been removed and the reason(s) for its removal.

Blocking or Banning

- 5.9 If a person uploads content that is removed under clause 5.6 of this policy on 3 occasions, that person may be blocked or banned from the social media platform.
- 5.10 Prior to blocking or banning a person from a social media platform, the person must, where practicable, be advised of the intention to block or ban them from the platform and be given a chance to respond. Any submission made by the person must be considered prior to a determination being made to block or ban them.

- 5.11 The duration of the block or ban is to be determined by the SMC, or in the case of a councillor's social media platform, the councillor.
- 5.12 Where a determination is made to block or ban a person from a social media platform, the person must, where practicable, be notified in writing of the decision and the reasons for it. The written notice must also advise the person which social media platforms they are blocked or banned from and the duration of the block or ban.
- 5.13 Where a person that is the subject of a block or ban continues to engage on a social media platform(s) using an alternative social media account, profile, avatar, etc, a moderator may block or ban the person from the platform(s) immediately. In these circumstances clauses 5.9 to 5.13 do not apply.

6. Use of Social Media during Emergencies

- 6.1 During emergencies, such as natural disasters or public health incidents, the SMC will be responsible for the management of content on the Council's social media platforms.
- 6.2 Authorised users and council officials must not upload content onto the Council's or their own social media platforms which contradicts advice issued by the agency coordinating the emergency response.

7. Records Management and Privacy Requirements

Records Management

- 7.1 Social media information is a 'record' for the purposes of the *State Records Act 1998*.
- 7.2 Social media information must be managed in accordance with the *State Records Act 1998* and the Council's approved records management policies and practices.

Privacy Considerations and Requirements

- 7.3 Social media communications are in the public domain. Council officials should exercise caution about what personal information, if any, they upload onto social media.
- 7.4 The *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* applies to the use of social media platforms by the Council and councillors. To mitigate potential privacy risks, the Council and councillors will:
- a) advise people not to provide personal information on social media platforms
 - b) inform people if any personal information they may provide on social media platforms is to be used for official purposes
 - c) moderate comments to ensure they do not contain any personal information
 - d) advise people to contact the Council or councillors through alternative channels if they have personal information they do not want to disclose in a public forum.

8. Private Use of Social Media

8.1 Council officials who engage on social media in their private capacity should maintain a separate social media account(s) for that purpose.

8.2 Council officials should ensure that:

- a) they do not identify themselves as a council official on their private social media account(s)
- b) they do not undertake any functions associated with their role as a council official on their private social media account(s)
- c) appropriate privacy settings are enabled on their private social media account(s).

What Constitutes 'Private' Use?

8.3 For the purposes of this policy, a council official's social media engagement will be considered 'private use' when the content they upload:

- a) is not associated with, or refers to, the Council, any other council officials, contractors, related entities or any other person or organisation providing services to or on behalf of the Council, and
- b) is not related to or does not contain information acquired by virtue of their employment or role as a council official.

8.4 If a council official chooses to identify themselves as a council official, either directly or indirectly (such as in their user profile), then they will not be deemed to be acting in their private capacity for the purposes of this policy.

Use of Social Media during Work Hours

8.5 Council does not prohibit personal use of social media during work time but rather ensures that the use does not interfere with work productivity. It is suggested that private use of social media is confined to lunch time or before or after work.

Group Managers and Managers are responsible for tracking excess use of the internet and social media usage through existing IT reporting processes. A monthly report will be tabled at Council's Senior Management Team Meetings to ensure usage is monitored.

8.6 Council staff who do access and engage on social media in their private capacity during work hours must ensure it does not affect their required performance.

RELATED POLICIES/PROCEDURES

Media Policy (CORP.S-Pol.18)
Code of Conduct (CORP.S-Pol.03)
Sponsorship Policy (CORP.S-Pol.19)
Privacy Code of Practice (CORP.S-Pol.08)
Information Systems and Surveillance Policy (GOV-Pol.02)
Filming Protocol and Manual (WS-Pol.01)
Community Consultation Policy (COMM-Pol.03)
Local Government Act 1993
Copyright Act 1968
State Records Act 1998
Private & Personal Information Protection Act 1998
Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009
Racial Discrimination Act 1975
Disability Discrimination Act 1992
Sex Discrimination Act 1984

POLICY AUTHORITY

The policy authority is the General Manager.

REVIEW

This policy is to be reviewed once per term of Council.

ADOPTED BY COUNCIL/EXECUTIVE:

DATE: 21 February 2022
RESOLUTION NO: 017/22

VERSION CONTROL TABLE

DATE	VERSION	RES. NO.	KEY CHANGES	AUTHOR