

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

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| Policy Number: | 1.4 |
| Approved by: | Council |
| Date Approved: | December 2023 |
| Date of Next Review: | December 2024 |
| Applicable to Unit(s): | Whole Organisation |
| Responsible Officer: | Coordinator Communications and Media |
| Related Policies: | Media and Communications Policy |
| Related Documents: | Customer Service Charter Wellington Shire Council Social Media Guide – Staff Induction Wellington Shire Council Written Style Guide and Web Style Guide Wellington Shire Council Corporate Style Guide |
| Statutory Reference: | Nil |

OVERVIEW

The objective of this policy is to provide understanding and guidance for the appropriate use of social media platforms and tools by Councillors, Council staff, Council volunteers and contractors for the purpose of conducting Council business.

THE POLICY

This policy applies to all Council employees, contractors, agents and volunteers of Wellington Shire Council who use social media on behalf of Wellington Shire Council. This policy also applies to agencies and individuals who provide services to Wellington Shire Council.

The policy outlines requirements for compliance with confidentiality, governance, legal, privacy and regulatory parameters when using social media to conduct Council business. It aims to:

- Inform appropriate use of social media tools for Wellington Shire Council
- Promote effective and productive community engagement through social media
- Minimise miscommunication or mischievous or damaging communications
- Ensure that only accurate information is shared on social media platforms

The policy applies to those digital spaces where people may comment, contribute, create, forward, post, upload and share content, including blogs; bulletin boards; citizen journalism and news sites; forums and discussion boards; instant messaging facilities; microblogging sites (e.g. X, Tumblr); online encyclopedias and wikis (e.g. Wikipedia); podcasts and video podcasts; social media (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, Messenger, WhatsApp, Snapchat, YouTube, Vimeo); video and photo sharing sites (e.g. Flickr, Pinterest, Periscope); e-marketing software (Mailchimp or other), third-party event builders (Eventbrite, TryBooking or other) and any other websites that allow individuals to use simple publishing tools or new technologies emerging from the digital environment. The absence of a reference to a particular site or type of social media activity does not limit the application of this policy. Access to current social media channels can be discussed with the Communications and Media team.

This policy is not intended to cover personal use of social media where:

- The author publishes information in their personal capacity and not on behalf of Wellington Shire Council; and
- No reference is made to Wellington Shire Council, its Councillors, staff, policies and services, suppliers or other stakeholders or council related issues.

Where a staff member makes reference to Council activities, issues, policy or Council decisions in their personal use of social media, Wellington Shire Council will consider whether the staff member in doing so has breached Wellington Shire Council's Staff Code of Conduct. This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies and procedures of Wellington Shire Council.

When using social media in relation to Council business, Councillors, staff, volunteers and contractors are expected to:

- Seek prior authorisation from the Communications and Media Unit.
- Adhere to Wellington Shire Council codes of conduct, policies and procedures
- Behave with caution, courtesy, honesty and respect
- Comply with relevant laws and regulations
- Reinforce the integrity, reputation and values of Wellington Shire Council.
- Forward any important social media activity to the Communications and Media unit for follow up.
- Direct stakeholders to official communication channels to make a request or complaint.
- Consider if comments on a post may be harmful to the reputation of Council and if warranted, moderate or remove comments as necessary in line with the rules of Council's social media channels.
- Act responsibly when communicating as Council or a Council representative in community Facebook groups.

The following content is not permitted under any circumstances:

- Abusive, profane or sexual language
- Content not relating to the subject matter of that channel or website
- Content which is false or misleading
- Confidential information about Council or third parties
- Copyright or Trade Mark protected materials
- Content that uses Council brands, logos or identifiers without permission from the Communications and Media unit.
- Discriminatory material in relation to a person or group based on age, colour, creed, disability, family status, gender, nationality, marital status, parental status, political opinion/affiliation, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, race or social origin, religious beliefs/activity, responsibilities, gender or sexual orientation
- Illegal material or materials designed to encourage illegal activity
- Materials that could compromise Council, employee or system safety
- Materials which would breach applicable laws (defamation, privacy, trade practices, financial rules and regulations, fair use, trademarks)

- Material that would offend contemporary standards of taste and decency
- Material which would bring the Wellington Shire Council into disrepute
- Personal details or references to Councillors, Council staff or third parties, which may breach privacy laws
- Spam, meaning the distribution of unsolicited bulk electronic messages
- Statements which may be considered to be bullying or harassment.
- Council staff using their personal online profiles to comment or provide negative or trolling feedback on social media content about Council's community consultation, projects, works or Council issues.
- Fake Council or employee profiles used to distribute or comment on Council content, or content related to a Council decision.
- Personal social media accounts linked to staff email addresses or similar.
- Posts to social media groups on behalf of Council. If an employee wishes to post to a local community group, they should seek approval from the Communications and Media unit.

In addition:

- Social media channels are monitored and updated by the Communications and Media Unit, or other staff as deemed necessary during normal business hours or as reasonably required.
- Council staff can make a request for online or social media promotion directly to the Communications and Media team.
- Content posted to social media must have permissions and legible, high quality imagery suitable for online purposes. Logos or other authorized imagery requires permission from the Communications and Media Unit before being posted on social media.
- Where a staff member or Councillor would like to update or create a new social media page, request must be received from the Communications and Media team for consideration.
- Council staff must not comment or provide feedback on social media content concerning community consultation of projects or works. Issues should be passed on to the Communications and Media Unit to be addressed.
- Council staff using their own personal online profiles are permitted to share social media items on their preferred platforms

When using social media in their private time via private accounts, employees, contractors and Councillors should not:

- Publish any information on behalf of Wellington Shire Council
- Make any reference to Wellington Shire Council, its Councillors, employees, policies and services, suppliers, other stakeholders or Council related issues.
- Upload photographs of themselves or their colleagues where they are easily identifiable as a Council employee (for example wearing a Council uniform, driving a Council vehicle), acting in an unprofessional or illegal manner.
- Use social media to bully, intimidate or harass current employees, contractors or stakeholders of Council.
- Rely on privacy settings, thinking your comments and/or photos are private.

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

Media Unit before using social media to communicate. Depending upon the nature of the issue and potential risk, it may also be appropriate to consider seeking legal advice.

ENFORCEMENT

All content published or communicated on behalf of Wellington Shire Council using social media must be recorded (including the author's name, date, time and media site location) and kept on record.

Wellington Shire Council actively monitors social media for relevant contributions that impact on the municipality, its operations and reputation. Wellington Shire Council will be able to find – and act upon – contributions made by Councillors and staff if deemed necessary.

This policy will be published and promoted to Councillors, staff, volunteers and contractors of Wellington Shire Council. Breaching this policy may result in disciplinary action, performance management and review. Serious breaches may result in suspension or termination of employment or association.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Wellington Shire Council is committed to upholding the Human Rights principles as outlined in the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)* and referred to in Council's Human Rights Policy. The Human Rights Checklist has been completed and this policy accords with Council's policy commitment to uphold human rights principles.

REVISION HISTORY

| VERSION | DATE | MAJOR / MINOR UPDATE | SUMMARY OF CHANGES |
|---------|---------------|----------------------|---|
| 1.0 | December 2022 | Minor update | Update of terminology, details referencing social media |
| 1.1 | December 2023 | Minor updates | Minor formatting and terminology updates Date of Next Review updated to: December 2024 |