

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

DEFINITIONS

In this Social Media Policy, the following terms have the following meanings:

Authorised user	members of council staff who are authorised by the General Manager or Social Media Coordinator (SMC) to upload content and engage on Council’s social media accounts on Council’s behalf
Council official	Councillors, members of staff and delegates of Council (including members of committees that are delegates of Council)
Minor	for the purposes of clause 4.4(b) of this policy, 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 Council’s Social Media Coordinator assigned to a staff member under 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 include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Yammer, YouTube, Instagram, Flickr and Wikipedia

PART 1: PRINCIPLES

1.1 The Councillors, staff and other officials of Lachlan Shire Council are committed to upholding and promoting the following principles of social media engagement:

- Openness:** Our social media accounts 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 accounts are kept up to date with informative content about our Council and community.
- Accuracy:** The content we upload onto our social media accounts and any other social media account will be a source of truth for our Council and community and we reserve the right to correct inaccuracies when they occur.
- Respect:** Our social media accounts are safe spaces. We will uphold and promote the behavioural standards contained in this policy and our Council’s Code of Conducts when using our social media accounts and any other social media account.

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PART 2: ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR COUNCIL'S SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

2.1 Council currently maintains a presence on the following social media platforms:

- a) Facebook
- b) LinkedIn
- c) Instagram

Council reserves the right to add or remove social media platforms and/or accounts.

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

ESTABLISHMENT AND DELETION OF COUNCIL SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

2.3 A new council social media account, or a social media account 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 account 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 by Council.

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 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 accounts in accordance with Part 5 of this policy
- f) ensure Council complies with its record keeping obligations under the State Records Act 1998 in relation to social media
- g) ensure Council adheres to the rules of the social media platform(s) and account(s)
- h) coordinate with the Council's Information Services team to ensure the Council's social media accounts 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.

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AUTHORISED USERS

- 2.10 Authorised users are members of council staff who are authorised by the General Manager/SMC to upload content and engage on Council’s social media accounts on 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 The General Manager/SMC will appoint authorised users when required.
- 2.13 An authorised user must receive a copy of this policy and induction training on social media use and Council’s obligations before uploading content on Council’s behalf.
- 2.14 The role of an authorised user is to:
- ensure, to the best of their ability, that the content they upload onto Council’s social media accounts is accurate
 - correct inaccuracies in Council generated content
 - engage in discussions and answer questions about the substantive content on Council’s social media account
 - keep Council’s social media accounts up to date
 - moderate Council’s social media accounts in accordance with Part 5 of this policy
 - ensure Council complies with its record keeping obligations under the State Records Act 1998 in relation to social media
- 2.15 When uploading content, an authorised user must identify themselves as a member of Council staff but they are not obliged to disclose their name or position within the Council.
- 2.16 Authorised users must not use Council’s social media accounts for personal reasons.

ADMINISTRATIVE TONE

- 2.17 Authorised users upload content and engage on social media on 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.
- 2.18 Authorised users may use more personal, informal language when engaging on Council’s social media accounts, for example when replying to comments. Abbreviations (for example: ‘CU L8r’, ‘How RU’, ‘lol’) however are not to be used.

REGISTER OF AUTHORISED USERS

- 2.19 The SMC will maintain a register of authorised users. This register is to be reviewed annually to ensure it is up to date.

CEASING TO BE AN AUTHORISED USER

- 2.20 The General Manager / SMC may revoke a staff member’s status as an authorised user, if:
- the staff member makes such a request and an alternate authorised user is available.
 - the staff member has not uploaded content onto any of Council’s social media accounts in the last twelve months

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- c) the staff member has failed to comply with this policy
- d) the General Manager/SMC is of the reasonable opinion that the staff member is no longer suitable to be an authorised user.

PART 3 – ADMINISTRATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR COUNCILLORS’ SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

- 3.1 For the purposes of this policy, councillor social media accounts are not council social media accounts. Part 2 of this policy does not apply to councillors’ social media accounts.
- 3.2 Councillors are responsible for the administration and moderation of their own social media accounts (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 account.
- 3.4 Councillors must comply with the rules of the platform(s) and account(s) when engaging on social media.
- 3.5 The SMC may provide a link to councillors’ social media accounts on the Councillor Profile page on Council’s website, if requested by the respective councillor.

INDUCTION AND TRAINING

- 3.6 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

- 3.7 A councillor’s social media account 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 accounts and updated within two weeks of a change in circumstances.

OTHER GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR COUNCILLORS’ SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

- 3.9 Councillor social media accounts must specify or provide a clearly accessible link to the ‘House Rules’ for engaging on the account.
- 3.10 A councillor’s social media account must include a disclaimer to the following effect:

“The views expressed and comments made on this social media account are my own and not that of the Council”.

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- 3.11 Despite clause 3.10, mayoral or councillor media releases and other content that have been authorised according to the Council’s media and communications protocols may be uploaded onto a councillor’s social media account.
- 3.12 Councillors may, in consultation with the General Manager, upload publicly available Council information onto their social media accounts.
- 3.13 Councillors may use more personal, informal language when engaging on their social media accounts.

COUNCILLOR QUERIES RELATING TO SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

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

OTHER SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS ADMINISTERED BY COUNCILLORS

- 3.15 A councillor must advise the General Manager of any social media accounts 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) One month of becoming a Councillor, or
 - b) One month of becoming the administrator.

PART 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 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

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- 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 or account.

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) obtain written permission from a minor’s parent or legal guardian before uploading content in which the 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’s governing body 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*).

PART 5 – MODERATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

Note: Councils and council officials should be aware that they may be considered a ‘publisher’ of any content uploaded onto a social media account they administer, including content that:

- is uploaded by a third party; and/or
- appears on their social media account because they have ‘liked’, ‘shared’, or ‘retweeted’ the content, or similar.

5.1 Council officials who are responsible for the moderation of the Council’s or Councillors’ social media accounts may remove content and ‘block’ or ban a person from those accounts. Such actions must be undertaken in accordance with this Part. For Council, SMCs and delegated authorised users can be moderators as per 2.7 and 2.8 of this policy.

5.2 For the purposes of this Part, ‘social media account’ and ‘account’ means both Council’s and Councillors’ social media accounts.

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HOUSE RULES

- 5.3 Social media accounts must state or provide an accessible link to the 'House Rules' for engaging on the account.
- 5.4 At a minimum, the House Rules should specify:
- the principles of social media engagement referred to in clause 1.1 of this policy
 - the type of behaviour or content that will result in that content being removed or a person being blocked or banned from the account
 - the process by which a person can be blocked or banned from the account
 - a statement relating to privacy and personal information (see clause 7.4 of this policy)
 - when the account will be monitored (for example weekdays 9am – 5pm, during the Council's business hours)
 - that the social media account is not to be used for making complaints about the Council or council officials. Information about making complaints can be found in Council's Complaints Management Framework and Policy available on Council's website.
- 5.5 For the purposes of clause 5.4(b), third parties engaging on social media accounts must not post or share comments, photos, videos, electronic recordings or other information that
- is defamatory, offensive, humiliating, threatening or intimidating to council officials or members of the public,
 - contains profane language or is sexual in nature
 - 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
 - contains content about the Council, council officials or members of the public that is misleading or deceptive
 - breaches the privacy of council officials or members of the public
 - 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,
 - violates an order made by a court
 - breaches copyright
 - advertises, endorses or solicits commercial products or business,
 - constitutes spam
 - would be in breach of the rules of the social media account.

REMOVAL OF CONTENT

- 5.6 Where a person uploads content onto a social media account that is of a kind specified under clause 5.5 (a) – (k), the moderator, being the GM/SMC or delegated authorised user, 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.

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BLOCKING OR BANNING

- 5.9 If a person uploads content that is removed under clause 5.6 of this policy on two occasions, that person may be blocked or banned from the social media account / all social media accounts.
- 5.10 A person may only be blocked or banned from a Council social media account with the approval of the General Manager. This clause does not apply to blocking or banning a person from a Councillor's social media account.
- 5.11 Prior to blocking or banning a person from a social media account, the person must, where practicable, be advised of the intention to block or ban them from the account/all accounts 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.
- 5.12 The duration of the block or ban is to be determined by the General Manager, or in the case of a Councillor's social media account, the Councillor.
- 5.13 Where a determination is made to block or ban a person from a social media account/all social media accounts, 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 accounts they are blocked or banned from and the duration of the block or ban.
- 5.14 Where a person that is the subject of a block or ban continues to engage on a social media account(s) using an alternative social media account, profile, avatar, etc., a moderator may block or ban the person from the account(s) immediately. In these circumstances clauses 5.9 to 5.13 do not apply.

PART 6 – USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA DURING EMERGENCIES

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

PART 7 – RECORDS MANAGEMENT AND PRIVACY REQUIREMENTS

- 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 Records Management Policy.

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.

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- 7.4 The *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* applies to the use of social media platforms and accounts 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 and accounts
 - b) inform people if any personal information they may provide on social media platforms and accounts 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.

PART 8 – PRIVATE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Note: Activities on social media websites are public activities. Even though privacy settings are available, content can still be shared and accessed beyond the intended recipients.

The terms and conditions of most social media sites state that all content becomes the property of the site on which it is posted.

- 8.1 Council officials, excluding Councillors, 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 perform any functions associated with their role as a council official on their private social media account(s)
 - b) 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 staff must limit private social media use during work hours to emergency situations only.

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RELATED DOCUMENTS

LSC Code of Conduct for Staff Policy

LSC Code of Conduct for Councillors Policy

LSC Complaints Management Framework and Policy

Local Government Act 1993

State Records Act 1998

LSC Records Management Policy

Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998

Greg Tory

GENERAL MANAGER

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