
Cessnock City Council Social Media Policy

Date Adopted: **7/05/2019** Revision: **1**

1. POLICY OBJECTIVES

1.1. The objectives of this policy are to:

- 1.1.1. Outline Council's use and management of Social Media.
- 1.1.2. Ensures that communication carried out on Social Media by Council is managed transparently and effectively.
- 1.1.3. Outline the responsibilities of Councillors when they use Social Media.

2. POLICY SCOPE

2.1. This policy applies to:

- 2.1.1. all Council's online Social Media Presences;
- 2.1.2. Councillors and their use of Social Media.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

- 3.1. Council recognises the importance of Social Media as a communication and engagement tool.
- 3.2. Council encourages open, responsive and reliable communication with the community. Social Media provides for enhanced community engagement and a platform for instantaneous information sharing on Council issues, operations and services.
- 3.3. Council will manage its Social Media Presences in accordance Council's Social Media Community Guidelines.

4. COUNCILLORS AND SOCIAL MEDIA USE

- 4.1. Councillors must ensure their use of Social Media is not in breach of Council's Code of Conduct. When using Social Media Councillors;
 - 4.1.1. Must make it clear that they are expressing their personal opinion and not purporting to represent the position of the elected Council;
 - 4.1.2. Must not use Council's Social Media Presences as a forum for political debate or make comments that impact Council's reputation or brings Council into disrepute;

- 4.1.3. May actively share Council posts for the purposes of promoting initiatives and projects rather than releasing information independently before Council has distributed through official Media Channels.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

5.1. Compliance, monitoring and review

- 5.1.1. The General Manager is responsible for the implementation of this policy and is responsible for ensuring this policy:
 - i. aligns with relevant legislation, government policy and/or Council's requirements/strategies/values;
 - ii. is implemented and regularly monitored; and
 - iii. is reviewed to evaluate its continuing effectiveness.

6. LEGAL AND PRIVACY OBLIGATIONS

6.1. Legal

- 6.1.1. Information published on Social Media becomes part of the public sphere and is therefore subject to legal actions of defamation and contempt. All users should exercise caution when publishing material which must not be defamatory or contemptuous.

6.2. Privacy

- 6.2.1. All correspondence on a Council Social Media Presence will form part of a public record that Council may use and/or make available in accordance with the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* (NSW) and the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (NSW). Council will take all reasonable steps to protect the personal information it holds from misuse, unauthorised access and modification. Council will retain your personal information for a period that is in accordance with the State Records General Authority 39 (GA39).

7. RECORDS MANAGEMENT

- 7.1. All records relevant to administering this policy must be maintained in accordance with Council's [Records Management Policy](#).

8. BREACHES AND COMPLAINTS AS PER THIS POLICY

- 8.1. To ensure compliance with the different legislative and regulatory requirements Council is obligated to conform with, the following is not permitted under any circumstance and will constitute a breach of this policy:
 - 8.1.1. Offensive, humiliating, bullying, threatening, intimidating profane or abusive language;

- 8.1.2. Information which is false or misleading, is a personal attack on someone, or is defamatory;
- 8.1.3. Behaviour, comments or remarks which are discriminatory 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, sex or sexual orientation;
- 8.1.4. Behaviour, comments or information which is illegal or designed to encourage law breaking;
- 8.1.5. Behaviour, comments or information which would breach applicable laws (defamation, privacy, trade practices, financial rules and regulations, fair use, trademarks);
- 8.1.6. Making comments that have the capacity to bring Council into disrepute;
- 8.1.7. Behaviour that would otherwise be in breach of Council's Code of Conduct and any other legislation.

8.2. Any complaints or breaches under this policy will be lodged and managed in accordance with Council's Code of Conduct and/or Council's Complaint's Handling Policy.

9. POLICY DEFINITIONS

Council	means Cessnock City Council.
Council Officials	Means members of staff of Council, including Councillors and other approved delegates, including volunteers, and members of Council committees.
Council Social Media Presence	Any online presence that represents a Council facility, service or business unit.
Social Media	<p>Social media refers to third party applications or tools that enable creation and exchange of user-generated content over the internet. Social media may include, but not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • social networking sites eg Facebook, Myspace, LinkedIn, Bebo, Yammer, Google+ • video and photo sharing websites eg Flickr, Youtube, Instagram • blogs, including weblogs, corporate blogs and personal blogs • blogs hosted by media outlets, for example, 'comments' or 'you say' feature on smh.com.au • micro-blogging, for example Twitter

- wikis and online collaborations, for example Wikipedia
- forums, discussion boards and groups, for example Google groups, Whirlpool
- vod and podcasting
- online multiplayer gaming platforms, for example World of Warcraft
- instant messaging including SMS, 'What's App'
- geo-spatial tagging (Foursquare)
- online encyclopaedias such as Wikipedia
- Any other channels or tools that allows for creation and exchange of user-generated content.

Media Channels Means print or electronic publications, including, but not limited to television, radio, newspapers, magazines, newsletter, digital media, internet and social media.

10. POLICY ADMINISTRATION

Business Group:	Media and Communication
Responsible Officer:	Senior Media and Communication Officer
Policy Review Date:	Three years from date of adoption unless legislated otherwise
File Number / Document Number:	DOC2014/002471
Relevant strategic objectives	Objective 5.2: Encouraging more community participation in decision
Relevant Legislation (reference specific sections):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part 2 of <i>Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998</i> (NSW) • Part 2 of <i>Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009</i> (NSW) • <i>Division 2 of Part 2, Clause 26 of Schedule 1, Defamation Act 2005</i> (NSW) • Part 2 of <i>State Records Act 2005</i> (NSW)
Related Policies / Protocols / Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Code of Conduct • Procedures for the Administration of the Code of Conduct • Code of Meeting Practice • Social Media Protocol • Social Media Community Guidelines • Records Management Policy • Complaints Handling Policy • Unreasonable Customer Policy • Unreasonable Customer Guideline

11. Policy Authorisations

No.	Authorised Function	Authorised Business Unit / Role(s)
1	Manage all breaches under this policy: review and determine any potential breaches or complaints under this policy.	General Manager
2.	Refer possible complaints and breaches under this policy to Council Officials.	General Manager
3	The Media and Communication team are responsible for the management and monitoring of Council's Social Media pages.	Media and Communication

12. Policy History

Revision	Date Approved / Authority	Description Of Changes
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Social Media Policy	7 May 2019	Periodic review
Social Media Engagement Policy (PM114/2013 - 654)	6 November 2013	Periodic review