

Social Media Policy

GOV-CORP 008

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Previous procedure withdrawn or amended	Nil
Department responsible for implementation	Executive Services
Department responsible for procedure	Executive Services
Publication of procedure	A copy of the Social Media Policy, October 2014 be placed on Council's website and copies be made available for inspection at the Customer Service Centre
Related Documents	Social Media Guideline GOV-CORP 008

1. Purpose and Background:

Australians are among the most prolific users of social media in the world, and expectations are growing on councils to engage, work openly and transparently, be more accountable and move more quickly on issues. Social media represents opportunities to achieve real value by engaging residents and being seen to be more receptive as an organisation.

Social media is an important tool used in a range of ways by the Council. Its use, implications and outcomes can reflect on Councillors, employees, the Huon Valley Council brand (reputation), and local government generally.

This policy seeks to guide the use of the Council's official social media accounts as well as personal use of social media by employees and Councillors where there is potential for social media posts to impact upon the Council's reputation.

2. Definitions:

Social media includes web-based and mobile technologies which offer individuals the opportunity to connect with other people, create and share information and ideas, and develop relationships through online communities and networks.

Popular social media technologies include:

- Email
- instant messaging
- text messaging
- podcasts
- blogs
- music sharing
- photo sharing
- crowd sourcing
- dating sites
- virtual games and virtual social worlds.

It includes, but is not limited to, social media platforms Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube and Vine.

At the time of writing, the Council's official social media accounts are with Twitter and Facebook.

3. Policy Statement:

Huon Valley Council recognises social media as a valuable way to engage with the community. While it will not replace traditional methods of engagement, social media is playing an ever increasing important role in Council communications and consultations. The speed and reach of content posted on social media means that comments posted online are available immediately to a wide audience.

It is important that social media is managed strategically and appropriately and that Council employees and Councillors understand their personal use of social media has the potential to impact upon the Council's reputation.

4. Application:

This policy applies to the Council's official social media accounts and the other areas of Council that operate Facebook accounts. It also applies to all employees and Councillors personal use of social media where it may impact upon the Council's reputation.

5. Procedural Considerations

The following principles apply to both official and personal use of social media:

- The Council's Code of Conduct applies to online activities.
- The public considers Councillors to be representatives of Council at all times, even when individuals are posting on their personal accounts.
- When using social media for personal communication, employees and Councillors must not purport to represent the Council.
- Councillors and Council employees must not disclose Council material that they are not authorised to disclose.
- Councillors and employees must be aware that information that is intended to remain private may unintentionally enter the public domain and be viewed or accessed by colleagues, members of the public or the media.
- Assume everything is public. Conversations, comments and other posts can remain online permanently, even if an individual tries or thinks they have deleted them. Councillors and Council employees should be cautious in their comments and protect their own privacy and the privacy of those they are communicating with
- Councillors and Council employees are to behave with integrity, respect and accountability on social media. Posts and online conduct must not amount to discrimination, harassment or unfair treatment of others.

When using Council social media for work purposes, employees should:

- Be credible; accurate, fair, thorough and transparent;
- Be respectful, cordial, honest and professional at all times;
- Be responsive and share information where appropriate;
- Don't discuss confidential or highly classified material
- Respect copyright
- Respect privacy
- Behave with honesty and integrity, and
- Be consistent with other Council information.

Non-compliance with the Social Media Policy by Council employees and Councillors will be managed through the relevant Code of Conduct and disciplinary systems.

Personal use of social media

Personal use of social media must comply with the Council's Social Media Policy and IT Policy.

The use of social media in work time is supported for professional purposes only, as per the IT policy.

Official Council social media accounts

The aim of the Council's social media accounts is to promote Council events and initiatives, promote other community events and celebrate what's great about living in the Huon Valley. Social media, Twitter in particular, should also be used to provide information in emergency situations (floods, fire, etc.).

In addition to the general Council accounts, Facebook pages for Youth Services, the Port Huon Sports Centre and Cygnet Sports Centre also exist. These pages should be clearly identifiable as Huon Valley Council-run pages. Each of these services has an officer responsible for uploading content, which should be relevant to the particular service. All Council pages will be monitored and meetings with other page managers will occur on a regular basis. To remain active, accounts must be being used appropriately, updated regularly and reaching their target audience.

If employees are unsure about any issue dealing with Council's Social Media presence they are to liaise with the General Manager for guidance and clarification.

New accounts must not be activated without first being approved by the General Manager. Creating a separate Facebook page is not always appropriate or feasible. New accounts must also have the approval of your department manager and the General Manager.

The General Manager has the responsibility for enforcing Huon Valley Council's Social Media Policy.

A social media guide has also been developed and is attached to the policy.

6. Attachments:

Social Media Guideline GOV – CORP 008