



Bellinghen Shire Council **POLICY**

 Internal Use Only

 External Use

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Department: **Governance & Engagement**
 Responsible Officer: Manager Governance & Engagement
 Contact Officer: Communication & Community Engagement Officer
 Date Approved by General Manager:
 Date Confirmed by SCC: N/A

Adopted:
 Minute No:
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1. **PURPOSE**

This policy has been developed to provide understanding and guidance as well as standards of use to Bellinghen Shire Council employees and councillors as they engage in conversations or interactions using social media for professional or personal use.

2. **OBJECTIVES**

The Social Media Policy has the following objectives:

- 2.1 To set the parameters for the use of social media, where it forms part of an employee's professional responsibilities;
- 2.2 To inform employees of their responsibilities when using social media in a personal capacity;
- 2.3 To manage risks associated with Council's use of these tools; and
- 2.4 Ensure appropriate authorisations and responsibility for information provided.

3. **SCOPE**

Bellinghen Shire Council is committed to delivering quality customer service and to communicating effectively with our community. It recognises that social media represents an opportunity to participate in meaningful two way dialogue with our residents, ratepayers and customers.

This policy applies to all Councillors and Council employees who utilise social media during and outside of work hours for professional or personal purposes.

4. **DEFINITIONS**

Social Media: Social media is the general term used for internet-based tools for sharing and discussing information among people. It refers to user-generated information, opinion and other content shared over open digital networks. Social media may include (although is not limited to):

- blogs hosted by media outlets (eg. 'comments' or 'your say')
- blogs, including corporate blogs and personal blogs
- forums, discussion boards and groups
- instant messaging (including SMS)
- micro-blogging (eg. Twitter)
- social networking sites (eg. Facebook, Myspace, LinkedIn,)
- video and photo sharing websites (eg. Flickr, Youtube)
- video podcasts
- wikis and online collaborations (eg. Wikipedia)
- sound social networks, e.g. Soundcloud, Hubbub

Social media also includes other emerging electronic/digital communication applications. It is important to remember that any website can become a 'social media space' with the addition of functionality such as comments, 'likes' and discussion areas.

Employee: All paid employees of Council, a contractor or subcontractor, a student gaining work experience or a volunteer.

5. POLICY STATEMENT

Social Media are important communication channels that provide Council with additional opportunities to engage directly with the public. These tools can be used to provide information about services and products, and create two-way conversations and consultation opportunities.

It is essential that employees (as defined above) understand that comments published or broadcast via social media platforms are public statements and must be made by an authorised spokesperson in the same way that comments are made in any public forum or to the media.

The objectives of this policy are compatible with the adopted Code of Conduct.

5.1 Professional use of social media

Access to Social media sites at work is restricted to staff who have a genuine business need and authority from their Deputy General Manager.

In order to **engage** on social media sites on Council's behalf, employees must be authorised by the General Manager through Council's Delegation of Authority system.

When using social media on behalf of Council, Authorised representatives must:

- disclose that they are an employee of Council and use only their own identity, unless authorised to use an approved official account or avatar;
- disclose and comment only on information classified as public domain information;
- ensure that all content published is accurate and not misleading and complies with all relevant council policies and other relevant requirements;
- ensure they are not the first to make a major announcement (unless specifically given permission to do so);
- comment only on their area of expertise and authority;
- ensure comments are respectful of the community with which they are interacting online;
- if the user subsequently discovers an error in their blog or social networking entry, they are required to immediately inform their supervisor and then correct the error;
- adhere to the terms of use set by the social media platform or website and adhere to legislation including copyright, privacy, defamation, contempt of court, discrimination, harassment and any other applicable laws, as well as Council's Privacy Management Plan.

Authorised representatives must not:

- post or respond to material that is offensive, obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, bullying, discriminatory, hateful, racist, sexist, constitutes a contempt of court, a court suppression order, or is otherwise unlawful use or disclose any confidential or secure information;
- comment on or post any material that might otherwise cause damage to Council's reputation or bring it into disrepute.
- send or cause to be sent chain or SPAM emails or text messages in any format.

5.2 Personal use of social media

This policy does not aim to discourage or unduly limit employees using social media for personal expression or pursuing other online activities in their personal lives.

Employees should be aware of and understand the potential risks and damage to Council that can arise, either directly or indirectly, from their personal use of social media. Compliance with this policy should ensure that risks are minimised.

Employees are personally responsible for content published in their personal capacity on any form of social media platform.

Employees must not:

- imply that they are authorised to speak as representatives of Council, nor give the impression that the views expressed are those of Council;
- use the identity or likeness of another Council employee in a social media space;
- use their council email address or any council logos or insignia that may give the impression of official support or endorsement of their personal comment;
- use or disclose any confidential information or personal information obtained in their capacity as an employee or contractor of Council;
- post material that is, or might be construed as, threatening, harassing, bullying or discriminatory towards another employee or contractor of Council;
- comment or post any material that might otherwise cause damage to Council's reputation or bring it into disrepute.

5.3 Creation and moderation of Council-produced social media

All Council websites and social media accounts must be authorised by the General Manager.

All online and social media accounts used by Council, as well as their authorised users must be listed on the Social Media Register. This register will be maintained by the Communication and Community Engagement Officer and stored in Council's CivicView Sytem.

5.4 Compliance

Non-compliance with this policy may constitute a breach of council's Code of Conduct or other employment/service conditions which may result in disciplinary procedures being taken.

Identifying and reporting inappropriate use

Where an employee becomes aware of inappropriate or unlawful online content that relates to Council, or content that may otherwise have been published in breach of this policy, the situation and circumstances should be reported immediately to the Deputy General Manager Corporate & Community for resolution.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Managers/Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that staff are aware of their responsibilities under the Social Media Policy and liaising with the Deputy General Manager Corporate & Community over any concerns related to its use.

Council Employees and Councillors should be aware of and comply with their responsibilities under this policy and related policies such as the Model Code of Conduct.

7. RELATED POLICY OR PROCEDURES

Community Engagement Policy
 Media & Communications Policy
 Internet, Email and Computer Use Policy.
 Customer Service Charter
 Complaints Handling Policy
 Records Management Policy

The contents and intent of this policy are consistent with expectations outlined in the Model Code of Conduct. This policy is intended to support and expand on conduct obligations in the Code specifically in relation to the use of social media.

8. RELATED LEGISLATION

Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (GIPA Act)
NSW Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998
NSW Anti Discrimination Act 1977
 Web Content and Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 (WCAG 2.0)