

Social Media



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| Council Policy Number | 131 |
| Date adopted | 18 May 2022 |
| Scheduled for review | May 2025 |

1. Preamble

Social media provides a range of communication platforms which can be used in addition to the traditional communication tools, such as media releases, website and newsletters.

2. Purpose

To guide Councillors, staff, contractors, agents and volunteers in the appropriate use of social media platforms and tools when conducting Campaspe Shire Council ('Council') business.

3. Definitions

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| Social media | Online digital spaces used for creating, conversing and sharing information and can include blogs, social networks, forums, podcasts or videos. |
| Social media user | Combined throughout policy to include Councillors, staff (permanent, temporary or casual), contractors, agents and volunteers. |
| Social media editor | Authorised by the Manager Customer Service to use a Council social media account, or one of its services or commercial businesses. |
| Personal use | Using social media privately, whether during business hours or outside of business hours. |

4. Policy Statement

This policy applies to all social media users who want to use social media on behalf of Council.

It will also apply to agencies and individuals who provide services to Council and will be included in all relevant external supplier contracts (as applicable, as it relates to our work).

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 Council;
- promote the effective and productive provision of information through social media;
- minimise miscommunication or mischievous communications;
- help Council address the inherent expectations and challenges of communicative immediacy.

The policy applies to those digital spaces where people may comment, contribute, create, forward, post, upload and share content, and may include (though is not limited to):

- social networking sites and apps (eg. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn);
- video and photo sharing apps (eg. Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat);
- Blogs, including corporate blogs and personal blogs;
- Blogs hosted by media outlets (eg. comments on 'Your Say')
- Forums, discussion boards and groups (eg. Google groups)
- Review platforms (eg. TripAdvisor)
- Instant messaging (eg. Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp)

4.1 Personal use of social media

This policy is not intended to discourage personal expression however you are responsible for the content you publish in a personal capacity on any form of social media platform. The best advice is to approach online worlds the same way as you do the physical one. Have fun but be smart.

- The internet never forgets. Search engines, archives and other technologies make it virtually impossible to take something back. There is really no such thing as “delete” on the internet, so always think twice before you post.
- Nothing is ever truly private. Even if you use privacy tools assume that everything you write, exchange or receive on social media is public. Material posted in a relatively secure setting can still be copied and reproduced elsewhere.
- Assume that your personal life and professional life will merge online regardless of your care in separating them. Even if you do not identify yourself as a Campaspe Shire Councillor, staff member, contractor, agent or volunteer you could still be recognised as such, including when posting anonymously or using an alias or pseudonym.
- Own up to mistakes. If you make a mistake, correct it immediately and be clear about what you’ve done to fix it.
- Respect copyright. If it’s not yours, don’t use it. Before posting someone else’s work check with the owner first.

When using social media, you must not:

- Disclose confidential Council information.
- Disclose internal Council discussions or decisions.
- Imply that you are authorised to speak as a representative of Council, nor give the impression that the views you express are those of Council, unless you are an authorised social media editor, as outlined in point 3.
- Use any Council logos. Your Council email address cannot be used for personal accounts, however it is acceptable to use for accounts relating to your work, for example LinkedIn.
- Make any disparaging comment/post that may cause reputational damage to the Council.
- Make any disparaging comment/post about a Councillor, staff member, contractors, agents and volunteers.
- Post material that is false, offensive, obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, bullying, discriminatory, hateful, racist, sexist, infringes copyright or is otherwise unlawful.

4.2 Using social media at work

Staff are encouraged to submit content to the Communications team relating to their work to be shared with Council’s social media followers.

When using social media at work you must do so in accordance with the ICT Policy, which requires staff to use the resources ‘reasonably’, in a matter that does not interfere with work and is not inappropriate or excessively accessed. It is not acceptable to spend hours using social media that is not related specifically to your work.

Examples of reasonable use include:

- Liking, sharing or retweeting content from a Council account on your own account
- Updating statuses and posting messages during breaks

When using social media, users are expected to:

- adhere to Council codes of conduct, policies and procedures;
- behave with caution, courtesy, honesty and respect;
- comply with relevant laws and regulations;
- adhere to and reinforce the integrity, reputation and values of Council.

4.3 Authorised professional use of social media

Before engaging in social media as a representative of Council, social media editors must be authorised by the Manager Customer Service.

New Council social media accounts must be authorised by the Executive Management Team and enabled by the Manager Customer Service.

Once authorised to comment on behalf of Council, social media users should make comments and posts that:

- Offer advice and support in their area of expertise. Advice, support or comment from a colleague who has expertise relevant to the issue may also be relayed in liaison with them.
- Are factually correct and comply with the relevant policies, especially confidentiality and disclosure.
- Are respectful of all individuals and communities and respectful to others' opinions, even in times of heated discussion and debate.
- Adhere to Council's Communications and Writing Guideline and Social Media Plan.
- Adhere to this policy and seek to conform to the cultural and behavioural standards of the social media platform being used as well as the Terms of Use.

4.4 Monitoring and identifying inappropriate use

Social media users are one of our most vital assets for monitoring the social media landscape.

If you come across positive or negative comments about Council and its activities, please share them with the Communications team.

In the case of negative comments, notifying the Communications team before an issue reaches a crisis situation can enable potential issues to be resolved more effectively and efficiently.

If a social media user becomes aware of, or suspects content or activity that may breach this policy you must report this to your immediate supervisor, Manager or General Manager.

Council uses social media reporting software, ArchiveSocial, to monitor comments for inappropriate use and comply with Public Records Acts requirements. It is not used to monitor private accounts.

4.5 Compliance

Depending on the circumstances, non-compliance with this policy may constitute a breach of employment or contractual obligations, misconduct, sexual harassment, discrimination, bullying or other breach of the law.

Social media users who fail to comply with this policy may face disciplinary action in accordance with the:

- Councillor Code of Conduct (Councillor);
- Disciplinary Action Procedure (staff), which may include termination of employment.

4.6 A-Z guide for using social media

Guidelines for using social media are as follows:

Access

Be mindful of the requisite government web standards for people with special needs. Information made available via non-compliant platforms should be made accessible in another form if possible.

Accuracy

Be accurate, constructive, helpful and informative. Correct any errors as soon as practicable. Do not publish information or make statements which you know to be false or may reasonably be taken to be misleading or deceptive.

Authorisation

Ensure appropriate authorisation has been obtained before using social media including, but not limited to uploading content and acting as a spokesperson on behalf of Council.

Be responsive

Specify the type of comments and feedback that will receive a response and clearly communicate a target response time. Make it easy for audiences to reach Council via other methods by publishing Council's phone number, generic email, etc. On Facebook in particular, include 'manned' hours in the Information tab.

Be safe

Protect your personal privacy and guard against identity theft.

Defamation

Do not comment, contribute, create, forward, post, upload or share content that is malicious or defamatory. This includes statements which may negatively impact the reputation of another.

Disclosure

Only discuss publicly available information. Do not disclose confidential information, internal discussions or decisions of Council, employees or third parties. This includes publishing confidential, personal or private information where there is sufficient detail for potential identification of Councillors, Council staff or third parties.

Discrimination

Be mindful of anti-discrimination laws and do not publish statements or information which may be discriminatory.

Expertise

Do not comment outside your area of expertise. Do not commit Council to actions or undertakings.

Identity

Be clear about professional identity or any vested interests. Do not use fictitious names or identities that deliberately intend to deceive, mislead or lie. Do not participate anonymously or covertly via a third party or agency.

Intellectual property

Seek permission from the creator or copyright owner, to use or reproduce copyright material including applications, audio tracks (speeches, songs), footage (video), graphics (graphs, charts and logos), images, artwork, photographs, publications or music. Also seek permission before publishing or uploading material in which the intellectual property rights, such as trademarks, are owned by a third party, eg. company logos. Seek permission from the website's owner wherever possible before linking to another site.

Language

Be mindful of language and expression.

Media

Do not issue statements or make announcements through social media channels unless authorised. Do not respond directly if approached by media for comment through social media. Refer the inquiry to the communications team as per Council's media policy. Social media will point back to original sources of media releases and alerts, ie. website, not publish entire statements.

Modification and moderation

Ensure that any social media sites created or contributed to can be readily edited, improved or removed and appropriately moderated.

Opinion

Clearly separate personal opinions from professional ones and be mindful of Council's Code of Conduct when discussing or commenting on Council matters. In general, don't express personal opinions using Council pages or tags or other identifications. Only where this is not possible, consider using a formal disclaimer to separate official Council positions from personal opinions and distance Council from comments made by public and other outside interests.

Political bias

Do not endorse any political affinity or allegiance.

Privacy

Be sensitive to the privacy of others. Seek permission from anyone who appears in any photographs, video or other footage before sharing these via any form of social media. If asked to remove materials, do so as soon as possible.

Respect

Always be courteous, patient and respectful of others' opinions, including detractors.

Reward

Do not publish content in exchange for reward of any kind.

State of mind

Do not use social media when inebriated, irritated, upset, angry or tired.

Transparency

Do not seek to buy or recompense favourable social media commentary. Encourage online publishers to be open and transparent in how they engage with, or review Council personnel, services or wares.

4.7 Site transparency

When available, filters will be used to restrict inappropriate comments. In addition, auto responses will be used to advise office hours for direct messages, to advise the customer of when the page is monitored.

The following comment policy will be attached to all Facebook pages, with wording adjusted to match the business service name:

Campaspe Shire Council's Facebook Page is designed to present matters of public interest in Campaspe, including its many residents, businesses and visitors. We encourage you to submit your questions, comments, and concerns, but please note this is a moderated Facebook Page.

Campaspe Shire Council reserves the right to delete submissions that contain:

- vulgar language;
- personal attacks of any kind;
- offensive comments that target or disparage any ethnic, racial, or religious group.

Further, Council also reserves the right to delete comments that are:

- spam or include links to other sites;
- clearly off-topic;
- advocate illegal activity;
- promote particular services, products or political organisations;
- infringe on copyrights or trademarks;
- use personally identifiable information.

Campaspe Shire Page administrators reserve the right to remove any comments at any time, for any reason and to remove access rights to any user who posts information in violation of this policy. If you have a comment or would like to report a post for review, send an email to comms@campaspe.vic.gov.au or contact Council's Communications team on (03) 5481 2200.

Posters that repeatedly disregard the guidelines will be removed and marked as spam.

4.8 Further information

If you have any doubt about applying the provisions of this policy, check with the Communications team before using social media to communicate. Depending on the nature of the issue and potential risk, it may also be appropriate to consider seeking legal advice.

5. Exclusions

Nil

6. Human Rights

This policy has considered and complies with the Human Rights and Responsibilities contained in the Victorian Charter of *Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.

7. Related Legislation

Councillors and staff of the Council are expected to demonstrate standards of conduct and behaviour that are consistent with relevant legislation, regulations and policies. A list of relevant legislation may be used as a guide. Council policies and guideline provisions which must be adhered to in relation to the use of social media include the following:

- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Victoria)
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001* (Victoria)
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* (Victoria)

8. Related Policies, Procedures and Strategies

A 072, Information and Communication Technology

Councillor Code of Conduct

Employee Code of Conduct

Council Policy 055, Media Relations

Council Policy 081, Privacy and Data Protection

Procedure PR130 - Disciplinary Action

9. Attachments

None

Review Period

Three years

Responsible officer


Manager Communications

Administrative Updates

It is recognised that, from time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this document. Where an update does not materially alter the policy, such a change may be made administratively. Examples include a change to the name of a Council department, a change to the name of a Federal or State Government department, and a minor update to legislation which does not have a material impact. However, any change or update which materially alters this document must be by resolution of Council.

Approval History

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| Adopted | 19 July 2011 | Minute Book Reference No 17821 (item 13.3) |
| Revised | 5 February 2014 | Executive Management Group |
| Revised | 27 August 2014 | Executive Management Group |
| Revised | 9 September 2015 | Executive Management Group |
| Revised | 30 November 2016 | Executive Management Group |
| Revised | 6 September 2017 | Executive Management Group |
| Revised | 29 January 2019 | Minute Book Reference No 18 (item 7.4) |
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| Revised | 23 September 2020 | Administrative Change (7. Related Legislation) |
| Revised | 22 February 2021 | Administrative update to apply consistent references to Campaspe Shire Council ('Council') |
| Revised | 18 April 2022 | Minute Book Reference No. |

Chief Executive Officer: 

Date: 23.5.22