POLICY STATEMENT

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

POLICY ADOPTED: **21 April 2020**

Policy Objective:
Bland Shire Council recognises that social media provides opportunities for dynamic and interactive two-way communication, which can complement existing communication and further improve information, access and delivery of key services. The Council also recognises the value of social media for:
- networking;
- recruitment;
- continuing professional development;
- employee engagement;
- innovation;
- marketing and promotion; and
- circulating time sensitive information to the widest possible audience.

It is acknowledged that certain risks are associated with social media tools. The intent of this policy is to provide understanding and guidance for the appropriate use of social media platforms and tools for anyone who uses social media on behalf of Bland Shire Council.

Policy Statement:
This policy is designed to provide a framework for Council to use web-based technologies to facilitate collaboration and sharing between Council, employees, ratepayers and customers.

The policy applies to all Councillors, employees, contractors, agents and volunteers of Bland Shire Council who purport to use media on behalf of the Council.

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 of appropriate use of social media for Bland Shire Council
- Promote effective, timely and productive community engagement through social media
- Minimise miscommunication or mischievous communications
- Empower the community where there are opportunities for people to genuinely participate in community life and in decisions that affect their lives

The policy applies to those digital spaces where people may comment, contribute, create, forward, post, upload and share content, including:
- Blogs
- Bulletin boards
- Open journalism and news sites which facilitate public comment
- Forums and discussion boards
- Instant messaging facilities
- Microblogging sites (e.g. Twitter)
- Online encyclopaedias (e.g. Wikipedia)

- Podcasts
- Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, MySpace, Google+, Friendster, LinkedIn, TikTok)
- Video and photo sharing sites (e.g. Flickr, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat)
- Video podcasts
- Wikis
- Any other websites that allow individuals to use simple publishing tools or new technologies emerging from the digital environment.

As it is not possible to expressly refer to or list the specific sites or kinds of social media outlets, the absence of a reference to a particular site or kind of social media activity does not limit the application of this policy.

Related Documents
This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies and procedures of Bland Shire Council, including Council's Communications Policy, Internet, Email and Computer Usage Policy, Council's Code of Conduct, Social Media procedures and Council employment contracts.

Council officers operating any social media platform as part of their duties are also bound to abide by the terms and conditions of that particular site.

Social Media Requirements
When establishing a social media account on behalf of Council, users must complete the Social Media Account Checklist (Appendix A) and submit to the relevant Director for approval and the General Manager for authorisation.

Account administrators must operate the account in accordance with the objectives outlined in the completed Social Media Account checklist submitted to the General Manager.

When using social media, individuals posting as representatives of Council are expected to:
- Adhere to Bland Shire Council code of conduct, policies, procedures and guidelines
- Behave with caution, courtesy, honesty and respect
- Comply with relevant laws and regulations
- Reinforce the integrity, reputation and values of Bland Shire Council
- Identify yourself as a representative of Council. Provide your full name and position in which you are communicating. In some instances, this can be achieved in your user profile.
- Know and follow record management practices. Council has regulatory and legal obligations to retain certain information as records. Follow the procedures outlined in Council's Records Management Policy.

The following content is not permitted under any circumstances:
- Abusive, profane or sexual language
- Content which is false or misleading
- Confidential information about Council or third parties
- Copyright or Trade mark protected materials
- Discriminatory material 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
- Illegal material or materials designed to encourage law breaking
- Materials that could compromise Council, an employee or system safety
- Materials which would breach applicable laws (eg. defamation, privacy, trade practices, financial rules and regulations, fair use, trademarks)
- Material that would offend contemporary standards of taste and decency
- Material that would bring the Council into disrepute
- Personal details or references to Councillors, Council staff or third parties, which may be inconsistent with Council's Privacy Policy.
- Spam, meaning the distribution of unsolicited bulk electronic messages

- Statements which may be considered to be bullying or harassment

If any doubt prevails regarding applying the provisions of this policy, administrators are required to check with their relevant Director or the General Manager before using social media to communicate.

The General Manager or Director of Corporate and Community Services will exercise authority to amend the site or delete posts if considered detrimental to any party or individual and will advise and discuss these actions with the appropriate site administrator.

Social media accounts
When using Facebook, all Council accounts must be operated and administered as a "page" rather than a "profile".

Facebook advise that maintaining a personal account or "profile" for anything other than an individual person is a violation of its Statement of Rights and Responsibilities.

All social media accounts administered by Council officers as part of their employment shall remain under the control of Council. Log in and password details must be provided to records as well as the relevant director or supervisor. When a staff member leaves Bland Shire Council, responsibility for administering the relevant account will be transferred to another employee at the discretion of the relevant director or supervisor.

Dealing with offensive or inappropriate behaviour
Bland Shire Council encourages open two-way communication through social media and accepts that not all feedback will be positive or constructive. Council will not tolerate content that is offensive, obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, bullying, discriminatory, hateful, racist, sexist, infringes copyright, constitutes a contempt of court, breaches a Court suppression order, or is otherwise unlawful. Such content will be removed. Users who breach Council's Social Media Policy may be banned from accessing Council's social media sites. Council also reserves the right to moderate content from individuals who seek to monopolise and dominate Council's social media sites for their own purposes.

Privacy
Councillors and staff are required to adhere to the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act (NSW) 1998 when posting material on social media.

References:
Local Government Association of South Australia – a Social Media Issues Paper for Local Councils
Rockdale City Council Social Media Policy DRAFT
Bankstown City Council Social Media Policy
Randwick City Council Social Media Policy
Cornwall Council (UK) Social Media Policy
Town of Port Headland Social Media Policy
State Library of New South Wales

Appendices:
Appendix A – Social Media Account Checklist

Authorisation:

Status	Committee	N/A	
	Manex		
Owner	**Director Corporate & Community Services**		
EDRMS Doc. ID	373110		
Superceded Policy	Adopted 20 November 2012		
Date of Adoption/ Amendment	**Revision Number**	**Minute Number**	**Review Date**
20 November 2012	0		June 2014
21 April 2020	1		April 2022

Related Council Policy / Procedure
Social Media Procedures
Bland Shire Council Code of Conduct
Communications Policy
Internet, Email and Computer Usage Policy
Record Management Policy
Privacy Code of Practice for Local Government
Privacy Management Plan

Appendix A

Social Media Account Checklist

The following checklist is a good place to begin when considering setting up a social media account and determining its purpose.

1. What will our account name be?
- Can we get a name that aligns with our organisation-services?
- Can we get a name that matches other social media accounts we already have?
- All Council pages must commence with "Bland Shire" followed by the position or department title (eg Bland Shire Mayor) or a position or department title followed by "Bland Shire" (eg General Manager Bland Shire).
- All Council social media pages are owned by Bland Shire Council and should be referenced accordingly

2. What email account will it be linked to?
- Can this email be accessed by multiple staff or one person only?
- If it is a corporate account will it block communication from the site?

3. Who can post/publish items to the account?
- Will publishing responsibility be restricted to an individual or team of people?
- How will the messages be controlled, fact checked, spell checked?
- Is it important that any communications have a similar 'voice' or style?
- Will this be officially recognised as part of people's work plans with time allocated to the activity? If so, how much time?

4. What type of content can be published?
- What will the account be used for primarily?
- Will we post images or just text?

5. What type of content will NOT be published?
- Will we post details of events/promotions for organisations outside of Council that we are not a partner with, or attending?
- Will we post details of events/promotions for other areas of Council?
- What about activities/groups that staff are involved with outside of work?
- What is our policy about naming staff members online?
- What do we do with information that may be critical of Council or politically sensitive e.g. new development application?

6. Who is our target audience?
- How will we reach them?
- Why are we doing this?

7. Who/What will we follow/friend or NOT?
- Will we follow official Council accounts from our own Council?
- Will we follow other Councils?
- Will we follow local media?
- Will we follow Councillors?
- Will we follow individual members of staff?
- Will we follow members of the public?
- Will we follow political parties?
- What about local service providers, businesses, emergency services, Government organisations, community groups, lobby groups, clubs etc.?

8. Who/What will we block and why?
- What is our legal/moral obligation here?

- Will we block illegal, offensive, defamatory material? Political/fundraising material?
- Advertising/promotional material?

9. Will we Direct Message followers/friends?
- Will all our communication/posting be public? - Remember many of our followers/friends may be under 18 years of age.

10. How will we track/monitor our postings/communication?
- Will we use a third party product?
- What will our policy be about deleting posts?
- Should copies be kept of deleted posts?
- Do we need to archive posts? How often? How?