

POLICY STATEMENT

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

AUTHORISATION

POLICY TYPE: <i>(Council or Operational)</i>	Council
POLICY LOCATION: <i>(eg. Corporate, Engineering, etc.)</i>	Executive Services
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER: <i>(by position title)</i>	Media and Communications Officer
AUTHORISED BY: <i>(GM or Director Title)</i>	General Manager
DATE ADOPTED:	
ADOPTED BY: <i>(Manex or Council)</i>	Council
MINUTE NO: <i>(If required)</i>	
REVIEW DUE DATE: <i>(Four years unless statutorily required sooner)</i>	March 2028
REVISION NUMBER:	3
RELATIONSHIP TO THE COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN	This Policy supports Council's Delivery Program and Operational Plan 2022-23 under strategy 4.3 and 11.2. Ensuring proper management and use of social media further allows for active engagement with community and promotion of open communication by adopting innovative and accessible communication strategies.

DOCUMENT HISTORY

VERSION NO.	DATE	DESCRIPTION OF AMENDMENTS <i>Include names of former policies that this policy will replace if applicable</i>	AMENDED BY <i>(Where required)</i>
1	20 Nov 2012		
2	21 April 2020		
3	March 2024	New template adopted. Synthesis of the document, whilst adding additional information relating to complaints handling when received via social media, and Councillor and Staff use of social media. Clarification also added on authorised users and scope of document.	Media and Communications Officer

REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

This Policy will be reviewed within 4 years from the date of adoption or as required in the event of legislative changes. The Policy may also be changed as a result of other amendment that are to the advantage that Council and in the spirit of this Policy.

Any amendment to the Policy must be with the approval of the General Manager/Manex.

1. Definitions;

'Authorised persons' refers to the General Manager, the Director of Corporate and Community Services or persons that have been given express approval by the General Manager to perform administrative duties on Council social media.

'Social Media' refers to internet-based tools for sharing or discussing information. It relates to user-generated information, opinion or other content shared over open digital networks.

Social Media may include (although is not limited to):

- social networking sites (eg: Facebook, Twitter)
- video and photo sharing websites (eg: Flickr, Youtube)
- blogs, including corporate blogs and personal blogs
- Wikipedia and other online collaborations (e.g. wiki's)
- forums, discussion boards and groups (eg: Google and Yahoo groups)
- podcasting

2. Purpose:

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 a number of benefits to having a healthy and positive social media presence, such as networking, recruitment, promotion and circulating time sensitive information.

This policy is designed to provide a framework for Council, Council staff and Councillors to use social media tools to facilitate collaboration and sharing between Council, employees, ratepayers and external stakeholders.

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.

3. Scope:

This policy applies to:

- the use of any of Council's social media forums in an official capacity by an approved social media representative.
- Councillors, employees, contractors, agents and volunteers of Bland Shire Council.
- all activities undertaken on an official Council social media channel or using a social media tool.
- all individuals seeking promotion through the Media and Communications Officer managing any of Council's social media forums such as:
 - Bland Shire Council Facebook page
 - Visit West Wyalong Facebook page
 - Bland Shire Library Facebook Page
 - Bland Shire Children Services Unit Facebook Page
 - Bland Shire – It Takes a Village Facebook Page
 - Bland Shire Youth Facebook Page
 - Bland Shire Youth Instagram Page
 - Bland Shire Council Facebook Page
 - Bland Shire Council LinkedIn
 - Visit West Wyalong Facebook Page
 - Bland Shire Library Instagram Page
 - Bland Shire Children Services Unit Instagram Page
 - Bland Shire Council YouTube channel

It is noted that Social Media falls under the 'Media' category of Bland Shire Council's Communication Policy and Procedure, and this document should be read in conjunction with these other documents.

4. Outcomes;

This Policy is designed to inform authorised users, and members of Council, of the appropriate use of social media as a representative of the Bland Shire Council. It outlines measures to protect and enhance the reputation of Council in the use of social media channels and to promote effective, timely and productive community engagement through social media. Effective implementation will result in empowering the community to genuinely participate in community life, and in decisions that affect their lives, whilst minimising miscommunication or mischievous communications.

5. General Matters;

Staff and Councillors, with the exception of the Mayor and General Manager, are prohibited from posting on social media regarding Council related business and operational matters in their capacity as a staff member or Councillor without the written permission of the General Manager.

Council staff and Councillors may post on social media as private individuals on the conditions that their comments are not perceived as representing official Council position or policy. Best practise is to not identify yourself as a staff member, or as a Councillor, to avoid misplaced implications of official authority.

Councillors and Council staff should raise social media occurrences that could result in damage to Council's reputation directly to the General Manager at their earliest convenience, and refrain from commenting or posting on the matter.

6. Roles and Responsibilities;

The Implementation of this Policy applies to authorised persons that administrate and manage Bland Shire Council social media outlets and representatives of Council.

When establishing a social media account on behalf of Council, authorised 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.

Council's social media platforms are administered by authorised persons only. Councillors and staff are responsible for the moderation and administration of their own personal accounts.

Official Council social media Users;

Authorised users will:

- 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.
- Ensure that 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.

- Ensure that all social media accounts administered by Council officers as part of their employment shall remain under the control of Council.
- Provide log in and password details to records as well as the relevant director or supervisor.
 - When a staff member leaves Council, responsibility for administering the relevant account will be transferred to another employee at the discretion of the relevant director or supervisor.
- Ensure that the community are aware of Council policy regarding offensive and inappropriate behaviour.
 - This information will be accessible to the general public on all relevant social media pages and accounts.
- Promptly remove 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.
- Ban users that breach Council's Social Media Policy from accessing Council's social media sites. The authorised user also reserves the right to moderate content from individuals who seek to monopolise and dominate Council's social media sites for their own purposes.
- In the event that a community member has a complaint regarding content on Council social media, they should be acknowledged, and directed to make a complaint in line with the Complaints Handling Policy.
- In the event that a community member has a query, the query should be directed to the relevant staff member or director for appropriate response.
- All queries or complaints should be recorded in Bland Shire Council's records management system.

Authorised users will ensure posts:

- Adhere to Council's 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.
- Are corrected promptly when they have errors in content, spelling and grammar.

Authorised users will ensure posts do not contain:

- 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.

Councillors and Mayor;

Councillors should conduct themselves on social media in a way that reflects the values of Council and in adherence with the Model Code of Conduct. Whether intended or not, posts, comments or any other social media activity engaged in a private capacity may reflect on Council and their role as a Councillor.

Councillors may make personal comments on social media platforms, however they must make clear that any views and opinions are their own, and do not reflect that of other Council representatives or Council itself.

The following examples relate to, but are not limited to, what a Councillor must **not** do:

- Speak on Council's behalf;
- Commit Council to any action, pre-empt official Council announcements or post any confidential Council information;
- Direct staff to post content, in line with the Model Code of Conduct;
- Breach the privacy of other Council officials or those that deal with Council;
- Post content that is offensive, humiliating, threatening, or intimidating to other Council officials or those that deal with Council;
- Post content to ridicule, vilify, harass, cyberbully, discriminate against or bring into disrepute the Council, or other Council officials, including Councillors or community members; or
- Post content about Council that may be misleading or deceptive to the community.

Council Staff;

Council staff and Management should conduct themselves on social media in a way that reflects the values of Council and in adherence with the Model Code of Conduct. Whether intended or not, posts, comments or any other social media activity engaged in a private capacity may reflect on Council and their role as a Council employee.

Council Staff may post on their private social media platforms in a personal capacity but must make clear that any views are their own opinions as an individual and not those of Council.

The following are examples of, but are not limited to, what Council staff should and should not do on social media.

Do ...

- Remember everything you say and do is public, and you can be identified as a Council employee.
- Pause before you post – would you be comfortable with this information being shared with your family, friends, work colleagues, media and the broader community, and is the information likely to bring you or Council into disrepute?
- Be mindful of your general conduct obligations under the Model Code of Conduct, including the requirement not to damage Council's reputation.
- Be careful to communicate accurate information.
- Be courteous and respectful of Councillors, other Council staff and members of the community, including respecting people's privacy.

- Report any violations of this policy to the General Manager and/or the Internal Ombudsman.

Do not ...

- Imply that you are speaking on behalf of Council.
- Disclose official, personal, or confidential information that is not publicly available (such as staff, personal information, legal advice, commercial-in-confidence and Model Code of Conduct complaints).
- Post material that is obscene, pornographic, defamatory, threatening, harassing or discriminatory to any individual, group or organisation or may lead to criminal penalty.

7. Legislation and Supporting Documents;

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following legislation:

- Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)
- Local Government (General) Regulation 2021
- Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (GIPA)
- Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act (NSW) 1998 (PPIPA)

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following Bland Shire Council documents:

- Bland Shire Social Media Procedure
- Bland Shire Council's Code of Conduct
- Bland Shire Complaints Handling Policy
- Bland Shire Council's Communications and Engagement Plan
- Bland Shire Council's Communications Policy
- Bland Shire Council's Communications Procedure
- Bland Shire Council employment contracts.
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Authorised users are required to adhere to the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act (NSW) 1998 when posting material on social media.

8. References:

Local Government Association of South Australia – a Social Media Issues Paper for Local Councils
NSW Department of Industry, Skills and Regional Development Social Media Policy
State Library of New South Wales

9. Attachments:

Appendix A – Social Media Account Checklist

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 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?
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