

Social Media Policy

LINKS TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN AND DELIVERY PROGRAM:

Direction G2: Our community is actively involved in well -informed decision processes.

Strategy G2c: Promote and advocate communications that are targeted, accessible and clearly branded.

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Definition of social media

'Social media' is the term commonly given to websites, online tools and other Information Communication Technologies (ICT) which allow users to interact with each other in some way – by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests.

It involves building communities or networks, encouraging participation and engagement.

Examples of social media platforms include social networking such as Facebook, Twitter, and MySpace; blogs (online diaries); podcasts; message boards; and content sharing websites such as Flickr and YouTube.

The sections Councillors, Lifeguards and Personal Use of Social Media also apply to associated websites which do not necessarily have an interactive component.

Purpose of policy

Social media is increasingly a key and popular communications tool, and this policy provides a framework for the effective and safe use of social media to promote Waverley Council's vision, services and achievements and to engage with the community.

This policy will also apply to any new technologies or systems which develop in the future.

In conjunction with other policies and procedures, the policy works towards Council's overall communications aim which is to "Position Council as a high profile, innovative and effective organisation in touch with community needs".

The policy also seeks to protect the reputation of Council and its staff by minimising the various risks associated with the use of social media platforms.

Who does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to everyone who works for Council. This includes all business areas of Waverley Council and all permanent, casual, temporary and contracted Council staff, volunteers and Waverley family day care educators. There is also a specific section relevant to Councillors.

Any acts which breach this policy can result in disciplinary action under Council's Code of Conduct.

Council's position on social media

Council sees social media as a required and increasingly important communications tool. Social media is used by Council when there is a need identified in:

- a communications strategy
- a media strategy
- a community engagement/consultation strategy.

A need could be to:

- enhance Council's reputation by promoting Council projects, services and events
- respond to comments posted on external social media related to Council projects, policies or services
- provide an informal way for the community to communicate with Council
- provide another means of consulting with the community.

Council currently has a number of social media platforms within social networking and blogging including:

Platform	Project Manager
What's on Waverley Facebook page	Communications and Engagement
Planning Bondi's Future Facebook Page	Communications and Engagement
What's on Waverley Twitter account	Communications and Engagement
Bondi Pavilion Facebook page	Communications and Engagement
Have Your Say Waverley Website	Communications and Engagement
My Bondi Summer website/blog	Events and Business Development
My Bondi Summer Facebook page	Events and Business Development
Bondi Winter Magic Facebook page	Events and Business Development
Bondi Winter Magic website/blog	Events and Business Development
Local Studies blog (currently under construction)	Waverley Library

Council lifeguards have Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts which are managed either through *Bondi Rescue's* production company or by individual lifeguards.

Ownership and Monitoring

The Communications and Engagement team has ownership of all Council-run social media. If another business area is authorised to manage content on one of these sites or pages as a project manager, the Communications and Engagement team has responsibility to monitor it to keep up to date with community comments on the topic or business area and where required provide guidance on best practice.

If during monitoring Communications and Engagement staff or the relevant Director or Divisional Manager assess that changes need to be made to content or that content is inappropriate and needs to be removed, the Project Manager can be requested to remove it.

In the absence of a Project Manager or if content needs to be added, edited or removed urgently or out of hours, Communications and Engagement have the authority to log in and remove or change the content.

Please refer to other sections of this policy and the Social Media Guidelines for more information about appropriate content and use.

Access

Staff whose role requires use of social media platforms such as You Tube are granted access by application to Council's Information Technology (I.T) Department.

Most other social media platforms are currently freely available through any internet browser. Please see the Personal Use of Social Media section of this policy for staff responsibilities when accessing personal social media sites or pages at work.

As explained under the Authorisation section of this policy, access to the back end of Council's social media platforms to enable the posting or editing of content requires approval from Communications and Engagement.

Authorisation

New social media sites or pages

The Communications and Media Manager and Executive Officer to the General Manager have authority to approve a new social media platform for Council in conjunction with the relevant Director.

New social media platforms are generally only approved when the topic cannot be adequately managed and promoted through existing Council social media sites or pages and/or other communication channels. Other criteria considered includes:

- The expected volume of content and interaction with the community is high or expected to be high, regular and ongoing
- The topic is relevant to a specific target audience
- The topic is sensitive, specific and likely to attract significant comment and should therefore be separated from existing Council sites or pages and followers
- The topic has led to the creation of active external social media sites or pages which require monitoring and response.

Please contact Communications and Engagement to request consideration of a new social media platform.

Project Managers

The Communications and Engagement team and the Executive Officer to the General Manager have authority to post content to all Council social media platforms on behalf of Council.

The Communications and Media Manager or a delegated member of Communications and Engagement and Executive Officer to the General Manager have the authority to approve staff to project manage Council social media platforms.

Project Managers are able to post content to the site or page they are managing, and respond to comments by other parties on behalf of Council.

Staff will be approved as Project Managers if they:

- Are an expert on the topic
- Have the capacity to manage the day to day content of the site or page including doing regular updates and responses in line with the Social Media Guidelines
- Have the skills and experience to adhere to this policy and the Social Media Guidelines when managing the site or page.

Staff should approach the Communications and Engagement team if they wish to become a Project Manager.

Use of social media for work

Project Managers and members of the Communications and Engagement team use their judgement when posting content on Council social media sites or pages, but the Social Media Guidelines provide a summary of key considerations.

Expertise

Authorised Project Managers should comment within their area of expertise. Should additional information need to be sourced, Project Managers should contact the relevant business division for information to include and seek approval from that business area on draft comment.

Social media should not be used to commit Council to take certain action or to make promises that have not been authorised by Council. Should a member of the community expect such a response, the matter should be referred to Communications and Engagement for further action.

Disclosure

Council staff should only discuss or post publicly available information. As per Council's Code of Conduct, staff must maintain the integrity and security of confidential documents or information in their possession, for which they are responsible.

This also applies to social media, whereby confidential information should not be disclosed without authorisation. This includes any confidential financial, commercially sensitive or personal information, documentation of decisions or meetings, particularly where it is possible to identify individual Councillors, Council staff (or members) or third parties.

Please refer to the Code of Conduct for more information.

Accuracy

Project Managers should ensure all posts or contributions to social media sites and pages are accurate in terms of information, facts and language. Should an error be made, action must be taken to correct it immediately everywhere it appears either by

editing the post or preparing an additional entry that clearly states the error and the correction.

Please check information with topic expert staff before posting, as any posts that are inaccurate, ambiguous or potentially misleading can damage the reputation of Council. It is also important to keep in mind that information posted online is automatically public and permanent – it can always be retrieved, even if it has been 'deleted'.

Social media sites and pages can also be used to help correct any inaccurate facts being published by other users about Council projects, initiatives or decisions. Should this be necessary, staff should discuss it with Communications and Engagement first.

Identity

Staff must not purport to be someone else on Council social media sites or pages or use fictitious names, identities or third parties in order to deceive or mislead users.

Opinion

Council's social media sites or pages must not be used to publish personal opinion or information that does not accurately reflect Council's position on issues. If they are unsure, Project Managers should confirm Council's position on the issue in question with relevant staff.

Liking and Following

Council's social media platforms must not 'like' or 'follow' sites or pages:

- run by a private company where Council could be seen as endorsing a particular brand other than those relevant to Council activities and operations or related to a charity or charitable event
- a political party of candidate in the lead up to an election
- that do not adhere to Council's values (eg: Respect For All).

Please refer to Council's Code of Conduct for more information.

If in doubt, contact Communications and Engagement for advice.

Privacy

Staff should take all possible action to ensure they protect the privacy of others. This includes publishing a disclaimer on all social media sites or pages operated by Council stating that any personal information obtained inadvertently through social media platforms will not be used for Council's marketing purposes or passed on to any third parties.

Staff should also seek to obtain permission from anyone who appears clearly in any photos, videos or other footage before publishing them on Council's social media sites or pages, or advise that photos are being taken or footage is being captured. In the event someone requests that they be removed, please action immediately and record that correspondence for future reference.

Intellectual property

Social media facilitates access to an abundance of content, images, videos, photographs, songs and other media. It is important, however, to remember that intellectual property regulations still apply in the social media sphere.

As a result, staff must ensure they seek the approval of the creator or copyright owner to use, reproduce or publish any copyrighted material on social media sites. Please also acknowledge the copyright and attribute the source of the material which is published and shared online.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- audio clips, songs and music
- video footage
- images, photos, artwork, logos
- data graphs and charts, and
- publications.

Defamation

Project Managers must not engage in dialogue on Council social media that is malicious or defamatory, or which may impact negatively on another person's reputation. This includes creating, commenting on, contributing to, forwarding, posting, uploading or sharing content or statements.

Please refer to Council's Code of Conduct for more information about unacceptable use of Council resources.

Reward and Prize Incentives

Content, statements, photos or other material cannot be published on Council's social media sites or pages in exchange for reward or for personal benefit. This includes offering reward to any other users for favourable media or social media coverage or commentary. Please refer to the Code of Conduct for more information.

Community members are able to be encouraged to 'Like' or join one of Council's social media platforms or get involved in a Council activity (eg: a survey) through prize incentives. Prize incentives can be offered that are not excessive in value and which do not promote brands or companies that do not adhere to Council's values. Contact Communications and Engagement for advice on appropriate prize incentives.

Transparency

Council's social media sites and pages are valuable platforms to help promote Council as open and transparent. There are a number of ways this should be managed:

- Do not omit key publicly available information on Council's policies, projects or services relevant to the topic

- Acknowledge any mistakes and take action to rectify them immediately, apologising to anyone affected or inconvenienced
- Respond publicly to any complaints, negative comments, questions or concerns, and provide opportunities for the user to contact Council for more information or to continue the dialogue. Ensure the response is timely, polite and respectful
- Encourage users to be open and honest about their thoughts on Council's approach to community engagement, service delivery and other issues.

Political bias

Project Managers cannot endorse, or be seen to endorse, any political candidates, parties or align Council with any political affinity on Council's social media sites and pages. This includes but is not limited to 'Liking' or 'Following' a candidate or party.

Ensure posts are politically neutral and do not endorse a policy by a candidate or party or refer to the political affiliation of any Councillor, staff member or volunteer.

Respect

Always interact respectfully with others on social media sites and pages, including being polite, patient and sensitive to the needs, opinions and concerns of users. This is particularly important when responding to any negative commentary or detractor feedback.

Please refer to the Code of Conduct for more information.

Discrimination

Always abide by the Code of Conduct and relevant anti-discrimination laws when using social media for Council purposes by not publishing or engaging in any dialogue that discriminates against another person or group of people. This includes creating, commenting on, contributing to, forwarding, posting, uploading or sharing content or statements.

Please refer to the Code of Conduct for more information.

Language

Staff must always be mindful about the language and expressions used on Council's social media sites and pages. Posts, entries and responses should always be polite, semi-formal and respectful. The use of profanities or offensive language will not be tolerated and will be removed immediately, and further action taken if required.

State of mind

Staff should not operate Council social media sites and pages when affected by drugs or alcohol, irritated, tired or upset as this may lead to the publication of errors, mistakes or incite inflammatory comments.

Please refer to the Code of Conduct for more information.

Media

Any media enquiries fielded through Council's social media sites and pages must be referred to Council's Media and Public Relations Officer for response.

Staff should never publish media announcements or issue statements via Council's social media unless authorised by Communications and Engagement or their appropriate supervisor.

Please refer to Council's Media Policy for more information.

Modification and moderation

Managing, moderating and maintaining approved Council social media is the responsibility of Communications and Engagement in conjunction with authorised Council social media spokespeople and Project Managers.

Should staff post material or content that breaches any element of this policy, it is the responsibility of the staff member or Communications and Engagement to remove the relevant post or page (if necessary).

Depending on the nature and severity of the activity, Communications and Engagement have the authority to remove access to the site or page and report the behaviour to the relevant supervisor. Further action may be taken under the Code of Conduct.

Should any member of the community post offensive or inappropriate content to any of Council's social media sites or pages it will be the responsibility of Communications and Engagement or the authorised spokesperson to immediately remove the post, report it to the parent site (if necessary) and ensure suitable privacy settings are enabled to prevent it happening in future. Council staff should report any instances of inappropriate content to Communications and Engagement for immediate discussion and action.

Accessibility Standards

Project managers should be aware of the web standards for accessibility for people with disability, and ensure that where social media sites and pages are not compliant with the standards, information and messages are appropriately disseminated in a number of ways, including other online, audio and print methods as required.

Responsiveness

Project Managers are required to respond to posts or comments, particularly those that may be negative or pose a question, within two days, preferably one. If the target response time cannot be met, an initial response should be provided to the relevant user to acknowledge the comment and give a target response time for their enquiry. It is important to contact relevant staff members for information to ensure the response is accurate and appropriate.

If staff feel that social media is not the most effective vehicle to handle the enquiry or question, the user should be provided with another way to contact the relevant business area to get more information or can be referred to the website if the information provided is adequate.

Emergencies

Should a Project Manager notice a post or comment that relates to a potential emergency or requires a strategic response from Council, it should be referred immediately to Communications and Engagement for action.

Record keeping

In the interest of accountability it is essential that records are kept of social media activity deemed to be:

- contentious
- inappropriate and in breach of this policy
- a submission or comment related to a consultation project.

This includes records of posts and the feedback received or engagement undertaken (screenshots preferred). This information is to be sent to Communications and Engagement via communications@waverley.nsw.gov.au

Blogs and blogging

Blogs form part of Waverley Council's social media framework in order to meet community needs. The Communications and Engagement team approve all blog content. Project Managers are responsible for drafting content, which is sent to Communications and Engagement for editing and approval. See the Authorisation section of this policy for information on applying for a blog.

Lifeguards

Creation of social media platforms

Council Lifeguards are able to have their own personal social media accounts which identify them as lifeguards.

Accounts are also able to be created relevant to their role in Bondi Rescue and run by individual lifeguards, a delegate or the tv show's production company.

Content

With all of these accounts, content managers are required to be mindful of Council's Code of Conduct which clearly states that staff should not provide comments which might harm Council's reputation or where it could be perceived they are acting as a representative of Council.

Where possible, when commenting on Council initiatives or services, content managers should specify that they are Council initiatives.

To ensure posts related to Council decisions are accurate and up to date, lifeguards should seek information from the appropriate Council officer.

Lifeguards should advise Communications and Engagement of any community comments on social media platforms which mention Council or its projects and programs.

While not mandatory, lifeguards should advise Communications and Engagement of any topics which could be promoted through Council's social media platforms.

Councillors

Creation of social media platforms

Councillors are able to have websites and personal social media accounts, including those which list "Councillor" in front of their name.

These accounts and websites are not Council run or managed, or necessarily representative of Council's views or policies, and this needs to be made clear.

A standard disclaimer which can be used is "All views are my own and not necessarily representative of Waverley Council policy." For social media platforms where there is a limit to characters, the disclaimer can simply be "All views my own."

The creation of any new social media account which is run or managed by Council or could be seen as representative of Council's views or policies (for example a Mayoral Twitter account) needs to be approved - the criteria and process is explained in the Authorisation section of this policy.

Content

Individual Councillors are able to express their own views through their social media accounts and websites at any time. When doing so, they have a responsibility to make it clear that they are commenting in a personal capacity, not as a representative of Waverley Council.

Councillors are also required to ensure the information they provide in relation to Council decisions on their websites and social media accounts is accurate and up to date.

Specifically, Councillors should be mindful of their responsibilities under Chapter 40 of the Local Government Act *Honesty and Disclosure of Interest* and Council's Code of Conduct in relation to public comment. This includes ensuring they do not provide comments on their websites or social media sites and pages which might harm Council's reputation through inaccurate or misleading information.

Where a Councillor posts content relating to a decision of Council (including projects, policies, events and other activities), the Councillor is required to provide access to factual and up to date information explaining the decision and, where necessary, the

reasons for that decision. This could include providing a link to the full resolution on Council's website, or to a project page, fact sheet, media release or media article.

To ensure posts and information provided on websites related to Council decisions are accurate and up to date, Councillors should seek a written statement from the appropriate Council officer.

Personal use of social media

Access at work

When using social media for personal purposes at work, need to be mindful of Council's Code of Conduct. Under this section of the code, staff are required to ensure usage is brief and occasional, restricted to official breaks such as lunch, and does not interfere with their work or Council business.

Any staff member using social media for personal purposes contrary to the Code of Conduct can face the removal of access and disciplinary action.

The decision to remove access or instigate disciplinary action is made by the staff member's Director in consultation with the relevant Divisional Manager, Human Resources and the Communications and Media Manager or delegate.

Content

Under Council's Code of Conduct, staff are required to be mindful of content posted to personal social media sites or pages and websites and avoid those which:

- could harm Council's reputation
- appear as if the staff member is commenting as a representative of Council on how policy is going to be implemented or should change.

When using personal social media accounts or websites, staff must always identify views or opinions published as their own, particularly if commenting on issues related to Council or where they are identifiable as a Waverley Council employee or volunteer.

Staff are able to promote Council initiatives through their personal social media accounts and websites.

As per the Code of Conduct, if a staff member is found to be posting inappropriate content as outlined in this policy, disciplinary action can follow.

Privacy

Staff should be safe and protect their personal privacy against identity theft by ensuring any personal information they wish not to be publicly available is securely locked down with appropriate privacy settings for their own social media accounts.

Contact for this policy

If staff are unsure about any aspect of this policy, or if an issue related to social media use is not addressed through the policy, they should contact the Communications and Engagement team.

Appendix 1: Social Media Guidelines

Only approved Project Managers are able to post content on Council social media sites and pages.

Project Managers use their judgement and experience when posting content on Council social media sites or pages, but these guidelines can assist them to adhere to Council's Social Media Policy and to maximise communication opportunities.

Contact the Communications and Engagement team for associated advice.

Content for Council social media sites and pages should be:

Varied: There should be a broad range of posts that cover different types of content and source to retain varied interest.

Relevant: Posts should be relevant to the target audience and followers of the site or page.

Human: The tone of posts should be in informal spoken plain English, and written/paraphrased in a way that suits the audience.

Frequent: At least one post a week with at least an hour between 'tweets' and several hours between Facebook posts so as not to flood the news streams of followers.

Easy to retweet/share: Make it easy for others to share the posts by keeping them interesting, short and snappy, ideally with an accompanying image or video.

Timely: In keeping with the nature of social media, all posts should be timely. Tweets should be posted almost as the event happens and Facebook posts on the same day as an event/announcement/project is occurring.

Credible: While the tone of posts can occasionally be 'fun', always remember that as representatives of Council it is a requirement to aim for associated objectives.

Inclusive: In keeping with the culture of social media, it's important to strive to flag relevant content gleaned from other social media platforms and share/re-tweet messages from other relevant stakeholders and levels of government.

Different types and sources of content

Ensuring maximum exposure of existing Council web and other communications content is important.

This includes promotion via media releases, council news items, What's On items and information from Waverley in Focus as well as any information going up on the What's on Waverley, My Bondi Summer or Bondi Pavilion Facebook pages.

Subject matter should be paraphrased to fit within 140 characters for Twitter and two to three sentences for Facebook. Links to releases can be shortened using Bitly or a similar site for Twitter and Facebook use.

Adding value with exclusive content

Announcements and coverage of events: Pre-announcement and promotion of upcoming events as well as live coverage of events where there will be significant interest from the Waverley community are good subjects for posts (eg the Royal visit to Bondi Beach by Prince Charles).

Thought leadership (or 'link blogging'): Where best practice can be demonstrated and relevant research highlighted, events, awards etc mentioned elsewhere on the web to position Waverley Council as a 'thought leader' and reliable filter of high quality, interesting and relevant content should be pursued.

Asking and answering questions: This is a good way to engage the audience and can also be used as a means of conducting a 'straw poll' on a particular issue

Crisis communications: In the event of a major incident, Council's social media sites and pages, and in particular Twitter, can be used as a primary channel to provide up to the minute advice and guidance. Council's website should be used in conjunction with social media.

Twitter

Hashtags

It is common within Twitter to distinguish content and isolate a word/words using a # sign. This enables other users to search and filter based on these key terms, collaborate and share relevant information and allows 'trending' as displayed on twitter.com homepage.

Hashtags should be used at the discretion of the project manager tweeting but hashtags such as #mybondisummer #waverleytogether would work.

Link shortening

URLs should be shortened in tweets using link compressing sites. The top five providers are: is.gd; bit.ly; tinyurl.com; sinpurl.com; cli.gs

Re-tweeting

Project managers should seek opportunities to re-tweet content that is relevant to Council. This may include re-tweeting interesting content that shows up in our stream such as research findings and statistics, relevant business/networking events, relevant celebrations/commemorations eg awards Remembrance Day etc

Following and followers

Council should not initiate contact by following personal users as it may be perceived as being 'Big Brother' like behaviour. However, it is good etiquette to follow back anyone who follows Council (there are services that can do this automatically such as tweelater.com).

Council social media sites or pages should not 'follow' or 'like' a page or site that does not reflect Council values or which indicates support for a private company. See the Social Media Policy for more information.

Should Council need to follow or like a project page to clarify an aspect of a Council activity or decision, the authorised spokesperson should request to join the page by the owner for the purposes of responding to content.