



Councillors Social Media Policy

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| Version No. | Version 1.0 December 2021 |
| Endorsement | General Manager Corporate Services |
| Authorisation | Council |
| Review date | December 2025 |
| Responsible officer | Manager Engagement and Advocacy |
| Policy owner | Communications Coordinator |

1. Purpose

The Councillors Social Media Policy sets out protocols for use of social media by the elected Councillors of Melton City Council.

This Policy is intended to assist Councillors to use social media in a way that encourages two-way engagement with the community and minimises exposure of Council and Councillors to legal and reputational risk.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to use of social media by Melton City Councillors when used in their:

- Professional capacity, in the course of fulfilling their functions and duties to Council; and
- Personal capacity, where that use is connected with, or might otherwise impact on, Council, its reputation and/or its effectiveness.

This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies and procedures of Melton City Council including the Media Policy and Code of Conduct (Councillors).

The policy applies to digital spaces where people may comment, contribute, create, forward, post, upload and/or share content.

3. Definitions

| Word/Term | Definition |
|------------------|---|
| Digital spaces | Digital spaces describe any online platform where people may interact with the author and/or others, including commenting, contributing, creating, forwarding, posting, uploading and/or sharing content. |
| Personal use | Personal use is defined as using social media privately, whether during business hours or outside of business hours. |
| Professional use | Professional use is defined as using social media when acting as a representative of Melton City Council, whether during business hours or outside of business hours. |
| Social media | Social media describes the tools/platforms that people use to build online profiles, share content and participate in social networking |

4. Policy

Melton City Council recognises that social media provides opportunities for dynamic and interactive two-way engagement with our community.

Nothing in this Policy is intended to limit, restrict or detract from robust public debate in a democracy.

4.1 Councillors must:

- Adhere to codes of conduct, policies and procedures
- Behave with courtesy, honesty and respect
- Comply with relevant laws and regulations and ensure confidentiality of Council information
- Not mislead the public or community or misrepresent the views of Councillor colleagues

A breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action through Councillor Code of Conduct.

4.2 Social media use and expectations

- Councillors should keep the Mayor informed of any relevant social media content or Councillor contact with organisations, resident groups or others that could foreseeably escalate into adverse media or social media attention and which might negatively impact or compromise Council.
- It is Councillors' responsibility to manage their social media accounts including creating and sharing content, gaining permissions for the use of images and other materials if required and monitoring comments.
- Councillors should identify and separate personal opinions from Council position. When contributing to public comment on social media, Councillors should act in accordance with the principles of the Councillor Code of Conduct and the Media Policy when discussing Council matters.
- Councillors are strongly encouraged to have a dedicated Councillor account separate to any other personal or business accounts they might hold for the purpose of Council related activity.
- Councillors should ensure that they have appropriate privacy settings on all social media sites moderated, managed or operated by them, bearing in mind that all social media posts are public to some degree.
- Councillors should ensure they do not post, like or comment on abusive or inappropriate content, or materials that would breach applicable laws
- Councillors should uphold a positive public image of, and confidence in, the Council at all times as per Councillor Code of Conduct.
- A breach of these uses and expectations may result in disciplinary action under the Councillors Code of Conduct.

4.3 Content not permitted

The following content is not permitted:

- Offensive or inappropriate language or material (such as profanity, inappropriate sexual language, pornography, depictions of extreme violence, racial or other vilification or hatred)
- Content which is false or misleading including having or interacting with a social media account a Councillor knows to be false.
- Confidential information about Council or third parties
- Statements that breach human rights
- Discriminatory material in relation to a person or group based protected attributes in the *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*
- Statements which may be considered to be bullying or harassment
- Illegal material or materials designed to encourage law breaking
- Materials that could compromise Council, employee or system safety
- Materials which would breach applicable laws (defamation, privacy, trade practices, financial rules and regulations, fair use, copyright, trademarks)
- Material which would bring the Council or individual Councillors into disrepute
- Personal details or references to Councillors, Council staff or third parties, which may breach privacy laws
- Spam, meaning the distribution of unsolicited bulk electronic messages as defined by the *Spam Act 2003 (Commonwealth)*.

Monitoring

Councillors must actively monitor their social media accounts and moderate comments that are in breach of the above content.

Breaches

A breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action under the Councillors Code of Conduct.

If a Councillor suspects a breach of this policy, they must bring it to the attention of the Manager Legal, Governance and Risk or the Chief Executive Officer and/or the Mayor.

4.4 Local Government Act 2020 policy alignment

This policy aligns with the overarching governance principles and five supporting principles in the Local Government Act 2020, in particular, the following public transparency principles:

- (b) Council information must be publicly available unless:
 - (i) the information is confidential by virtue of this Act or any other Act; or
 - (ii) public availability of the information would be contrary to the public interest;
- (c) Council information must be understandable and accessible to all;
- (d) public awareness of the availability of Council information must be facilitated.

4.5 Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006

This policy has been assessed against the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 as being consistent with that Act and, in particular, as promoting the rights of members of the community to have access to Council and Council information.

5. Responsibility/Accountability

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| 5.1 | <p>Councillors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek advice from the Communications unit on using social media • Register social media accounts/tools/site with the Communications unit • Understand and comply with the provisions in this policy • Seek training and development for using social media • Seek advice from Legal and Governance or the Communications unit if unsure about applying the provisions of this policy |
| 5.2 | <p>Executive</p> <p>Promotion of adherence of this policy to Councillors</p> |
| 5.3 | <p>Communications unit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide advice to Councillors on the use of social media • Educate Councillors about this policy and their responsibilities when using social media • Keep a register of Councillor social media accounts • Monitor social media channels for conducting Council business • Monitor online for references to Melton City Council |

6. References and links to legislation and other documents

| Name | Location |
|---|--|
| Media Policy | Policy and Procedures Intranet |
| Code of Conduct (Councillors) | Policy and Procedures Intranet |
| <i>Copyright Act 1968 (Cth)</i> | www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act |
| <i>Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)</i> | www.legislation.vic.gov.au |
| <i>Defamation Act 2005 (Vic)</i> | www.legislation.vic.gov.au |
| <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)</i> | www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act |
| <i>Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)</i> | www.legislation.vic.gov.au |
| <i>Electronic Transactions Act 2000 (Vic)</i> | www.legislation.vic.gov.au |
| <i>Evidence Act 2008 (Vic)</i> | www.legislation.vic.gov.au |
| <i>Fair Trading Act 1999 (Vic)</i> | www.legislation.vic.gov.au |
| <i>Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)</i> | www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act |
| <i>Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Vic)</i> | www.legislation.vic.gov.au |
| <i>Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986 (Cth)</i> | www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act |
| <i>Information Privacy Act 2000 (Vic)</i> | www.legislation.vic.gov.au |

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| <i>Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)</i> | www.legislation.vic.gov.au |
| <i>Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)</i> | www.legislation.vic.gov.au |
| <i>Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)</i> | www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act |
| <i>Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 (Vic)</i> | www.legislation.vic.gov.au |
| <i>Spam Act 2003 (Cth)</i> | www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act |
| <i>Wrongs Act 1958 (Vic)</i> | www.legislation.vic.gov.au |