



Social Media Policy

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Responsible officer:	Manager Customer Engagement
Policy owner	Public Relations Coordinator

1. Purpose

The intent of this policy is to provide understanding, guidance and acceptable standards for the appropriate use of social media platforms and tools.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all Councillors, employees, contractors, sub-contractors, agents and volunteers of Melton Shire Council who engage social media on behalf of, and for the purpose of, conducting Council business. This policy will also apply to agencies and individuals who provide services to Melton Shire Council as nominated.

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 Melton Shire Council
- Promote effective and productive community engagement through social media
- Minimise miscommunication or mischievous communications
- Help Melton Shire Council manage the inherent challenges of speed and immediacy

The policy applies to those digital spaces where people may comment, contribute, create, forward, post, upload and share content, including:

- Apps
- Blogs
- Bulletin boards
- Citizen journalism and news sites
- Forums and discussion boards
- Instant messaging facilities
- Microblogging sites (e.g. Twitter)
- Online encyclopedias (e.g. Wikipedia)
- Podcasts
- QR codes

- Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, MySpace, Bebo, Friendster, LinkedIn)
- Video and photo sharing sites (e.g. Flickr, YouTube)
- 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.

This policy is not intended to cover personal use of social media where:

- the author publishes information in their personal capacity and not on behalf of, or in association with Melton Shire Council; and
- no reference is made to Melton Shire Council, its Councillors, staff, policies and services, suppliers or other stakeholders or Council related issues.

Notwithstanding, any personal use of social media during work hours should be kept to a minimum and not impede or interfere with work.

This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies and procedures of Melton Shire Council.

3. Definitions

App	Popularised in the general lexicon by the iPhone
Authorised User	Councillors
Blog	A blog is a personal journal published on the World Wide Web consisting of discrete entries ("posts") typically displayed in reverse chronological order so the most recent post appears first. Blogs are usually the work of a single individual
Podcast	A podcast is a type of digital media consisting of an episodic series of files (either audio or video) subscribed to and downloaded through web syndication. The word is a neologism derived from "broadcast" and "pod" from the success of the iPod
Smartphone	A smartphone is a mobile phone built on a mobile computing platform.
Social media	Social media describes the tools that people use to build online profiles and share content
Wiki	A wiki is a website whose users can add

4. Social Media Policy

Melton Shire Council recognises that social media provides new opportunities for dynamic and interactive two-way engagement with our community, which can complement existing communication and further improve information, access and delivery of key services.

When using social media Councillors, staff and contractors are required to:

- Adhere to Melton Shire Council codes of conduct, policies and procedures
- Behave with caution, courtesy, honesty and respect
- Comply with relevant laws and regulations
- Reinforce the integrity, reputation and values of Melton Shire Council.

The following content is not permitted under any circumstances:

- Abusive, profane or sexual language
- Content not relating to the subject matter of that blog, board, forum or site
- 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, employee or system safety
- Materials which would breach applicable laws (defamation, privacy, trade practices, financial rules and regulations, fair use, trademarks)
- Material that would offend contemporary standards of taste and decency
- Material which would bring the council 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
- Statements which may be considered to be bullying or harassment

If you have any doubt about applying the provisions of this policy, check with the Communications unit before using social media to communicate.

4.1 Authorisation

Authorised Users only are permitted to use social media for personal professional reasons or on behalf of Council.

Authorisation is granted through a signed and completed Social Media Authorised User Application Form available from Communications. Social media use is restricted to the application, purpose and/or objectives defined.

Access to Social Media through Melton Shire Council IT infrastructure and hardware will be

restricted to Authorised Users only.

Authorised User status can be revoked without prior notice by Communications, IT, department Manager or Executive and is revoked immediately upon resignation or termination of employment.

An intermediate proficiency level for each requested social media app is a prerequisite for Authorised Users, as understood by Communications.

Any required social media training to reach the minimum standard is the responsibility of the relevant department. (Refer Annexure B for Resources that may assist novice users attain an intermediate skill level.)

4.2 Expectations, behaviours and principles

4.2.1 Subject matter expertise

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

4.2.2 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.

4.2.3 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.

4.2.4 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.

4.2.5 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 # 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.

4.2.6 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 practicable.

4.2.7 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 Trade marks, are owned by a third party e.g. company logos. Seek permission from the website's owner wherever possible before linking to another site (including a social media application).

4.2.8 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.

4.2.9 Reward

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

4.2.10 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.

4.2.11 Political bias

Do not endorse any political affinity or allegiance.

4.2.12 Respect

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

4.2.13 Discrimination

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

4.2.14 Language

Be mindful of language and expression.

4.2.15 State of Mind

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

4.2.16 Be safe

Protect your personal privacy and guard against identity theft.

4.2.17 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 unit as per Council's media policy.

4.2.18 Modification and moderation

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

4.2.19 Access

Be mindful of the requisite government web standards for accessibility. Information made available via non compliant platforms should be made accessible in another form where practical.

4.2.20 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, Facebook, Skype and Twitter accounts.

4.2.21 Record keeping

Content published or communicated by or on behalf of Melton Shire Council using social media must be recorded (such as the author's name, date, time and media site location) and kept on record as far as practicable.

5. Enforcement

Melton Shire Council actively monitors social media for relevant contributions that impact on the municipality, its operations and reputation. Melton Shire Council will be able to find – and act upon – contributions made by Councillors and staff if deemed necessary.

This policy will be published and promoted to Councillors and staff of Melton Shire Council. Breaching this policy may result in disciplinary action, performance management and review. Serious breaches may result in suspension or termination of employment or association.

Melton Shire Council reserves the right to remove, where possible, content that violates this policy or any associated policies.

6. Role and Responsibility

Role	Responsibilities
5.1 Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seek advice from the Communications unit on using social media• Seek approval for Council branding of social media• Register social media account/tools/site with the PR unit• Understand and comply with the provisions in this policy• Seek training and development for using social media• Seek advice from the Legal Officer or the PR unit if unsure about applying the provisions of this policy
5.2 Staff and contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seek approval from relevant manager for business strategy incorporating social media• Seek authorisation from the Communications unit on using social media and developing a communications plan to support business strategy• Seek approval for Council branding of social media

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register social media account/tools/site with the PR unit • Seek training and development for using social media • Understand and comply with the provisions in this policy • Maintain records of email addresses, comments, 'friends', followers and printed copies or electronic 'screen grabs' when using externally hosted sites to the extent practicable • Seek advice from the Legal Officer or the Communications unit if unsure about applying the provisions of this policy • Ensure contractors are provided with a copy of this policy • Familiarise self with the End User Licence Agreements of any external social media tools being used
<p>5.3 Business Unit Managers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve business strategy incorporating use of social media • Ensure staff obtain authorisation from the Communications unit on their planned use of social media • Ensure contractors are provided with a copy of the social media policy • Offer training for staff using social media • Advise IT of approval to access social media for business purposes
<p>5.4 Information Services Unit</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate secure access to support delivery of Council business via social media • Provide technical support and solutions to assist regular back-up and archiving of internally hosted social media sites as practicable
<p>5.5 Communications Unit</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorise use of social media tools for conducting Council business • Nominate agencies and individuals who provide services to Melton Shire Council who are required to comply with this policy • Provide advice and assist with the development of communication plans using social media • Educate Councillors, staff and contractors about this policy and their responsibilities when using social media • Advise appropriate precautions e.g. disclaimers • Maintain a register of social media being used for conducting Council business including records of the business case for using social media, its strategic imperative, the intended administrator, URL, login, password and audience • Assist staff to retain some record explaining the context or purpose of social media, and a sample of posts where it is impractical to retain large volumes of screen grabs • Monitor social media accounts/tools/sites registered for conducting Council business • Monitor social media for references to Melton Shire Council • Seek legal advice as appropriate where an issue is likely to be contentious or may create legal risk for Council.

7. References and links to legislation and other documents

Councillors and staff of Melton Shire Council are expected to demonstrate standards of conduct and behaviour that are consistent with relevant legislation, regulations and policies.

7.1 Council Policy and Procedures

The following Melton Shire policy and procedures must be adhered to in relation to the use of social media. These documents are available on the Policy Intranet site:

- Code of Conduct for Councillors
- Code of Conduct for staff
- Community Engagement Guidelines
- Council employment contracts
- Council Internet and Email Usage Policy
- Council Media Policy
- Council Mobile Phone Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Records and Document Management Policy
- Recruitment and Selection Policy and procedures
- Risk Management Policy
- Web Policy

7.2 Relevant legislation

- Copyright Act 1968 (Cth)
- Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)
- Defamation Act 2005 (Vic)
- Fair Trading Act 1999 (Vic)
- Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)
- Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Vic)
- Local Government Act 1989 (Vic)
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)
- Information Privacy Act 2000 (Vic)
- Spam Act 2003 (Cth)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Public Records Act 1973 (Vic)
- Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 (Vic)
- Wrongs Act 1958 (Vic)

7.2 Other Resources

Department of Justice Social Media Policy YouTube	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ws3Bd3QINsk
Facebook guidebook	http://mashable.com/guidebook/facebook/
Facebook cheatsheet	http://www.finder.com.au/guides/the-one-page-facebook-guide/
Facebook pages introduction	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0EAsE1v0nE
Twitter introduction	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddO9idmax0o&feature=player_embedded
Twitter guidebook	http://mashable.com/guidebook/twitter/