

	<h1 style="text-align: center;">Online Engagement Policy</h1>
Version No.	V1.0, 20 March 2015 <i>Revised Web Policy and Social Media Policy</i>
Endorsement	General Manager Corporate Services, 8 April 2015 Policy Review Panel, 4 May 2015
Authorisation	Council, 26 May 2015
Expiry date	1 March 2017
Responsible officer	Manager Customer Engagement
Policy owner	Communications Coordinator

1. Purpose

The intent of this policy is to provide understanding, guidance and acceptable standards to ensure a consistent approach to online engagement including appropriate use of websites and social media tools.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all Councillors, employees, contractors, sub-contractors, agents, consultants and volunteers engaged specifically to represent Council, who engage online through websites and/or social media on behalf of, and for the purpose of, conducting Council business.

The policy outlines requirements for compliance with accessibility, usability, responsiveness, confidentiality, governance, legal, privacy and regulatory parameters.

It aims to:

- address appropriate use of Council’s web content management system, other websites created to conduct Council business and social media tools for Melton City Council
- promote effective and productive online community engagement through websites and social media
- minimise miscommunication or mischievous communications
- help Melton City 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
- Micro blogging sites (e.g. Twitter)

- Online encyclopaedias (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
- Websites
- 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 City Council; and
- no reference is made to Melton City 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 City Council.

3. Definitions

Word/Term	Definition
App	Software program designed to run on a mobile device
Authorised User	Council staff member authorised to use social media or create website content on behalf of Council or a Councillor
Blog	A blog is a personal journal published online consisting of individual entries ('posts') typically displayed in reverse chronological order so the most recent post appears first.
CMS	Content Management System used to create and manage content for a website
Offensive material	Any content that could be reasonably considered unacceptable for public consumption, as determined by a Council officer. This may include but is not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pornography or implied sexual activity, child abuse material, depictions of bestiality, material containing excessive violence or sexual violence, drug use. • Material that advocates the doing of a terrorist act or detailed instruction in crime.

Word/Term	Definition
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Material that has a strong impact on or may upset someone in terms of their ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, culture, age and physical appearance. Material that causes or promotes any form of harassment. <p>Material that uses frequent or very strong coarse language.</p>
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.
Smart phone	A smart phone is a mobile phone able to perform many functions of a computer, usually with a large touch screen.
Social media	Social media describes the tools/platforms that people use to build online profiles, share content and participate in social networking
WCAG 2.0	Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 lists recommendations for making web content more accessible to a wider range of people with disabilities, including blindness and low vision, deafness and hearing loss, learning disabilities, cognitive limitations, limited movement, speech disabilities, photosensitivity and combinations of these. Following these guidelines will often make the web content more usable to users in general.
Web Accessibility National Transition Strategy	The Australian Government's adoption and implementation of Web Content Accessibility Guidelines version 2.0 (WCAG 2.0).
Wiki	A website or database developed collaboratively by a community of users who can add or edit content.

4. Policy

The Council Plan 2013-2017 states that 'Council wants to support transparency through public access to relevant information, decision making and strategic documents'. Council also aims to facilitate community engagement in planning and decision making by providing information about Council services and associated activities through a range of communication tools and providing the community with balanced and objective information, to assist them in understanding Council's direction and decisions.

Melton City Council recognises that online user needs are changing and 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.

Council's online presence aims to:

- enable people to conduct their Council business online 24/7
- provide customer service
- distribute positive news, events and information of interest to residents
- engage in conversation

- establish greater responsiveness from and engagement with the City of Melton community
- establish trust in Melton City Council
- humanise and bring personality to the City of Melton brand
- drive corporate, unit or service KPIs and objectives

Council's online presence is NOT intended to:

- provide a comprehensive resource for all Council documents, except as required by law or deemed important to customer service
- be a reference for all Council business, except as required by law or deemed important to customer service

4.1 Website

In order to create a better website for everyone, Council's website should adhere to the following requirements:

4.1.1 Authorisation

Authorised Users only are permitted to contribute to Council's website on behalf of Council. Authorisation is granted through the Communications unit in coordination with the relevant service unit Manager. Training in the web content management system by the provider or the Communications unit is mandatory.

4.1.2 Accessibility

The Web Accessibility National Transition Strategy sets a course for improved web services, paving the way for a more accessible and usable web environment that will more fully engage with, and allow participation from, all people within our society.

It states that Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 is applicable to all online government information and services. Conformance is required on all government websites owned and/or operated by government under any domain. This includes external (public-facing or private) and internal (closed community) sites.

The WCAG 2.0 guidelines have been developed with a goal of proving a single shared standard for web content accessibility that meets the needs of individuals, organisations, and governments internationally.

Melton City Council must meet the legislative requirements under the:

- *Victorian Equal Opportunity Act 2010*
- *Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992.*

4.1.3 Accuracy

The website must be updated as often as needed, with a minimum of every three months to ensure the information is timely and correct. See online engagement procedures document for updating schedule applicable to information that rotates frequently (e.g. media releases and events).

4.1.4 Responsiveness

The website must be accessible through desktop, mobile phone and tablet. The layout should automatically adjust based on the user's screen size. This is now an expected feature in websites.

4.1.5 Usability

User 'needs' should be the guiding principle for government websites.

Users come to the site to accomplish tasks and to fulfil needs. It is Council's responsibility to make sure they can complete the top tasks easily and efficiently. The website should be simple and approachable and focussed on Council's core services and users 'top tasks'.

The information presented should be necessary, useful, understandable and presented in a clear, concise and accessible manner. The pages should contain plain clear language using active voice and avoiding jargon.

4.1.6 Content included

- The Communications Coordinator retains the right to amend, delete, add content on an as-needs basis
- Information included on the site should
 - Inform and provide access to Council's programs and services, or provide relevant links to information from other stakeholders and/or
 - Engage the community and/or
 - Allow stakeholders to conduct Council business
- The website is not a reference for information that does not pertain to Council business

For more information see Website Content Management Plan.

4.2 Sub sites

Melton City Council only has one main website. However, if service units have specific needs in website functionality or branding that can't be met by Council's main website they can create a sub site.

4.2.1 Authorisation

Service units need to provide a business case and get authorisation from Communications to create a sub site. Unless there is a demonstrable reason why the Council brand should not take precedence, all sub sites will be so branded.

To protect the reputation and image of Council, authorisation will depend on:

- Specify aim and target group and functionality needs
- Quality assurance
- Resources to start and maintain the sub site
- Hosting facilities
- Branding
- Temporary or permanent sub site

- Risk management strategy

4.2.2 Requirements for sub sites

4.2.2.1 Branding

All temporary and permanent sub sites can have individual branding but they need to conform to the range of options presented in Council's style guide.

In exceptional circumstances, by request of the business/service unit manager, Communications reserves the right to approve design outside of the style guide; however, there is no compromise on Council's logo under any circumstance.

4.2.2.2 Accessibility

- All temporary and permanent sub sites need to be compliant with the WACG 2.0 accessibility guidelines.
- All temporary sub sites should be accessible from Council's website through a friendly URL.
- All permanent sub sites should be accessible from the home page of Council's website.

4.2.2.3 Usability

- All permanent sub sites should have similar layout and navigation styles to Council's main website so that the user can have a consistent experience in online engagement with Council.
- The information presented should be necessary, useful, understandable and presented in a clear, concise and accessible manner. The pages should contain plain clear language using active voice and avoiding jargon.

4.2.2.4 Accuracy

All sub sites must be updated as often as needed, with a minimum of every three months to ensure the information is timely and correct.

4.2.2.5 Responsiveness

All permanent sub sites must be accessible through desktop, mobile phones and tablets. The layout should automatically adjust based on the user's screen size. This is now an expected feature in websites.

4.3 Social media

4.3.1 Authorisation

If service units want to create a social media presence for a certain program, target group or issue, they need to develop a business case and risk management strategy and get authorisation from the Communications unit.

Authorisation will depend on the following:

- Specify the aim and target group of the social media tool
- Social media tool needs to provide two-way communication
- Specifying how the social media tool will be branded and linked back to Council and how it will be linked to other Council communication materials

- Project duration
- Specifications on quality insurance regarding content production and timing, monitoring, effectiveness measurement, response strategy, accessibility, usability, content permission, copyright, content optimisation and promotion
- Specifications on resourcing (budget and staff)
- Risk management strategy
- Data management and record keeping
- Social media tool look/brand will need be professionally designed and approved by Communications

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

If a service unit wants to advertise on social media, this does not need authorisation by the Communications unit. However, any branding for this advertising needs to be signed off by the Communications unit in accordance with Council's Corporate Style Guide.

A social media presence always needs to be linked to a profile and for this a mock profile to which more than one staff member has access (e.g. Melton libraries) should be set up instead of using a personal profile.

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.

Communications will undertake six-monthly reviews of social media tools to monitor quality assurance.

Authorised User status can be revoked without prior notice by Communications, service unit manager or Executive and is revoked immediately after leaving the organisation or termination of employment.

An intermediate proficiency level for each requested social media tool 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 service unit.

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

- adhere to Melton City 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 City Council.

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

4.3.2 Disclaimer

Rules of engagement and disclaimers should always be included in the profile section of the social media tool or be available in a clearly obvious and discoverable way.

4.3.3 Expectations, behaviours and principles

Council staff should adhere at all times to the Melton City Council Staff Code of Conduct.

Councillors should adhere at all times to the Melton City Council Councillor Code of Conduct.

4.3.3.1 Subject matter expertise

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

4.3.3.2 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.

4.3.3.3 Accuracy

Be accurate, constructive, helpful and informative. Correct any errors as soon as practicable. Do not publish information or make statements which you know are false or may reasonably be taken to be misleading or deceptive.

4.3.3.4 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.

4.3.3.5 Opinion

Clearly separate personal opinions from professional ones. 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 interests.

4.3.3.6 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.

4.3.3.7 Reward

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

4.3.3.8 Transparency

Do not seek to buy or recompense favourable social media commentary or 'likes'. Encourage online publishers to be open and transparent in how they engage with, or review Council personnel, services or wares.

4.3.3.9 Political bias

Do not endorse any political affinity or allegiance (not applicable for Councillors).

4.3.3.10 Respect

Social media is a communication tool that encourages discussions and free and frank contributions. Always be courteous, patient and respectful of others' opinions, including detractors. (See also Definitions, 4.3.2 and 4.3.3.18).

4.3.3.11 Language

Be mindful of language and expression. Keep your communications clear, positive, polite and professional. Avoid being ironic or sarcastic, it can be misinterpreted.

4.3.3.12 State of Mind

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

4.3.3.13 Be Safe

Protect your personal privacy and guard against identity theft.

4.3.3.14 Media

Do not use 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 enquiry to the Communications unit as per Council's Media Policy.

4.3.3.15 Modification and Moderation

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

4.3.3.16 Accessibility

Research shows that all of the popular social media tools remain inaccessible to some degree. Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, blogging websites and the emerging Google+ all feature limited accessibility, denying many consumers with disabilities the opportunity to participate in social media. The accessibility standards of the social media tool are the responsibility of the vendor. Council's responsibility is to make our social media content as accessible as possible from our end. Information made available via non compliant platforms should be made accessible in another form where practical.

4.3.3.17 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 and website.

4.3.3.18 Contributions

Social media is a communication tool that encourages discussions and free and frank contributions; however, these contributions should always be respectful. You will need to monitor and, if necessary, censor contributions that other people make to your site, especially Facebook. Delete them if they don't match the above standards of behaviour or language and if needed block repeat offenders. Defamatory and offensive language will be attributed to the publisher as well as the original author. (See also Definitions, 4.3.2 and 4.3.3.10).

4.3.4 Enforcement

Melton City Council actively monitors social media for relevant contributions that impact on the municipality, its operations and reputation. Melton City 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 City 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 City Council reserves the right to remove, where possible, content that violates this policy or any associated policies.

4.3.5 Record keeping

Staff must maintain full, accurate and reliable records of their official use of social media as social media records made or received by public officers are dealt with in the same way as other records in accordance with Information Management principles.

Records should be recorded in a timely manner, as it may not be guaranteed that they will remain online. Both the content (including the format) and the context of the post need to be captured.

For more details on the content to be captured, see the Online Engagement Procedures document.

4.4 Privacy

Be sensitive to the privacy of others. Follow the photo permission requirements in Council's photography policy regarding 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.

4.5 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, photographers, 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).

4.6 Content not permitted

The following content is not permitted under any circumstances:

- Offensive or inappropriate language or material (such as pornography, depictions of extreme violence, racial or other vilification or hatred)
- 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, breastfeeding, employment activity, gender identity, impairment (also known as 'disability'), industrial activity, lawful sexual activity, marital status, parental status or status as a carer, physical features, political belief or activity, pregnancy, race, religious belief or activity, sex, sexual orientation or personal association (whether as a relative or otherwise) with a person who is identified by reference to any of the listed attributes
- 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
- Content not relating to the subject matter of that blog, board, forum or site.

5. Responsibility /Accountability

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 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 the Legal Officer or the Communications Unit if unsure about applying the provisions of this policy
5.2 Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promotion of adherence of this policy to Management team and Staff
5.3 Staff and Contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seek approval from relevant manager for business case for social media or sub site

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek authorisation from Communications Unit on social media tool and users list and creating a sub site • Seek approval for Council branding of social media or sub site • Seek training and development for using social media or sub site content management system • Understand and comply with the provisions of this policy • Maintain records of email addresses, comments, 'friends', followers and printed copies of electronic 'screen grabs' when using externally hosted sites to the extent practicable • Maintain records of URLs, logins, passwords and content management training manuals • 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
5.3	<p>Business Unit Managers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve business case for social media or sub site • Ensure staff obtain authorisation from the Communications unit on their planned use of social media or creation of sub site • Identify authorised users for Council's website, social media or sub sites • Ensure contractors and staff are aware of this policy and comply with its requirements • Offer training to staff using social media or sub sites
5.4	<p>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
5.5	<p>Communications Unit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect the reputation and image of Council • Authorise use of social media tools or creation of sub sites for conducting Council business • Identify (in cooperation with service unit Manager), authorise and train users to maintain Council's main website • Nominate agencies and individuals who provide services to Melton City Council who are required to comply with this policy • Provide advice on development and use of social media tools and sub sites • Assist with communication plans to promote social media tools and sub sites • Educate Councillors, staff and contractors about this policy and their responsibilities when using social media • Advise appropriate precautions, e.g. disclaimers

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a register of social media and sub sites being used for conducting Council business including records of business cases for using social media or creating sub sites and the intended administrators • Monitor social media accounts / tools / sites and sub sites for conducting Council business • Monitor online for references to Melton City Council • Seek legal advice as appropriate where an issue is likely to be contentious or may create legal risk for Council • Keep abreast of developments in the field of online engagement
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6. References and links to legislation and other document

Name	Location
Council Plan 2013-2017	www.melton.vic.gov.au
Code of Conduct (Councillors)	Policy and Procedures Intranet www.melton.vic.gov.au
Code of Conduct (Staff)	Policy and Procedures Intranet
Council Employment Contracts	
Internet, Intranet & Email Usage Policy	Policy and Procedures Intranet
Media Policy	Policy and Procedures Intranet
Corporate Style Guide	Policy and Procedures Intranet
Photography Policy	Policy and Procedures Intranet
Information Technology Mobile Device Policy	Policy and Procedures Intranet
Information Management Policy	Policy and Procedures Intranet
Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedures	Policy and Procedures Intranet
Enterprise Risk Management Policy	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 Translations 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

Name	Location
<i>Information Privacy Act 2000 (Vic)</i>	www.legislation.vic.gov.au
<i>Local Government Act 1989 (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>Public Records Act 1973 (Vic)</i>	www.legislation.vic.gov.au
<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