

Document Control	
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Responsible Position	Manager Corporate Communications
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1. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to set out the standards of behaviour expected in relation to professional use of social media on behalf of Maranoa Regional Council (Council), and the use of social media by Council employees and Elected Members.

The objectives of this policy are to:

- develop a culture of openness, trust and integrity in Council through appropriate use of social media;
- provide direction on the responsibilities and expectations for:
 - the professional use of social media on behalf of Council;
 - the use of social media by employees and Elected Members; and
 - standards of behaviour by any parties wishing to interact on social media platforms administered by council, including elected members.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with Councils Social Media Operational Procedure.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees of Council and Elected Members who use social media platforms either professionally or privately.

3. Statement

Council employs various social media platforms to provide information on Council initiatives, public notices, activities, facilities, services, events and programs. Social media should be used where the Council wishes to engage with the community to provide information or raise awareness of Council related matters.

Social media is considered an important tool for Council to actively engage with our community and provides a platform for active discussion and the exchange of ideas, promoting the Maranoa Region as a place to live, work, play, visit and invest.

4. Guiding principles

Acceptable use of social media channels

Council's social media assets are managed by the Corporate Communications Team and are used for engaging with the community, advertising matters required by legislation, advising the public of decisions made by council at its meetings, Council announcements, conducting community consultation, promoting the region, promoting careers at Council, promoting Tender and grant opportunities, pre and post event promotion of regional events and community activities, emergency and disaster communication, promoting economic and community development and increasing Council's brand awareness and promoting Council services.

Authorities and responsibilities

The primary responsibility for Council's social media is the Manager Corporate Communications who is generally responsible for all Council social media accounts across all platforms.

All social media accounts are to be set up and transacted in the name of Maranoa Regional Council. Alternatives may be identified if another Council business name is approved by the Chief Executive Officer (e.g. a Council business), however these accounts must be administrated within Council by Council's Corporate Communications team.

All content published and/or shared on Council's social media platforms is to be prepared, edited and issued through the Corporate Communications and/or delegated Social Media Editors using an official Council sites, to ensure adherence to the Social Media Policy, messaging and consistency in branding. The Social Media Editors will ensure they consult and receive approval of content by the subject matter expert and their relevant supervisor.

Moderation of social media content on Council's platforms, consistent with Council's Terms of Use, will be undertaken by the Corporate Communications team and/or designated Social Media Editors/Moderators.

The Manager Corporate Communications reserves the right to remain an administrator of any accounts created to ensure risk management measures (including centralised storage of master passwords for each site) to protect Council's reputation are satisfied.

Employees may not have access to Council's social media sites and comment on behalf of Council unless they are authorised by the CEO in liaison with the Manager Corporate Communications. Manager Corporate Communications with support from Information Technology Services Department can support and revoke authorised users' status for Council Social Media Editors.

Access will be based upon the duties of each position with relevant officers only having access to relevant platforms, in accordance with the Social Media Procedure/Guideline.

Comments and Replies

Service requests, requests for information or complaints must be submitted through Council's official correspondence channels via phone, email, in writing or in person.

This is to ensure they are genuine and captured via the appropriate customer service and records systems and responded accordingly.

Should Council deem it appropriate to respond to a comment or post, these will be responded to generally within normal business hours. Comments received outside of normal business hours will be responded to on the following business day where possible.

Creation of new accounts

A full list of Council's official social media sites can be obtained from the Corporate Communications team. The creation of new social media sites is at the discretion of the CEO.

Obligations when using Social Media

When using social media, the following rules will apply:

- only publish content that is classified as public information. No comment will be made on social media sites regarding confidential, personal, private or legal matters;
- only use corporate imagery such as logos and official Council photographs with the permission of the CEO (or nominee);
- all content posted is accurate and has been approved by the CEO, a director, a manager, or the Manager Corporate Communications
- comments will be respectful of the community and portray the Council in a positive way;

- all content will be impartial, apolitical and will not promote Elected Members' in relation to political campaigns or election;
- Councillor comments and use of photos in any social media activity will be prohibited during the election "Caretaker Period", as defined in the *Local Government Act* and in Councils Caretaker Period Policy, to avoid postings falling with the definition of "elected matter" under the Act.
- posts will only promote projects and decisions that have been approved by Council;
- posts will not promote any business other than Council or a Council owned business or Council partnered event;
- users must adhere to the terms of use and guidance associated with the relevant social media platform/website;
- ensure that no copyrighted or trademarked material is published without permission;
- ensure that information posted online is not illegal, libellous, discriminatory, defamatory, abusive, or obscene; and
- ensure capture of information/records and information privacy meet all legislative obligations.

Moderation and Terms of Use for third parties

Council's social media platforms generally will only be monitored within business hours. An open dialogue on social media is encouraged, however, comments and materials published on Council's social media platforms must adhere to appropriate standards of behaviour.

Council will not tolerate the following, and will remove any posts/messages that meet this unacceptable behaviour, including:

- Content considered defamatory, prejudicial, racist, inflammatory, repetitive, vexatious, offensive, cyberbullying, trolling or otherwise inappropriate;
- Comments or remarks which are off-topic to the source subject;
- Swearing, foul language or profanity;
- Harassment of, or personal attacks against, other users, council, councillors or council staff;
- Disclosure of personal or sensitive information about others;
- Material that could be considered spam, including links to other sites, such as commercial, non-government or off-topic pages; and
- Anything not in the public interest as determined by the CEO.

Any comments deemed to fit under these definitions will be subject to immediate removal. Users who engage in the above behaviours may be permanently banned or blocked from Council's social media sites. Determinations regarding breaches of the above will be made by an authorised council staff member.

Council reserves the right to turn off comments on social media at any time or when resources do not permit active moderation and engagement.

The above actions will acknowledge record keeping procedures.

5. Personal social media use

Guidelines for Elected Members

The Mayor and Councillors will act in accordance with this policy, Council's Media Policy, Code of Conduct for Councillors in Queensland, and all other related council policies and procedures.

Elected Members will manage their own social media and Council has no role in the creation or management of these platforms.

This policy does not preclude Elected Members from making their own statements or comments which may conflict with Council's position, or on matters that are not current Council programs or initiatives. In these scenarios, Elected Members must be aware of their Code of Conduct obligations by ensuring that their comments are not portrayed by them as the official view of Council.

Elected Members are to take reasonable steps to ensure that any comment they make will be understood as representing their personal views, not those of Council.

Elected members are encouraged to refer to the Office of Independent Assessor & LGAQ resource – Social Media Guidelines for Councillors and other relevant material published by third party Agencies.

Guidelines for Employees

Council recognises that social media is a part of everyone's daily life. This policy does not limit the usage of social media by Council employees for personal use, but reminds employees that you may be viewed as representatives of Council by the public. Any information that is shared about Council must only be what is available publicly.

All employees are reminded to act in accordance with this policy, the Code of Conduct (staff), the Media Policy and all other related council policies and procedures.

6. Record-Keeping

Social media postings, messages, attachments, and polls are considered digital public records under the Public Records Act 2002. As such, they must be recorded and stored in accordance with Council's records management policy and procedures. Social media postings, messages, attachments, and polls by Elected Members that relate to Council administration or business are also public records. This includes

posts made on a Councillor's personal social media platforms. Therefore, any public records about Council business created or received through these channels must be retained.

Elected Members are required to comply with the record-keeping processes outlined in the Information Management Policy. This includes, but is not limited to, ensuring that posts, comments, direct messages, and other communications related to Council business are recorded in line with Council's record-keeping procedures. These records must be provided to the Corporate Communications Team to ensure proper documentation.

The use of platforms such as Facebook Messenger, private email accounts, WhatsApp, or other messaging apps to conduct Council business without capturing public records in official Council systems constitutes a breach of the Public Records Act 2002 and will be regarded as misconduct.

As an alternative, Council may be designated as an administrator of a Councillor's social media page to ensure that records related to Council matters are managed appropriately and in compliance with relevant policies and legislation.

7. Non-Compliance

Non-compliance with the provisions of this policy may result in action being taken in accordance with Council's policies and procedures or relevant legislative requirements. Council and Councillors use of unapproved platforms is in breach of this policy and of the Crime and Corruption Commission Queensland's Council Records: Advice for mayors, councillors, CEOs and council employees Guidelines.

8. Definitions

TERM	DEFINITION
CEO	Chief Executive Officer (of Council)
Council	Maranoa Regional Council
Councillors / Elected Member	All elected representatives who hold (current) office with Council, including the Mayor and all Councillors.
Employee/s	includes a person who carries out work in any capacity for Council (i.e. temporary or permanent employee, contractor, sub-contractor, employee of a labour hire company, outworker, trainee, apprentice, volunteer, work experience student.)
Public Record	Has the meaning provided in the <i>Public Records Act 2009</i> .
(Social Media) Moderator	Designated Council employee who monitors online communications. The moderator may also answer general questions via the channel and respond to complaints or provide basic Council information or clarifications. A moderator may also be a Social Media Editor.

Social Media	Computer-based technology that facilitates the sharing of ideas, thoughts, and information through the building of virtual networks and communities. These technologies include, but not limited to: - messaging technologies (e.g., WhatsApp, Chat, Facebook Messenger); - social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Staff Walls, LinkedIn); - mass communication platforms (e.g. X, Reddit, Viber); and - video and image sharing platforms (e.g. YouTube, Snapchat, Instagram).
Social Media Accounts	All social media accounts, platforms and pages that Council support and manage, that have been created and approved by the Manager Corporate Communications or designated Social Media Editors.
Social Media Editor	A Council staff member who has the authority, in accordance with their delegations, to represent Council on social media. Includes Communications Officers and other delegated officers, as set out in the <Social Media Procedure/Guideline>

9. Related Policies and Legislation

Information Privacy Act 2009

Local Government Act 2009

Local Government Regulations 2012

Public Records Act 2002

Council Staff Code of Conduct

Code of Conduct for Councillors in Queensland

Office of Independent Assessor & LGAQ resource – Social Media Guidelines for Councillors

Crime and Corruption Commission Queensland's Council Records: Advice for mayors, councillors, CEOs and council employees

Information Management Policy

Media Policy

Caretaker Period Policy