

## 1 Policy History

Revision No.	Consultative/WHS Committee	SMT
1		20/08/2012
2	18/08/2015	

## 2 Policy Purpose

Council recognises the benefits of using social media as a means for marketing, promotion and disseminating time-sensitive information to the widest possible audience. It is acknowledged certain risks are associated with social media and this policy has been developed to assist staff to administrate and access social media in a responsible manner.

This policy sets out the standards of behaviour expected when making reference to Griffith City Council ('Council') on social media platforms, including social networking sites when the user is using a computer, tablet, smart phone or other hand-held device not owned or controlled by Council.

## 3 Policy Objective

- To extend existing corporate messages online by developing and maintaining relationships with community members who access social media.
- To provide a 'personal touch' in order to promote corporate messages.
- To provide an additional, user friendly method of communicating and encourage two way conversations as a way to connect with Council to provide feedback, seek help, suggest ideas and obtain information.

## 4 Policy Scope

This policy applies to all workers including: employees, labour hire staff, volunteers, apprentices, work experience students, subcontractors, and contractors of Griffith City Council (**users**) who contribute social networking sites, website and external blogs who identify themselves as being associated with Council.

This Policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment, nor does it form part of any contract for service.

This policy should be read in conjunction with Social Media Guidelines (COMM-FO-402).

## 5 Application of the Policy

- Apart from the potentially damaging effects a blog or social networking entry may have on Council, inappropriate blogs on internal or external sites can also have adverse consequences for a User in terms of future career prospects, as the material remains widely and permanently accessible to other site users.
- There is no such thing as a 'private' social network/social media platform. Posting information on-line is a public activity. Users should be aware information placed on social media/networking sites, such as Facebook, may easily be forwarded on to a third party.
- It is the responsibility of the user to understand how the social network/social media platform site they are accessing operates.
- This policy does not apply to personal use of social media platforms where the User makes no reference to Council or any of Council's employees, contractors, other Council Officials, related entities or any other person or organisation providing services to or on behalf of Council.
- To this end users should not identify themselves as representing Council or Council related entities when participating in personal social media platforms.

## 6 Social Media Usage Considerations

Electronic communication activity produces a "digital footprint" that is difficult to erase, is not controllable and may re-surface as evidence at any time.

Be mindful information you share privately may not remain that way. Messages / posts / tweets etc. can be forwarded, copied or printed and distributed. Information posted online does not always remain private and can affect your personal and profession.

## 7 Social Media & Cyberbullying

A User must not harass, bully, intimidate or threaten another employee contractor or other Council Official (or a person the User knows to be a relative or associate of a Council Official) when contributing to a Social Networking Site or accessing a Social Media Platform.

Cyber bullying involves the use of electronic communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated and hostile behaviour by an individual or group that is intended to harm others.

Electronic communication can encompass:

- email
- Short Message Service (SMS)
- Multimedia Message Service (MMS)
- social media networking/photo sharing websites, blogs and chat rooms

Work place cyber bullying may be identified to have occurred when it can be established:

- there is a relationship to a role or individual at Council
- the bullying has been conducted during Council time or by using Council resources
- an event or incident can be linked to having occurred during Council time

Specific examples of cyber bullying can include, but are not limited to:

- malicious or threatening emails, SMS communications or on social media/networking sites, blogs or forums
- electronic communication which features offensive content such as profane language or explicit images.
- electronic communication aimed at correcting or providing feedback to an individual that are copied to a group with the effect of public shaming or demeaning the individual
- electronic content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination related to gender, ethnicity, disability, religion or sexual preference
- distribution of embarrassing, offensive or manipulated images or videos of an individual

Acts of cyber bullying are in breach of the Workplace Bullying Policy and Code of Conduct.

## 8 When does the Social Media Policy apply?

This policy has been developed to assist Council staff and business units who:

- Are authorised to administer, or contribute to, Council's official social media sites;
- Propose to use a social media platform or online community to promote the Council's policies, programs, events and services to engage internally with staff or with the Griffith community or to distribute content;
- Use social media in a personal capacity.

## 9 How is Social Media used at Griffith City Council?

- A two-way mechanism to encourage feedback and comment from stakeholders and residents
- A listening mechanism to improve understanding of public attitudes towards particular topics or issues;
- A tool to share information and consult with specific communities on current or planned policies, programs or services;
- A tool to share highly targeted information, for example media releases to direct to the community, activities and events to subscribers;



- Legislative and policy information to stakeholders;
- A way of fostering debate on a topic or issue; and
- An innovative way of delivering or supporting direct services such as self-help programs, lifestyle activities, advice services and more.

## **10 Personal Online/ Social Media Activities (*Speaking 'about' Griffith City Council*)**

- Be conscious about mixing personal and business life. There is no separation for others between personal and business profiles within social media. Council respects the right to free speech rights for all employees, however community members, customers, Councillors and key stakeholders as well as your colleagues may have access to the online content posted. Publishing information online that has been intended for specific person or a small group can and may be forwarded on.
- Be mindful of the global audience. While your message may be accurate in some parts of the world, it could be inaccurate or violate regulations in others.
- Be responsible for actions. Users will be held responsible for online activity which brings Council's reputation into disrepute. Use common sense and take the same caution with social media as with all other forms of communication.
- Follow the Council's Code of Conduct as well as all other Council Policies, Procedures and Guidelines including the Community Consultation Policy, Internet and Email Guidelines and Conditions of Access and Workplace Bullying Policy when using social media. Be respectful of all individuals, races, religions and cultures.
- If talking about Council, only share publicly available information. Engage only in discussions where you are knowledgeable about the topic. If you are unsure if information is publically available or is otherwise inappropriate to post, contact the Corporate Communications Officer before posting any such information.
- Be mindful of the Media Policy and Delegation of Authority.

## **11 Professional Online Activities (*Speaking 'on behalf of' Griffith City Council*)**

- Only users who are authorised by the General Manager are permitted to publish a blog or social network entry on any sites operated by Council, and the content of any such blog or entry must first be approved by the General Manager before publishing.
- Follow Council's Code of Conduct as well as all other Council Policies, Procedures and Guidelines including the Community Consultation Policy, Internet and Email Guidelines and Conditions of Access and Workplace Bullying Policy. Be respectful of



all individuals, races, religions and cultures when using social media. All interaction should be in the spirit of our corporate values and principles, tailored to each respective audience.

- Approval processes exist for all publications and communication on behalf of Council. Refer to the Communication Strategy.
- Share only publicly available information. Engage only in discussions where you are knowledgeable about the topic. If you are unsure if information is publically available or is otherwise inappropriate to post, contact the Corporate Communications Officer before posting any such information.
- Seek further advice or comment on issues outside your area of expertise.
- Mind copyrights and give credit to the owners. Always make sure to give credit to the original authors of any content being published (text, images, trademarks, video etc.) from a third party, and that Council has the copyright or written approval for using such material.
- Monitor relevant social media channels daily. Ensure you know what is being discussed, so you can respond appropriately if issues arise.
- Know and follow record management practices. Council has regulatory and legal obligations to retain certain information as records. Ensure all relevant information which will be interpreted as a Council position is captured and registered on Council's records management system (TRIM). Online Council statements can be held to the same legal standards as traditional media communications.
- Inappropriate content on all social media tools implemented by Council includes:
  - Profane language or content;
  - Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, colour, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation;
  - Sexual content or links to sexual content;
  - Solicitations of commerce;
  - Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;
  - Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems; or
  - Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.
- It is not permitted to use corporate email addresses to create personal accounts for sites unrelated to Griffith City Council.

Please refer to the Social Media Guidelines (COMM-FO-402) document for complete details the types of social media utilised by Council.

## 12 Use of Social Networking, including Blogging Sites and Social Media Platforms

Users must not represent or indicate they represent Council or any of its related entities unless specifically authorised to do so in writing by the General Manager.

If a user is authorised to represent the Council or any of its related entities, the User must disclose they are an employee, contractor or other Council Official of Council or a related entity and what the users role and accountabilities are.

A User authorised to represent Council or a related entity must ensure:

- Any content they publish is factually accurate and complies with relevant policies of Council;
- They only comment on topics that fall within their area of responsibility at Council;
- A User must not disparage or make any adverse comment about Council, any policy or decision of Council or any of Council's related entities, employees, contractors and other Council Officials or any other person or organisation providing services to or on behalf of Council.
- They do not post material that is obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, discriminatory or hateful to another person or entity or which causes (or could cause) insult, offence, intimidation or humiliation.
- They do not disclose another person's personal information.
- They respect copyright, privacy, financial disclosure, occupational health and safety, employment and other applicable laws.
- They do not create any legal or contractual obligations on behalf of Council unless expressly authorised by Council.
- A User may only disclose publicly available information and must not disclose or caused to be disclosed Confidential Information.
- A User must use a disclaimer when referring to Council or a related entity of Council or a Council Official. Such a disclaimer is *'the views expressed in this post are mine only and do not necessarily reflect the views of Council'*.
- A User must not transmit or send Council's documents or emails or text messages (in any format) to any external parties or organisations unless expressly authorised to do so.
- They do not send or cause to be sent chain or SPAM emails or text messages in any format.
- If the User subsequently discovers a mistake in their blog or social networking entry, they are required to immediately inform Director and then take steps authorised by Director to correct the mistake. All alterations should indicate the date on which the alteration was made.

## 13 Compliance with this Policy

Users must comply with the requirements of this policy. Any breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action which may include termination of employment (or, for Persons other than employees, the termination or non-renewal of contractual arrangements).

Other disciplinary action that may be taken includes, but is not limited to, issuing a warning, suspension or disconnection of access to all or part of Council's Computer Network whether permanently or on a temporary basis.

## 14 Variations to the Policy

Council reserves the right to vary, replace or terminate this policy from time to time.

## 15 Definitions

**GCC** – Griffith City Council.

### **Social Media**

In this Policy the term "social media" includes (not limited to):

- Social networking sites e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn, Google +
- Video and photo sharing websites e.g. Flickr, YouTube
- Micro-blogging sites e.g. Twitter
- Weblogs, including corporate blogs, personal blogs or blogs hosted by traditional media publications
- Forums and discussion boards such as Yahoo! Groups or Google Groups
- Online encyclopaedias such as Wikipedia
- Any other web sites that allow individual users or companies to use simple publishing tools.

**Blogging** means the act of using web log or 'blog'. 'Blog' is an abbreviated version of 'weblog' which is a term used to describe websites that maintain an ongoing chronicle of information. A blog is a frequently updated website featuring diary-style commentary, audio-visual material and links to articles on other websites.

**Confidential Information** includes but is not limited to trade secrets of Council; non-public information about the organisation and affairs of Council such as: pricing information such as internal cost and pricing rates; marketing or strategy plans; commercial and business plans; contractual arrangements with third parties; tender policies and arrangements; financial information and data; training materials; technical data; schematics; proposals and intentions; designs; policies and procedures documents; concepts not reduced to material form; information which is personal information for the purposes of privacy law; and all other



information obtained from Council or obtained in the course of working or providing services to Council that is by its nature confidential.

**Computer** includes all laptop computers and desk top computers.

**Council Official** includes employees, agents and contractors (including temporary contractors), administrators appointed under section 256 of the Local Government Act 1993 (NSW), members of council committees, conduct reviewers, delegates of council, work experience employees and volunteers of Council.

**Hand held device** includes all such devices which are used by users, inside and outside working hours, in the workplace of the Council (or a related corporation of Council) or at any other place. Such devices include, but are not limited to, PDAs, iPhones, tablets, iPads, other handheld electronic devices, smart phones and similar products, and any other means of accessing social networking sites or a social media platform.

**Intellectual Property** means all forms of intellectual property rights throughout the world including copyright, patent, design, trade mark, trade name, and all Confidential Information and including know-how and trade secrets.

**Person** includes any natural person, company, partnership, association, trust, business, or other organisation or entity of any description and a Person's legal personal representative(s), successors, assigns or substitutes.

**Post** within this policy means broadcasting information in a public forum.

**Social Networking Site' and 'Social Media Platform** means a web-based or group of web-based application(s) that enables the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Social Networking can occur in a variety of formats including chat rooms, weblogs, and social blogs and includes, but not limited to, Facebook, My Space, Bebo, Friendster, Flickr, YouTube, Twitter, Yahoo Groups, Google Groups, Whirlpool, Instagram and other similar sites.

## 16 Exceptions

None

## 17 Legislation

None

## 18 Related Documents

Code of Conduct (GOV-CP-404)  
Mobile Device Policy (IT-PO-301)  
Staff Email & Internet Policy (IT-CP-302)





Social Media Guidelines (IT-FO-402)  
Statements to the Media Policy (COMM-CP-401)  
Workplace Bullying Policy (HR-PO-213)

## 19 Directorate

Economic & Organisational Development



## **Council official acknowledgement**

I acknowledge and confirm:

- receiving a copy of Council's Social Media Policy;
- I have read and will comply with the Policy; and
- I understand there may be disciplinary consequences if I fail to comply the Social Media Policy, including up to termination of my employment.

Name:

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Signed:

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Date:

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