

**POLICY TITLE****SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY****VERSION I:**

Adopted 21 August 2019

**Last reviewed:**

N/A

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**POLICY STATEMENT**

Social media is strongly embedded in Australian culture as part of everyday online activities. It is a useful tool in networking and communication with the local community and beyond, as well as a powerful marketing tool.

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Establish a culture of transparency, trust and integrity in social media activities undertaken by Dungog Shire Council that fosters networking, communication and marketing opportunities
- Protect the interests of the Council
- Provide guidelines to Councillors and staff about the professional and personal use of social media sites

**SCOPE OF THE POLICY**

This policy applies to all Councillors, Management, staff, volunteers and contractors working at Dungog Shire Council.

This policy has been developed to assist employees that use social media:

- In a work-related capacity; and/or
- In a personal capacity where the employee identifies themselves as a Council employee or makes reference to the Council, its staff or Councillors
- This policy DOES NOT apply to personal use of social media when no reference or inference is made to the Council or its staff.

This policy is not exhaustive, and it does not anticipate every possible use of social media.

Staff should contact their manager or the Nominated Supervisor if they:

- Aren't sure if they should engage with social media content
- Are worried about their privacy or reputation due to social media posts
- Find information online they think the Council needs to know about, including inappropriate activity on social media by other staff. Staff should always make sure they provide as much information as possible, including links or screenshots.

There are procedures to authorise creating social media accounts to carry out our work. If staff would like to create social media accounts for this purpose, they must have the approval of the General Manager.

## WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

Social and digital media are online services and tools used for publishing, sharing and discussing information. The list of social media types is extensive and can include forums, blogs, wikis, social networking websites and any other websites that allow individual users to easily upload and share content. Platforms include but are not limited to Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, Youtube.

## POLICY

Dungog Shire Council recognises the value of using social media as a communication tool. It allows the Council to connect with its community by sharing up to date and relevant information.

In utilising social media, the Council and its staff will apply the following general principles:

- Information disseminated through social media will be accurate, written and posted by authorised staff members (as appointed by the General Manager) and aligned with the Council's programs, policies and practices;
- The privacy of staff will be respected at all times;
- Privacy and other applicable laws will be taken into account when interacting on social media;
- In developing, posting or responding to content, staff will uphold the Council's core values and code of conduct by acting with honesty, integrity, courtesy and professionalism;
- Material published on social media sites will not be offensive, obscene, defamatory, discriminatory, racist or otherwise unlawful;
- Users will be polite and respectful of the opinions of others at all times;
- Users will be mindful that others may not share the same sense of humour or points of view;
- There will be no access or engagement with any material that is inappropriate or unlawful. This may include posts that are fraudulent, threatening, bullying, embarrassing, of a sexual nature, obscene, racist, sexist, defamatory or profane, whether obscured by symbols or not;
- Staff will not use Council ICT resources to post explicit or sexually suggestive messages;
- There will be no infringement of another person's, or the Council's, intellectual property rights.

## SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS

### **A WEBSITE to publish and share information with the community about:**

- The program, services and facilities offered by Council
- Policies and procedures
- Staffing
- Current news and events
- Contact information
- Links to other websites

### **A PUBLIC FACEBOOK PAGE to share up to the minute information with the wider community including:**

- Promotion of Council
- Interaction with the wider community
- Events
- Recognition of community projects, groups and contributions
- Links to other sites.

**The Dungog Shire Council Public Facebook Page will not include any of the following:**

- The publication of identifying images and photographs unless prior approval from people is sought
- Calendar events and dates specific to Dungog Shire Council
- Reference to specific community members without their consent

**About the Dungog Shire Council Public Facebook Page:**

- All posts and comments will be reviewed by an Administrator before appearing on the page
- The Administrator/s will be C7EVEN Communications and staff members as appointed by the General Manager

**PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

Dungog Shire Council recognises that employees may wish to use social media in a personal capacity. Employees should be aware that they are personally responsible for content they publish in any form of social media.

It is also important that staff do not risk the council's reputation with comments they make online. Staff can generally make public comment in a personal or private capacity if the comment is lawful and a reasonable person would not perceive it to be:

- made on behalf of the council
- affecting their ability to fulfil their duties
- so harsh or extreme in its criticism or endorsement of the council
- damaging to the integrity or reputation of the council
- so strong in its criticism of our administration that it could seriously disrupt the workplace
- a gratuitous personal attack that connects them to the council.

Specifically, staff SHOULD NOT:

- Make a negative comment, share or like posts that make a negative comment about the council, its programs, policies, councillors or other staff members; or are offensive in any way
- Share private or confidential information obtained through work
- Post comments or images that are obscene, offensive, threatening, harassing or discriminatory in relation to work, another staff member, a stakeholder or the council
- Create a social media page to protest policies that staff are responsible for implementing or promoting
- Comment on matters that the council is involved with
- Post inappropriate images that reference or involve the council in some way. This could be photos taken of employees engaging in misconduct that breaches the council code of conduct or values or otherwise damages the council's reputation
- Engage in comments that breach anti-discrimination law
- Release sensitive, personal or confidential information without proper authority
- Use an official work email address, or anything else that connects them to the council, when making public comment

Council staff should not use social media in a personal capacity during working hours. Employees should also be mindful of appropriate social media use in personal time. Should harassment of any kind take place on a social networking site such as, but not limited to, sexual or verbal harassment, employees will face an inquiry into their actions and depending on the severity of the situation face possible termination of employment. Employees are to report any such behaviour that they witness to their supervisor and refrain from commenting on the thread.

## PROCEDURES

### PERMISSION

From time to time, Council will use photos of staff carrying out work related duties for website and social media purposes.

Council will seek permission of staff prior to uploading staff photos onto its website or other forms of social media such as Facebook or Instagram.

### RESPONSIBILITIES

**Employees** and **Councillors** are responsible for:

- Adhering to the policy and its principles when using all forms of social media.

The **Nominated Supervisor** is responsible for:

- Authorising the content to be placed on the main website and Facebook pages
- Adhering to the policy and its principles when using all forms of social media.

### BREACHES

In situations where staff's online behaviour potentially breaches the council's code of conduct or values the issue will be investigated by management for disciplinary action.

Likewise, where a Councillors online behaviour breaches the council's social media policy the issue will be investigated by management.

### LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES AND REFERENCES

- Dungog Shire Council Code of Conduct
- Privacy Policy
- Australian Government Department of Communications and the Arts

This policy has been developed in consultation with Council's management team.

<b>Date Policy Adopted</b>	<b>Minute No</b>	<b>Authority</b>
21 August 2019	38150	Council resolution