



muswellbrook shire council

Social Media Engagement Policy

Policy No. C43/2

**Assembled by
Renee Rogers**

**Adopted By Council
XXX
Minute No. XX**

Social Media Engagement C43/2

POLICY OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this document is to provide a set of simple guiding principles for engaging in communications via social media channels. This policy will ensure that all Council staff members, Councillors, volunteers, contractors and consultants understand their responsibilities when engaging externally with other organisations, forums and individuals using online engagement tools or “social media”.

This includes but is not limited to the following:

- a) Social networking sites, e.g. Facebook, MySpace, Linked-in
- b) Video and photo sharing websites, e.g. Flickr, YouTube
- c) Micro-blogging sites, e.g. Twitter
- d) Forums and discussion boards such as Google or Yahoo groups
- e) Weblogs, including corporate blogs, personal blogs and blogs hosted by traditional media publications
- f) Online encyclopaedias, e.g. Wikipedia.

This policy applies to all users and is to be read in conjunction with the Code of Conduct and the following policies:

- a) Communications (being developed)
- b) Computer and Information Technology Use
- c) Harassment and Workplace Bullying

POLICY STATEMENT

Muswellbrook Shire Council is committed to the current, relevant and responsible provision of information about Council and its activities within the Muswellbrook Shire.

This policy addresses the governance and management of Council’s online presence and the use of social media as it pertains to this provision of information.

The social media spaces established by Council are designed to interact and engage with the wider community for the purposes of:

- a) Directing members of the community to Council Information, images and services;
- b) Extending the reach of publicly available Council information;
- c) Building a reliable identity by adhering to the social media engagement principles of transparency, responsibility and respect; and
- d) Creating social networking places for community building and interaction, to facilitate and support discussion around Council services, plans, publications and resources.

DEFINITIONS

Author – Members of Council staff authorised to use Council's information technology services to manage Council's online presence and present information on social media platforms.

Online Presence – Muswellbrook Shire Council or representation thereof as visible on the internet including information or opinion online expressed by a staff member acting as a representative of Council.

Social Media - Media for social interaction, using highly accessible and scalable communication techniques. The term refers to the use of web-based and mobile technologies to turn communication into interactive dialogue.

Comment – Content that is published to the internet using social media.

Community Building – the process of recruiting potential community or network participants, helping them to find shared interests or goals, use the technology and develop useful conversations.

Content – text, pictures, video and other meaningful material that is on the internet.

Forums – Discussion areas on web sites where people can post messages or comment on existing messages.

Screen Shot – a picture of a website, taken by pressing the print screen key using a keyboard and saving as a pdf, jpeg or similar digital file.

Social Media – Internet-based tools and platforms for sharing and discussing information

Social networking – the practice of using online resources to create a profile or online presence and then socialise with others using social media tools.

User – a person who is engaging or interacting within a social media platform who is not the authorised Council employee.

Vexatious complaints - complaints initiated with insufficient grounds and serving only to cause annoyance.

Web 2.0 - a broad term used to describe web applications that facilitate interactive information sharing, interoperability, and collaboration on the World Wide Web.

Weblogs – Websites with dated items of content in reverse chronological order, self published by people, that allow for commenting.

Web Applications – computer software hosted in a browser-controlled environment designed to help perform singular or multiple related specific tasks generally to help solve a problem.

POLICY

1. Principles of Social Media Engagement

- 1.1. This policy applies when an employee is authorised and accredited to represent a section, division or service of Muswellbrook Shire Council on social media platforms and is using a social media platform for business or Council purposes.
- 1.2. This policy does not apply to personal use of social media platforms where no reference is made to Muswellbrook Shire Council, its people, services, Councillors, contractors and/or other stakeholders.
- 1.3. When using social media to engage with the community authors should adhere to the principles and general conduct obligations outlined in Council's Code of Conduct. In this context Council employees should particularly observe the principles of transparency, responsibility and respect.

2. Social Media Authorisation

- 2.1 In order to become an authorised representative of Muswellbrook Shire Council on a social media platform, an employee must:
 - a) have approval from the relevant Director or General Manager;
 - b) sign a social media usage acknowledgment form.
- 2.2 As an authorised representative of Muswellbrook Shire Council engaging in social media platforms, authors are bound by the principles outlined in this policy, Council's Code of Conduct and Council's Computer and Information Technology Use Policy.

It is the responsibility of all authorised employees to be familiar with these principles, including any subsequent amendments.

3. Harassment and Bullying

- 3.1 The Harassment and Workplace Bullying Policy requires that Council staff must not must not harass, discriminate against, or support others who harass and discriminate against colleagues or members of the public.
- 3.2 This includes, but is not limited to, harassment and discrimination on the grounds of sex, pregnancy, age, race (including their colour, nationality, descent, ethnic or religious background), political affiliation, marital status, disability, homosexuality or transgender.

3.3 Users representing Council online must not act in a way that is discriminatory, bullying or bigoted. All information and opinions expressed in this context are a reflection of Muswellbrook Shire Council; staff acting contrary to the Harassment and Workplace Bullying Policy and the bullying and harassment provisions in the Code of Conduct will be subject to disciplinary action.

4. Relevant Legislative Provisions

Defamation Act 2005

Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009

Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988

Copyright Act 1968

Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998

State Records Act 1998

4.1 Section 4 of the *Defamation Act 2005* provides that electronic communication is subject to defamation liability. Users must not submit or publish content online in any media that is defamatory or could be reasonably interpreted as defamation unless the content is disclosed per the provisions of the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*.

4.2 Users may submit or publish content online that is classified as open access information by Council policy and publication guidelines. Information may be informally disclosed subject to authorisation by the General Manager and/or the Public Officer. (s8 *GIPA 2009*)

4.3 Under the provisions of the *Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988*, conduct that constitutes a disciplinary offence (such as a breach of the Code of Conduct) may constitute corrupt conduct under the Act and be subject to the associated penalties.

4.4 Users must not submit or publish online any content that would constitute a breach of copyright. This includes works of a written, audio, visual or multimedia nature not covered under Creative Commons licence or permission from the work's owner.

4.5 Unlawful activities may be referred to the appropriate authorities for criminal/civil action. Staff who are aware of, or observe a suspected violation of this policy, are responsible for reporting the incident to their supervisor.

4.6 Section 14(1) of the *State Records Act 1998* requires all technology dependent records such as those published on social networking platforms to be recorded in such a way that they remain accessible once that technology becomes redundant.

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REVIEW HISTORY:

	<i>Current</i>	<i>Previous</i>	<i>Prior</i>	<i>Prior</i>
<i>Minute No:</i>				
<i>Meeting Date:</i>				
<i>Review Date:</i>				
<i>Rescind Date:</i>				