



Social Media Policy

Application	All employees, volunteers, contractors and Councillors who contribute on social networking sites, website and external blogs that identify themselves as being associated with Council.
Responsible Officer	Corporate Services Coordinator
File No	CM:POL:CWP
Authorised by	Council
Effective Date	
Distribution	Internet / Intranet / Public Exhibition

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 Carrathool Shire 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.

Definitions

Council	Carrathool Shire Council
Council Officials	Councillors, employees, contractors, sub-contractors, volunteers (including work experience students), members of council committees
Social Media	In this policy the term "social media" includes (not limited to): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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	The act of using weblog 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: pricing information such as internal cost and pricing rates, production scheduling software, special supply information; marketing or strategy plans; exclusive supply agreements or arrangements; 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;

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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.

Reference

This policy complements other legislation and where it is silent on matters referred to in the following legislation such matters must be followed in accordance with the legislation.

- Local Government Act 1993
- Local Government (General) Regulation 2021

Policy statements

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.

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 professional life.

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 Carrathool Shire community or to distribute content;
- Use social media in a personal capacity.

Personal Online / Social Media Activities (Speaking "about" Carrathool Shire 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 Engagement Strategy, Email and Internet Acceptable Use Agreement and Workplace Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination



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 publicly available or is otherwise inappropriate to post, contact the Corporate Services Coordinator before posting any such information.
- Be mindful of the Delegation of Authority.

Professional Online Activities (Speaking “on behalf of” Carrathool Shire 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 Engagement Strategy, Email and Internet Acceptable Use Agreement and Workplace Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination 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.
- Share only publicly available information. Engage only in discussions where you are knowledgeable about the topic. If you are unsure if information is publicly available or is otherwise inappropriate to post, contact the Corporate Services Coordinator before posting any such information, if in doubt don’t post any 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 (MAGIQ). 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 Carrathool Shire Council.



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, work 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 the Director and then take steps authorised by the Director to correct the mistake. All alterations should indicate the date on which the alteration was made.

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.



Revision Table

Minute /Date	Amendment Reason or Reference
1056/20.08.2019	Adoption
May 2024	Statutory Review

Associated Documents

- Code of Conduct
- Employee Confidentiality Agreement
- Email and Internet Acceptable Use Agreement
- Workplace Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination Policy

Review

This policy may be amended from time to time and will be reviewed within four years of its adoption (or latest amendment) with reference to any relevant legislation and best practice guides.