

THE BAROSSA COUNCIL

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY



1. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to provide a framework for Elected Members and Council Employees to manage the flow of information delivered and received by Council through its Social Media applications when conducting official Council business.

2. Scope

- 2.1. This Policy formalises Council's position on the creation and dissemination of official content through social media channels by Elected Members and employees and applies to all digital spaces where people may comment, contribute, create, forward, post, upload and share official content, as individuals or on behalf of The Barossa Council. As it is not possible to expressly refer to or list all digital media platforms, the absence of any reference does not limit the application of this policy.
- 2.2. This Policy may not apply to personal use of Social Media where Employees and Elected Members publish information in their personal capacity (and not on behalf of, or in association with Council) where no reference is made to Council, its Elected Members, Employees, policies, services or any other issue, reflection, comment, like (or similar) or inference related to Council.

However, if such a reference is made while using Social Media in a personal capacity, Employees and Elected Members should be aware that their behaviour may be governed by the relevant behavioural guidelines.

- 2.3. The Mayor, Chief Executive Officer and Directors, pursuant to clause 3.1 of the Media and Communications Policy are Council's appointed authorised spokespersons, and as such may respond and engage on Council's Corporate Social Media Account. Other Elected Members will not engage in an official capacity with Council-owned social media, except where authorised by the Mayor.
- 2.4. If an Elected Member communicates a personal opinion or makes a public comment on a Council owned or non-Council owned social media platform, they must make it clear that it is their own personal view, which does not necessarily reflect the position of Council. Any such views should not disrespect Council, its decisions, decision-making process or Employees.
- 2.5. Whilst accessing personal Social Media during normal hours (except breaks) is not reasonable this Policy does not deal with Employees accessing Social Media sites for personal use please refer to Use Of Council Technology Resources Policy.
- 2.6. This Policy must be read in conjunction with Council's Media and Communications Policy.

3. Policy Statement

3.1. Strategic Use of Social Media

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- 3.1.1. Council will use Social Media as an additional and complementary tool to communicate and engage with our community and stakeholders, making Council more accessible, building transparency and positively guiding the community dialogue, in line with Council's Communications Strategy 2021-25.
- 3.1.2. Social Media provides a digital space where Council can:
 - listen to the needs of our community and respond;
 - provide community members with a space to actively participate in discussions that are important to them;
 - increase resident's access to Council;
 - increase Council's access to residents to improve the accessibility and transparency of Council communication;
 - direct the community to information, consultation, community engagement, events and photographs; and
 - promote activities, events and programs.
- 3.1.3. Council's Social Media should be used wherever appropriate as additional support when Council consults with its community in accordance with its Public Consultation Policy.
- 3.1.4. Information, images or footage which is distributed through Social Media in the conduct of Council business will be:
 - managed as official records in accordance with Council's *Knowledge Management Policy*, *General Disposal Schedules*; in conjunction with the *Social Media Process*; and
 - subject to the provisions of the *Freedom of Information Act 1991*, acknowledging data may be accessed by an applicant, in line with respective processes and legislation.

3.2. Responsibilities and Expectations

- 3.2.1. Only authorised and trained employees may create information for Council owned and non-Council owned Social Media platforms where Council is referenced.
- 3.2.2. Authorisation and training is administered by the Communications and Engagement Team.
- 3.2.3. Social media is administered in accordance with Council's Social Media Process and guidelines, including Council's Social Media Staff User Guide for Authorised Employees.
- 3.2.4. The Communications and Engagement Team is responsible for its processes and guidelines and for the maintenance and review of these documents.
- 3.2.5. Teams that operate Social Media Accounts are responsible for their accounts and must use the approved publishing and monitoring system to administer their account.
- 3.2.6. All accounts will be operated under a uniform terms and conditions framework, which must be utilised across all platforms. Terms and conditions will be inclusive of information relating to monitoring hours and appropriate communications.

- 3.2.7. It is not realistic for Authorised Employees to effectively respond to these communications outside of normal business hours unless as directed by senior management or where a timely response is necessary. Council's Social Media Process outlines response guidelines for managing and monitoring Council Accounts.

3.3. Behaviour

- 3.3.1. Social Media is a further tool for engagement with the community and is subject to Council's Behavioural Standards for Council Members and Human Resource Management Policy. Any allegations or breaches of the relevant Policy shall be investigated as per the relevant policy.
- 3.3.2. Comments by community members which amount to a complaint or a request for service, and which are posted on Council's Social Media should be acknowledged by an Authorised Employee and managed in accordance with Council's Customer Service Policy and Complaint Handling Process and Social Media User Guide.
- 3.3.3. Where an unauthorised employee engages with and/or comments on Council decisions, information or news, whether it is within a Council owned or non-Council owned social media platform, the employee must clearly identify that it is his/her own personal view. Any such views should not disrespect Council, its decisions, decision-making process or Employees. If the Council decision, information or news relates directly to the employee's role and/or work, the employee is encouraged not to comment if their personal opinion is contrary to Council's position.

3.4. Content

- 3.4.1. All content must be accurate, factual and updated where appropriate using Plain English
- 3.4.2. All content that is, on reasonable ground, not accurate or factual will be removed by Council as soon as possible.
- 3.4.3. Council's Social Media sites should provide:
- links to Council's website at www.barossa.sa.gov.au for more information, forms, documents or online services necessary to conduct business with Council;
 - User Terms and Conditions as approved by the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) outlining Council's expectations of community members who wish to interact within the digital space;
 - the action the Authorised Employee will take if prohibited content is posted and definitions of the prohibited content; and
 - appropriate authorisation statements to meet caretaker period requirements during periodic Council elections.
- 3.4.4. At all times Council reserves the right to access Authorised Employee login information.

- 3.4.5. Council Accounts shall not be utilised for posts or comments in relation to any development proposal under the Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016.
- 3.4.6. Council Accounts shall not be utilised in any way that could materially benefit, or be perceived to benefit, a Council Employee.

3.5. **Prohibited Content**

- 3.5.1. The following will not be tolerated on Council's Social Media and will be immediately removed by an Authorised Employee should it be posted by anyone:
- Abusive or profane comments.
 - Bullying or harassing comments.
 - Confidential material.
 - Copyrighted material.
 - Discriminatory language or material – in relation to a person or group based on age, colour, creed, disability, family status, gender, nationality, marital status, parental status, political opinion/affiliation, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, race or social origin, religious beliefs/activity, responsibilities, sex or sexual orientation.
 - Inappropriate material including that of a sexual nature.
 - Endorsements for a third-party organisation unless otherwise approved by Council or the Chief Executive Officer.
 - Material that in the opinion of the Chief Executive Officer or relevant Director is or potentially against the law or possess unreasonable publisher risks (e.g. defamation, privacy, trade practices, trademarks).
 - Images that may identify individuals (photographs/video) without their permission or that from their parent/guardian.
 - Materials which could compromise Council, Employee or the organisation's or communities safety.
 - Materials which breach a Council policy.
 - Materials which could damage Council's reputation.
 - Materials which are offensive to the reasonable person.
 - Personal details or references to Elected Members, Council Employees or related parties.
 - Political or election-related lobbying (however, information which promotes or encourages participation in Local Government elections is permitted).
 - Spam, junk mail or advertising.
 - Or any other material considered inappropriate.

3.6. **Opening and Closing an application or account**

- 3.6.1. To establish a new Social Media Account for Council a business case must be presented to Executive Leadership Team detailing those considerations addressed in the Social Media Process.
- 3.6.2. Accounts that do not meet the needs of the community or cannot be adequately administered will be closed on instruction from the CEO and/or in consultation with the Executive Leadership Team.

3.7. **Reporting**

- 3.7.1. All Social Media activity relevant to Council and Council business should be captured in line with the Social Media Process.

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3.8. **Records Management**

- 3.8.1. All Social Media activity falls within Council Records Management responsibilities and therefore all posts shall be managed in accordance with Council's Records Management Policy.

3.9. **Continued Unreasonable Conduct of Users**

- 3.9.1. If a user of Council's Social Media, after being warned of their inappropriate use, continues to post Prohibited Content as outlined in clause 3.5.1, Council reserves the right to suspend or block a user from the relevant platform; or all Council Social Media sites. Council will at all times allow a user to change their behaviour before instigating such action and will adhere to the principles of natural justice.

4. Supporting Processes and Documents

Social Media Process

Social Media Account Authorised Employee Application Form

Social Media User Guide

Terms and Conditions of Approval

5. Related Policies

Customer Service Policy

Complaints Handling Process

Use Of Council Technology Resources Policy (CD/20/50[v1])

Caretaker Policy

Behavioural Standards for Council Members

Privacy Policy

Human Resource Management Policy

Public Consultation Policy

Knowledge Management Policy

Media and Communications Policy

6. Legislation and References

LGA's Model Social Media Policy with a Social Media Issues Paper for SA Councils

Freedom of Information Act 1991 (SA)

Independent Commissioner Against Corruption Act 2012

Local Government Act 1999 (SA)

7. Review

This Policy will be reviewed by [the Council / Document Control Officer] in consultation with the relevant stakeholders, within four (4) years or more frequently if legislation or Council's need changes.

8. Further Information

- 8.1. This Policy is available on Council's website at www.barossa.sa.gov.au. It can also be viewed electronically at Council's principal office at 43-51 Tanunda Road, Nuriootpa

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and all Council branches, during ordinary business hours. A copy of this Policy can be obtained at those venues upon payment of a fixed fee.

- 8.2. Complaints regarding this Policy or its application can be made to the Customer Service team on 8563 8444 or barossa@barossa.sa.gov.au at first instance, who will refer you to the most appropriate officer according to Council's *Customer Service Policy* (see clause 8.1 above for availability).

9. Document Control

Corporate Plan Link:		6.7 Implement strategies for the community to be actively engaged in Council decision making through sound information and communications	
Document Owner:	Chief Executive Officer	Document Control Officer:	Team Leader Communications and Engagement
Audience:	External	Next Review Date:	20/06/2025
Version history			
Version No.	Date	Description of Change	
4.0	20/06/2023	Clarity around user expectations	
3.0	20/07/2021	Rolled over in Policy suite	
2.0	18/12/2018		
1.0	29/05/2015	New Policy	

10. Definitions

Account	The profile an organisation or an individual uses on a Social Media application. Council manages two forms of accounts: - Corporate account – managed by the platform administrator (Communications & Engagement) and used to communicate on cross-Council matters - Targeted account – managed by Authorised Council Employee(s) to communicate specific information to a specific audience eg Library
Authorised Employee	A Council Employee who has been authorised by the Chief Executive Officer or his/her delegate and trained to monitor, post and respond on Council's Social Media application(s) as per the Social Media Authorised Employee process
Blog	Blog is a shortened term for 'web log'. Any comment, article, diary, text on the internet can be considered a 'blog'.
Comment	A comment is information or text contributed by one user to another in an online service.
Copyright/Plagiarism	A term that identifies the legal protection given to the creator of an original work.
Elected Member	All elected members of The Barossa Council including the Mayor.
Hashtag	A word or phrase preceded by a hash sign (#), used on social media sites such to identify messages on a specific topic. Words preceded by a hashtag are publicly viewable, become grouped

	and searchable. No individual or organisation can control a hashtag, they are publicly crowd generated and driven.
Notifications	Notifications are messages sent from social media sites. They can appear as an alert to a user from within the social media platform or be delivered via other medium such as email.
Platform Administrator	Responsible for managing accounts and permissions.
Post	A post is content that has been contributed by a user to a social media channel. Posts can include text, images, video.
Social Media	Group term for a range of on-line communication channels, which enable content sharing and collaboration. Including but not limited to: social networking sites (eg Facebook, LinkedIn); microblogging sites (eg Twitter); blogs; podcasts; forums and discussion boards; wikis.
Tagging	On social media platforms, a 'tag' is a one use or users mention another in a post or contributed content. Users can also be identified in a picture via a 'tag'.



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