



Central Darling Shire Council Social Media Policy

Document Reference No:	GD/	Version:	
Service Unit:			
Author:			
Responsible Director:			
Authorisation Date:		Review Date:	
Minute No:			

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Purpose

This social media Policy sets standards of conduct for all Council officials who use social media in their official capacity. For the purposes of this policy, unless otherwise specified, the term Council official includes employees, agents and contractors (including temporary contractors), Councillors, 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 Central Darling Shire Council.

This policy is based upon the Model Social Media Policy developed by the Office of Local Government (OLG) in consultation with councils. There is also material referenced from Cyber Security NSW and the Local Government workplace relations document. The draft Central Darling Shire Council Social Media Policy has been adapted to suit the needs of our Council.

The OLG Model Social Media Policy sets out an exemplary approach by incorporating examples of best practice from the social media policies of a diverse range of NSW councils, as well as from Commonwealth and State Government agencies.

This policy will provide councillors with a robust framework for the administration and management of their social media platforms. It also sets standards of conduct for all Council officials who use social media in their official capacity. It has been developed to be fit-for-purpose in a digital age where innovation and emerging trends are the norm.

This social media policy has four 'Principles' of social media engagement. These are:

- **Openness; Relevance; Accuracy and Respect**

These principles, which are expanded upon in Part 1, underpin every aspect of Council's social media activity and Central Darling Shire Council is committed to upholding them.

Except for Part 8, this policy applies to Central Darling Shire Council social media pages and Councillor social media pages.

Social media is fundamental to not just how people interact with one another, but also to how we work, play, and consume information and ideas.

Despite its obvious benefits, social media also presents a variety of challenges and risks. These include:

- (a) The emergence of new, harmful forms of behavior, such as cyber-bullying and trolling.

- (b) Maintaining the accuracy, reliability and integrity of information shared from multiple sources.
- (c) Organisations can be held liable for third party content uploaded onto their social media platforms.
- (d) Content uploaded in a person's private capacity can adversely affect their employment and cause significant reputational damage to colleagues and employers.
- (e) Rapid innovation can make it difficult to keep pace with emerging technologies and trends.

In addition, potential corruption risks may arise due to social media use. These include:

- (f) Customers, development proponents/objectors, tenderers, or other stakeholders grooming public officials by behaviours such as 'liking' specific posts, reposting content, or sending personal or private messages.
- (g) Public officials disclosing confidential or sensitive information.
- (h) Using social media for sponsorship opportunities which may unfairly advantage one sponsor over another and lack transparency.
- (i) Public agencies or officials promoting certain businesses by behaviours such as 'following' them, 'liking' content, or making comments, which may result in those businesses being favoured over others.

As in the federal and state jurisdictions, social media has become an important tool in government and political discourse at the local level. In the context of Central Darling Shire social media has one main primary function:

- a) It is used to interact and share information with our communities in an accessible and often more informal format.

Social media enables councillors to promote their achievements and address their constituents directly about community issues and events in ways that either complement or bypass traditional news and print media.

However, councils and councillors are not immune from the challenges associated with social media, which can pose a significant risk both in a legal sense, and in terms of a council's ability to operate in a unified and coordinated way. It is therefore vital that Central Darling Shire Council has the right policy settings in place so that the full benefits of social media can be realized whilst mitigating risk.

Application

Part 1 – Principals

Central Darling Shire Council is committed to upholding and promoting the following principles of social media engagement.

Openness: Our social media platforms are places where anyone can share and discuss issues that are relevant to our Council and the community we represent and serve.

Relevance: We will ensure our social media platforms are kept up to date with informative content about our Council and community.

Accuracy: The content we upload onto our social media platforms and any other social media platform will be a source of truth for our Council and community. We will prioritise the need to correct inaccuracies when they occur, and this may include deleting content.

Respect: Our social media platforms are safe spaces. We will uphold and promote the behavioural standards contained in this policy and our Council's code of conduct when using our social media platforms and any other social media platform.

Part 2 - Administrative framework for Council's social media platforms

Platforms

2.1 Council will maintain a presence on the following social media platforms: Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram.

2.2 Council's social media platforms must specify or provide a clearly accessible link to the 'House Rules' for engaging on the platform.

Establishment and deletion of Council social media platforms

2.3 A new Council social media platform, or a social media platform proposed by a Council related entity (for example, a Council committee), can only be established or deleted with the written approval of the General Manager or their delegate.

2.4 Where a Council social media platform is established or deleted in accordance with clause 2.3, the General Manager or their delegate may amend clause 2.1 of this policy without the need for endorsement by the Council's governing body.

2.5 The General Manager will appoint the Council's social media coordinator (SMC). The SMC should be a senior and suitably qualified member of staff or contractor. This position is held by the Council Community Engagement and Tourism Officer.

2.6 The General Manager may appoint more than one SMC.

2.7 The SMC's role is to:

- a) Approve and revoke a staff member's status as an authorised user.
- b) Develop and/or approve the training and/or induction to be provided to authorised users as required.
- c) Maintain a register of authorised users.
- d) Maintain effective oversight of authorised users.
- e) Moderate the Council's social media platforms in accordance with Part 5 of this policy.
- f) Ensure the Council complies with its record keeping obligations under the *State Records Act 1998* in relation to social media (see clauses 7.1 to 7.4 of this policy).
- g) Ensure the Council adheres to the rules of the social media platform(s).
- h) Ensure the Council's social media platforms are set up and maintained in a way that maximizes user friendliness and any technical problems are resolved promptly.

2.8 The SMC may delegate their functions under paragraphs (e) and (f) of clause 2.7 to authorised users.

2.9 The SMC is an authorised user for the purposes of this policy.

Authorised Users

2.10 Authorised users are members are Council officials who are authorised by the General Manager/SMC to upload content and engage on social media on the Council's behalf.

2.11 Authorised users are responsible for managing, or have expertise in, the events, initiatives, programs, or policies that are the subject of the social media content.

2.12 The General Manager/SMC will appoint authorised users as required.

2.13 An authorised user must receive a copy of this policy and induction training on social media use and Council's obligations before uploading content on Council's behalf.

2.14 The role of an authorised user is to:

- Ensure, to the best of their ability, that the content they upload onto social media platforms is accurate.
- Correct inaccuracies in Council generated content including the removal of content.

- They can engage in discussions and answer questions on Council's behalf on social media platforms.
- Keep the Council's social media platforms up to date.
- Moderate the Council's social media platforms in accordance with Part 5 of this policy.
- Ensure the Council complies with its record keeping obligations under the *State Records Act 1998* in relation to social media (see clauses 7.1 to 7.4 of this policy) where authorised to do so by the SMC.

2.15 When engaging on social media on Council's behalf (such as, but not limited to, on a community social media page), an authorised user must identify themselves as a member of Council staff, but they are not obliged to disclose their name or position within the Council.

2.16 Authorised users must not use Council social media platforms for personal reasons.

Administrative tone

2.17 Authorised users upload content and engage on social media on the Council's behalf. Authorised users must use language consistent with that function and avoid expressing or appearing to express their personal views when undertaking their role.

2.18 Authorised users may use more personal, informal language when engaging on Council's social media platforms, for example when replying to comments.

Register of authorised users

2.19 The SMC will maintain a register of authorised users. This register is to be reviewed to ensure it is fit-for-purpose.

Ceasing to be an authorised user

1.2 At their discretion the General Manager/SMC may revoke a staff member's status as an authorised user. Reasons for this include, but are not limited to, if:

- a) The staff member makes such a request.
- b) The staff member has failed to comply with this policy.
- c) The General Manager/SMC is of the reasonable opinion that the staff member is no longer suitable to be an authorised user.

Part 3 – Administrative framework for councillors’ social media platforms

- 3.1** For the purposes of this policy, Councillor social platforms are not Central Darling Shire Council social media platforms. Part 2 of this policy does not apply to councillor social media platforms.
- 3.2** Councillors are responsible for the administration and moderation of their own social media platforms (in accordance with Parts 3 and 5 of this policy), and ensuring they comply with the record keeping obligations under the *State Records Act 1998* (see clauses 7.1 to 7.4 of this policy) and Council’s records management policy in relation to social media.
- 3.3** Clause 3.2 also applies to Councillors in circumstances where another person administers, moderates, or uploads content onto their personal social media platform.
- 3.4** Councillors must comply with the rules of the platform when engaging on social media.

Induction and training

- 3.5** Councillors who engage, or intend to engage, on social media must receive induction training on social media use. Induction training can be undertaken either as part of the Councillor’s induction program or as part of their ongoing professional development program.

Identifying as a councillor

- 3.6** Councillors must identify themselves on their social media platforms in the following format:

Councillor “First Name and Last Name”.

- 3.7** A Councillor social media platform must include a profile photo which is a clearly identifiable image of the Councillor.
- 3.8** If a Councillor becomes or ceases to be the mayor, deputy mayor, or the holder of another position (for example, chairperson of a committee), this must be clearly stated on the Councillor social media platforms and updated immediately/as soon as possible and no later than three days.

Other general requirements for Councillor social media platforms

- 3.9** Councillor social media platforms must specify or provide a clearly accessible link to the ‘House Rules’ for engaging on the platform.

3.10 A Councillor social media platform must include a disclaimer to the following effect:

“The views expressed, and comments made on this social media platform are my own and not that of the Central Darling Shire Council.”

3.11 Despite clause 3.10, Mayoral or Councillor media releases and other content that has been authorised according to Central Darling Shire Council's media and communications protocols may be uploaded onto a Councillor's social media platform.

3.12 Councillors may upload publicly available Council information onto their social media platforms.

3.13 Councillors may use more personal, informal language when engaging on their social media platforms.

Councillor queries relating to social media platforms

3.14 Questions from councillors relating to their obligations under this policy, technical queries relating to the operation of their social media platforms or managing records on social media may be directed to the General Manager/SMC in the first instance, in accordance with Council's councillor requests protocols.

Other social media platforms administered by Councillors

3.15 A councillor must advise the General Manager/SMC of any social media platforms they administer on which content relating to the Central Darling Shire Council or Council officials is, or is expected to be, uploaded. The councillor must do so within:

- a) As soon as possible and no later than three days of becoming a councillor or of becoming the administrator.

Part 4 – Standards of conduct on social media

4.1 This policy only applies to a Council official's use of social media in an official capacity or in connection with their role with Central Darling Shire Council. The policy does not apply to personal use of social media that is not connected with a person's role as a Council official.

4.2 Council officials must comply with the Council's code of conduct when using social media in an official capacity or in connection with their role as a Council official.

4.3 Council officials must not use social media to post or share comments, photos, videos, electronic recordings or other information that:

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- a) Is defamatory, offensive, humiliating, threatening, or intimidating to other council officials or members of the public.
- b) Contains profane language or is sexual in nature.
- c) Constitutes harassment and/or bullying within the meaning of the *Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW* or is unlawfully discriminatory.
- d) Is contrary to their duties under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* and their responsibilities under any policies or procedures adopted by the Council to ensure workplace health and safety.
- e) Contains content about the Central Darling Shire Council, Council officials or members of the public that is misleading or deceptive.
- f) Divulges confidential Council information.
- g) Breaches the privacy of other Council officials or members of the public.
- h) Contains allegations of suspected breaches of the Council's code of conduct or information about the consideration of a matter under the *Procedures for the Administration of the Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW*.
- i) Could be perceived to be an official comment on behalf of the Council where they have not been authorised to make such a comment.
- j) Commits the Council to any action.
- k) Violates an order made by a court.
- l) Breaches copyright.
- m) Advertises, endorses or solicits commercial products or business.
- n) Constitutes spam.
- o) Is in breach of the rules of the social media platform.

4.4 Council officials must:

- a) Attribute work to the original author, creator or source when uploading or linking to content produced by a third party.
- b) Obtain written permission from a minor's parent or legal guardian before uploading content in which the minor can be identified.

4.5 Council officials must exercise caution when sharing, liking, retweeting content as this can be regarded as an endorsement and/or publication of the content.

4.6 Council officials must not incite or encourage other people to act in a way that is contrary to the requirements of this Part.

4.7 Councillors must uphold and accurately represent the policies and decisions of the Council's governing body but may explain why they voted on a matter in the way that they did. (see section 232(1)(f) of the *Local Government Act 1993*).

Part 5 – Moderation of social media platforms

Note: Central Darling Shire Council and Council officials should be aware that they may be considered a 'publisher' of any content uploaded onto a social media platform they administer, including content that:

- **Is uploaded by a third party; and/or**
- **Appears on their social media platform because they have 'liked', 'shared', or 'retweeted' the content, or similar.**

5.1 Council officials who are responsible for the moderation of the Council's or councillors social media platforms may remove content and 'block' or ban a person from those platforms. Such actions must be undertaken in accordance with this Part.

5.2 For the purposes of this Part, 'social media platform' and 'platform' means both the Council's and councillors' social media platforms.

House Rules

5.3 Social media platforms must state or provide an accessible link to the 'House Rules' for engaging on the platform.

5.4 At a minimum, the House Rules should specify:

- a) The principles of social media engagement referred to part one of this policy.
- b) The type of behaviour or content that will result in that content being removed or 'hidden' or a person being blocked or banned from the platform.
- c) The process by which a person can be blocked or banned from the platform and rights of review.

- d) A statement relating to privacy and personal information (see clause 7.5 to 7.7 of this policy).
- e) That the social media platform is not to be used for making complaints about the Council or Council officials including elected members.

5.5 For the purposes of clause 5.4(b), third parties engaging on social media platforms must not post or share comments, photos, videos, electronic recordings, or other information that:

- a) Is defamatory, offensive, humiliating, threatening, or intimidating to Council officials or members of the public.
- b) Contains profane language or is sexual in nature.
- c) Constitutes harassment and/or bullying within the meaning of the *Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW* or is unlawfully discriminatory.
- d) Contains content about the Council, council officials or members of the public that is misleading or deceptive.
- e) Breaches the privacy of Council officials or members of the public.
- f) Contains allegations of suspected breaches of the Council's code of conduct or information about the consideration of a matter under the *Procedures for the Administration of the Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW*.
- g) Violates an order made by a court.
- h) Breaches copyright.
- i) Advertises, endorses or solicits commercial products or business.
- j) Constitutes spam.
- k) Would be in breach of the rules of the social media platform.

Note: If a person shares content from a Council platform to another social media page/platform and makes comments as outlined above (5.5 a-k) they will be immediately banned from the Council page.

Removal or 'hiding' of content

- 5.6** Where a person uploads content onto a social media platform that, in the reasonable opinion of the moderator, is of a kind specified under clause 5.5, the moderator may remove or 'hide' that content.
- 5.7** Prior to removing or 'hiding' the content, the moderator must make a record of it (for example, a screenshot).
- 5.8** If the moderator removes or 'hides' the content under clause 5.6, they can notify the person who uploaded the content that it has been removed and the reason(s) for its removal.
- 5.9** A person may request a review of a decision by a moderator to remove or 'hide' content under clause 5.6. The request must be made in writing to the General Manager and state the grounds on which the request is being made.
- 5.10** Where a review request is made under clause 5.9, the review is to be undertaken by the General Manager/SMC or a member of staff nominated by the General Manager who is suitably qualified and who was not involved in the decision to remove or 'hide' the content.

Blocking or banning

- 5.11** If a person uploads content that is removed or 'hidden' under clause 5.6 of this policy on three occasions, that person may be blocked or banned from the social media platform.
- 5.12** A person may only be blocked or banned from a Council social media platform with the approval of the General Manager/SMC. This clause does not apply to blocking or banning a person from a Councillor's social media platform.
- 5.13** Prior to blocking or banning a person from a social media platform, the person must, where practicable, be advised of the intention to block or ban them from the platform/all platforms and be given a chance to respond.
- 5.14** The duration of the block or ban is to be determined by the General Manager/SMC, or in the case of a Councillor's social media platform, the Councillor.
- 5.15** Where a determination is made to block or ban a person from a social media platform/all social media platforms, the person must, where practicable, be notified in writing of the decision and the reasons for it. The written notice must also advise the

person which social media platforms they are blocked or banned from and the duration of the block or ban and inform them of their rights of review.

- 5.16** Despite clauses 5.11 to 5.15, where a person uploads content of a kind referred to under clause 5.5, and the moderator is reasonably satisfied that the person's further engagement on the social media platform poses a risk to health and safety or another substantive risk (such as the uploading of defamatory content), an interim block or ban from the platform/all platforms may be imposed on the person immediately.
- 5.17** A person who is blocked or banned from the platform/all platforms under clause 5.16 must, where practicable, be given a chance to respond to the interim block or ban being imposed. Any submission made by the person must be considered when determining whether the interim block or ban is to be removed or retained under clauses 5.11 to 5.15.
- 5.18** Where a person that is the subject of a block or ban continues to engage on a social media platform(s) using an alternative social media account, profile, avatar, etc., a moderator may block or ban the person from the platform(s) immediately. In these circumstances, clauses 5.11 to 5.17 do not apply.

Part 6 – Use of social media during emergencies

- 6.1** During emergencies, such as natural disasters or public health incidents, the Council SMC will be responsible for the management of content on the Council's social media platforms. This will be in consultation/direction from the General Manager.
- 6.2** To ensure consistent messaging both during and after an emergency, authorised users and Council officials including Councillors must not upload content onto the Council's or their own social media platforms which contradicts advice issued by the agency coordinating the emergency response, or agencies supporting recovery efforts.
- 6.3** Training on social media use during emergencies should be included in training and/or induction provided to authorised users and Councillors.

Part 7 – Records management and privacy requirements

Records management

- 7.1** Social media content created, sent, and received by Council officials (including councillors) acting in their official capacity is a Council record and may constitute open access information or be subject to an information access application made under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*. These records must be managed in

accordance with the requirements of the *State Records Act 1998* and the Council's approved records management policies and practices.

7.2 You must not destroy, alter, or remove social media content unless authorised to do so. If you need to alter or remove social media content, you must do so in accordance with this policy, and consult with the Council's records manager and comply with the requirements of the *State Records Act 1998*.

7.3 When/if a Councillor's term of office concludes, the Councillor must contact the Council's records manager and General Manager/SMC to manage/transfer records of social media content created during their term of office and comply with the requirements of the *State Records Act 1998*.

7.4 In fulfilling their obligations under clauses 7.1 to 7.3, Council officials should refer to any guidance issued by the State Archives and Records Authority of NSW relating to retention requirements for Councils' and councillors' social media content¹.

Privacy considerations and requirements

7.5 Social media communications are in the public domain. Council officials should exercise caution about what personal information, if any, they upload onto social media.

7.6 The *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* applies to the use of social media platforms by the Council and councillors. To mitigate potential privacy risks, council officials will:

- a) Advise people not to provide personal information on social media platforms.
- b) Inform people if any personal information they may provide on social media platforms is to be used for official purposes.
- c) Advise people to contact the Council or councillors through alternative channels if they have personal information they do not want to disclose in a public forum.

7.7 Council officials and Councillors must ensure they comply with the *Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002* when engaging on and/or moderating social media platforms. In fulfilling their obligations, Council officials and Councillors should refer to any guidance issued by the Information and Privacy Commission of NSW, such as, but not limited to, the Health Privacy Principles.

¹ See State Archives and Records Authority of NSW '*Government Recordkeeping / Advice and Resources / Local Government*' and '*Social media recordkeeping for councillors*'

Part 8 – Private use of social media

Note: Activities on social media/websites are public activities. Even though privacy settings are available, content can still be shared and accessed beyond the intended recipients.

The terms and conditions of most social media sites state that all content becomes the property of the site on which it is posted².

What constitutes ‘private’ use?

8.1 For the purposes of this policy, a Council official’s social media engagement will be considered ‘private use’ when the content they upload:

- a) Is not associated with, or does not refer to, the Council, any other Council officials, contractors, related entities or any other person or organisation providing services to or on behalf of the Council in their official or professional capacities, and
- b) Is not related to or does not contain information acquired by virtue of their employment or role as a Council official.

8.2 If a Council official chooses to identify themselves as a Council official, either directly or indirectly (such as in their user profile), then they will not be deemed to be acting in their private capacity for the purposes of this policy.

Staff use of social media during work hours

8.3 Council Officials, employed by Council, are permitted to have access to social media platforms during Council ordinary work hours. This is for limited and reasonable personal use.

1.1 Using social media Platforms for personal use must not impact upon the user’s work performance or Council resources or violate this policy or any other Council policy.

1.2 Users must not inappropriately use social media. Inappropriate use includes, but is not limited to:

- a) Using Social Networking Sites and Social Media Platforms to send, post or otherwise publish:
 - i. Obscene messages.
 - ii. Racially and/or sexually harassing messages.
 - iii. Sexually explicit material.

² Social Media: Guidance for Agencies and Staff (Government of South Australia) – page 9

8.4 Internet access is to be used primarily for departmental business including the performance of work-related duties and endorsed professional development activities. However, limited personal use of the internet access is permitted provided that it meets the following characteristics:

- It is infrequent and brief.
- Does not adversely impact productivity or service delivery.
- Does not demonstrate illegal, unacceptable, or prohibitive behaviour (as outlined above).
- Does not negatively impact on the performance or security of the Central Darling Shire Council's information systems or services.
- It is not in relation to other employment.

Council officials should avoid using the same password across different services or websites so that in the event the password of one service/website is compromised, the damage is limited to that site only.

Part 9 – Concerns or complaints

9.1 Concerns or complaints about the administration of a Council's social media platform/s should be made to the council's General Manager/SMC in the first instance.

9.2 Complaints about the conduct of Council officials on social media platforms may be directed to the General Manager.

9.3 Complaints about a General Manager's conduct on social media platforms may be directed to the Administrator/Mayor.

Part 10 - Definitions

For the purposes of this policy – terms and their meanings

The following terms have the following meanings:

Authorised User Members of council staff who are authorised by the General Manager or SMC to upload content and engage on the Council's social media platforms on the Council's behalf.

Council official '**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 the Council.
Minor	For the purposes of clause 4.4(b) of this policy, is a person under the age of 18 years.
Intellectual Property	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.
Personal Information	Information or an opinion (including information or an opinion forming part of a database and whether or not recorded in a material form) about an individual whose identity is apparent or can reasonably be ascertained from the information or opinion.
SMC	Is a Council's social media coordinator appointed under clause 2.5 of this policy.
social media	Online platforms and applications - such as but not limited to social networking sites, wikis, blogs, microblogs, video and audio sharing sites, and message boards - that allow people to easily publish, share and discuss content. Examples of social media platforms include, but are not limited to Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Yammer, YouTube, Instagram, Flickr and Wikipedia.

Legislation

Enforcement

Clause 3.1(b) of the *Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW* provides that council officials must not conduct themselves in a manner that is contrary to a Council's policies. If adopted by Central Darling Shire Council, a breach of the policy will be a breach of the Central Darling Shire Council's code of conduct.

Related Documents

Central Darling Shire Council Media & Social Media Procedure - Council Officials.

Central Darling Shire Council Cyber Security Policy and Records Management Policy.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be monitored and reviewed by the responsible Director to ensure compliance. Once adopted, it remains in force until it is reviewed by Council. It is to be reviewed approximately every two (2) years to ensure that it meets requirements, or sooner if the General Manager determines appropriate.

ENDS