

Policy



STRATEGIC

SOCIAL MEDIA

Head of Power

Local Government Act 2009

Key Supporting Council Document

Lockyer Valley Regional Council Corporate Plan 2022-2027

- Lockyer Leadership and Council - Commit to open and accountable governance to ensure community confidence and trust in Council and our democratic values.

Definitions

Confidential Information

includes but is not limited to:

- trade secrets of Council;
- non-public information about the organisation and affairs of Council such as pricing information including internal cost and pricing rates, production scheduling software, special supply information;
- 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 procedure documents;
- concepts not reduced to material form;
- information which is personal information for the purpose of privacy law; 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.

<i>Council</i>	Lockyer Valley Regional Council
<i>Council Official</i>	includes Employees, councillors, agents and contractors (including temporary contractors), administrators appointed under section 124 of the <i>Local Government Act 2009</i> , members of Council committees, conduct reviewers, delegates of Council, trainees and work experience Employees and volunteers of the Council.
<i>Employee</i>	includes a direct employee of Council whether employed on a permanent, temporary, full-time, part-time or job share basis.
<i>Person</i>	includes any natural person, company, partnership, association, trust, business, or other organisation or entity of any description and a person's legal personal representative(s), successors, assigns or substitutes.
<i>Principal Engagement & Communications</i>	refers to the role managing corporate communications, regardless of the role title.
<i>Social Media Accounts</i>	refers to the individual account or page created on a Social Media Platform.
<i>Social Media Editors</i>	includes Team Leader Communications, Digital Media and Communications Officer and other delegated Employees.
<i>Social Networking Site and Social Media Platform</i>	are umbrella terms covering websites, online platforms, technology, applications or tools that enable active and participatory publishing and interactions between individuals over the internet. These include but are not limited to Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube, LinkedIn, TikTok, BlueSky and similar sites.

Policy Objective

The objectives of this policy are to:

- develop a culture of openness, trust and integrity in Council through appropriate use of social media tools;
- provide direction on the responsibilities and expectations for:
 - the professional use of social media on behalf of Council; and
 - the personal use of social media by Council Employees, Elected Members and other Council Officials where that use may reasonably be connected with Council, Council duties or the person's association with Council; and
- provide the parameters in which staff feel confident to positively engage with Council's social media content.

Policy Statement

This policy sets out the standards and behaviour expected in relation to the professional use of Social Media Platforms on behalf of Council, and the personal use of social media by Council Officials where that use may reasonably affect Council, the performance of Council-related duties or Council's reputation.

This policy applies to all Council Officials. Some provisions apply specifically to Employees or Elected Members where indicated.

The policy also outlines various legal considerations relating to the various Social Media Platforms in use.

Council employs various Social Media Platforms to provide information on Council initiatives, public notices, activities, facilities, tourism, services, events and programs.

Social media is considered a valuable tool for Council to actively engage with the community, promoting the Lockyer Valley as a vibrant place to live and providing a platform for active discussion and the exchange of ideas.

Council also acknowledges the widespread use of Social Media Platforms by Council Officials for professional and personal purposes.

Social Media Administrators

Council's Principal Engagement & Communications, Team Leader Communications and Digital Media and Communications Officer/s reserve the right to remain administrators of any Social Media Accounts created to ensure risk management measures to protect Council's reputation are satisfied.

Subsequent administrators of sites will require formal approvals from the Principal Engagement & Communications. Sites and accounts should have a restricted number of Employees who have administration rights.

Creation of Council-owned Social Media Accounts

Social Media Accounts can only be created with approval from the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or delegate in liaison with the Principal Engagement & Communications.

The Digital Media and Communications Officer/s will be responsible for the creation of the relevant account – ensuring brand consistency and style guide formatting is adhered to.

Elected Members are responsible for the creation, monitoring and maintenance of their professional social media pages.

Ceasing Employment

Where an Employee ceases employment with Council and has administration access to Council's Social Media Accounts/s, this access must be removed prior to the end of the relevant Employee's last working day.

The responsibility of advising the Digital Media and Communications Officer of the cessation of employment for any Employee who does not function within the Engagement and Communications Team, will lie with the relevant supervisor of that Employee.

The removal of access will be carried out by the Digital Media and Communications Officer except in the instance where the Digital Media and Communications Officer is unable to do so or ceases employment with Council, in which case the removal of access will be carried out by the Team Leader Communications or the Principal Engagement & Communications.

Council's Engagement and Communications Team shall review who has editor or administrator access to Council's Social Media Accounts on not less than an annual basis.

General Use of Social Media

Once authorised to publish or comment on behalf of Council, the following guidelines must be adhered to:

- only publish content that is classified as public information;
- ensure content is accurate and has been approved by the relevant supervisor/manager. For the primary corporate channels, this will be the Principal Engagement & Communications or delegate. For authorised secondary channels such as the Library's or Tourism's, this will be the relevant Principal or delegate.
- content must not disclose personal, Confidential or private information;

- any images of people being posted to social media must comply with Council’s general media consent procedures;
- content is evenly distributed and does not over-promote or bias one service, facility, event, etc, over others or promote Elected Members, specific Employees or projects in a biased manner;
- major announcements will only be made by the Digital Media and Communications Officer, Team Leader Communications or by other officers as directed by the Principal Engagement & Communications or the CEO;
- comments will be respectful of the community and portray Council in a positive way;
- the majority of posts and links will be Council-related and connected to a core service of Council, however public interest posts and links can be shared on Council Social Media Platforms following approval by the Principal Engagement & Communications;
- all content will be impartial, apolitical and will not promote Elected Members or specific projects and announcements that have not received approval from Council; and
- where possible, social media posts should refer to the equivalent information on Council’s website.

Comments and Replies

Comments that are posted by members of the public on Council’s social media pages can be of a positive, negative or neutral nature.

Council understands the expectation of immediacy in relation to response times to comments made through Social Media Platforms.

Council’s Social Media Editors will be responsible for monitoring comments or posts on the relevant Social Media Platforms.

Council’s Social Media Accounts are primarily for sharing information with the community and are not customer service channels for incoming requests. Therefore, not all comments or questions from community members will be responded to. However, Council’s Social Media Editors will endeavour to respond to a reasonable representative proportion of comments.

When assessing comments, the following guidelines must be adhered to:

- comments by the public will be hidden at the discretion of the Social Media Editors if they are deemed to be offensive, obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, bullying, discriminatory, hateful, racist, sexist, factually incorrect/misleading, mentions a Person by name inappropriately, infringes copyright, constitutes a contempt of court, breaches a court suppression order or is otherwise unlawful. Other comments that may potentially jeopardise Council’s financial, legal or operational capacity will be hidden at the discretion of the Social Media Editors;
- comments or posts that are not Council-related and not deemed to be a public record can be removed. This includes promotion of commercial services, products or entities; and

- any post or comment deemed offensive, but which is classified as a public record under the Crime and Corruption Commission and Queensland State Archives guidelines, must be hidden, and not deleted, for the satisfactory management of Council records.

Caretaker Period

In accordance with section 90D of the *Local Government Act 2009*, during the caretaker period, Council-owned Social Media Accounts including, but not limited to Facebook, X, LinkedIn, Instagram, BlueSky and YouTube, will not contain any material that could be construed or interpreted as election material.

Personal Use of Social Media

Personal use of social media by Employees during work hours should be minimal and not unduly interrupt or reduce work performance or focus. Employees may access social media during work hours for work purposes subject to approval from their supervisor or manager (eg. to access posts on private pages that refer to Council or Council activities). Access will be kept brief and must relate to a Council matter or Council business. Employees may view Council's corporate social media channels as a means of staying informed.

Employees are allowed to access social media during designated breaks using their own devices subject to ensuring any personal posts, comments or engagement do not bring Council into disrepute.

Posting about Council on social media by Employees is permitted but care must be taken to minimise the potential damage caused (directly or indirectly) to Council's reputation.

Elected Members may use social media in a personal or professional capacity and may share publicly available Council information, including decisions and positions formally adopted by Council. When expressing personal views, Elected Members should ensure those views are not presented as official comment on behalf of Council.

When using social media personally, other Council Officials must not disclose Confidential Information or imply that they are authorised to speak on behalf of Council. Any additional requirements applicable to their online conduct will arise from the relevant Code of Conduct, contract, appointment terms, Council policy or operational standard.

When using social media for personal use by Employees, the following guidelines must be adhered to with respect to Council information:

- only disclose or discuss publicly available Council information;
- ensure all content is accurate and complies with all relevant Council policies;
- do not imply that you are authorised to speak as a representative of Council or give the impression that the views expressed are those of Council;
- do not make comments, use location-based services (eg. check-in) or post any material that might otherwise cause damage to Council's reputation; and

- do not post at-work photos without the express permission of your manager or the Principal Engagement & Communications.

Legal Considerations

General advice is provided to assist Council Officials in complying with obligations set out in this policy. When in doubt, Employees are encouraged to seek further guidance or clarifications from the Digital Media and Communications Officer, the Team Leader Communications, the Principal Engagement & Communications, the Principal Governance & Property, the Governance Officer or the CEO, or refer to the Employee Code of Conduct.

The *Information Privacy Act 2009* contains rules, or privacy principles, that govern how Queensland Government agencies collect, store, use and disclose personal information. The *Public Records Act 2023* ensures public records are made, managed, kept and, if appropriate, preserved in a useable form for the benefit of present and future generations, with public access under the Act consistent with the principles of the *Right to Information Act 2009* and *Information Privacy Act 2009*.

Social media posts are public records and where they are deemed inappropriate or irrelevant may be hidden but should not be deleted. Council may from time to time use a social media record management system such as Brolly to ensure all social media interactions are recorded and registered in Council's official data management system (eg, ECM).

Posts on social media containing election material must comply with the *Local Government Electoral Act 2011* if posted during an election caretaker period, regardless of whether they are posted on a personal or official Social Media Platform. Generally, Council's Social Media Accounts may not be used by any candidate to post election material or comments.

Copyright

Social Media Editors will respect copyright laws and attribute work to the original author/source wherever possible.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

A high degree of care and attention should be applied when using any form of AI for any social media process. Content may be drafted with the assistance of AI but must be thoroughly checked by several officers with relevant knowledge of the subject matter prior to publishing. The use of AI images and other media types must be acknowledged within the post.

Online Conduct of Council Officials

Online activities of Council Officials, including social media posts and comments, are subject to conditions of any relevant Code of Conduct, Council policy or operational standard.

Abusive, harassing, threatening or defamatory postings may breach Council's behavioural expectations and may result in action under the relevant Code of Conduct, Council policy, employment arrangement, contract, appointment terms or other applicable process.

Workplace bullying and harassment includes any bullying or harassing comments Employees make online, including on their own private social networks and when out of office hours.

Defamation

Council Officials must refrain from posting material that may cause damage to another Person, organisation, association or company's reputation and seek further guidance from the Digital Media and Communications Officer, Team Leader Communications or Principal Engagement & Communications if publication of such material is thought to be necessary.

Risk Management

Effective adherence to this Social Media Policy will ensure Council's brand across social media is clear, and negative or detrimental comments are addressed appropriately to minimise reputational risk.

Council's Strategic Risk Register provides a detailed classification of risks and controls associated with media and communications.

Matters Not Covered

The CEO or delegate will use their discretion to resolve any matter relating to use of Council's social media channels that is not covered by this policy. The CEO or delegate's decision is final.

Human Rights

Council is committed to respecting, protecting and promoting human rights. Council has an obligation under the *Human Rights Act 2019* to give proper consideration to human rights when making a decision, and to act and make decisions in a way that is compatible with human rights. To the extent that an act or decision under this policy may engage human rights, Council will have regard to the *Human Rights Act 2019* in undertaking the act or making the decision.

Relevant Legislation

Anti-Discrimination Act 1991

Human Rights Act 2019

Information Privacy Act 2009



Local Government Act 2009
Local Government Electoral Act 2011
Public Records Act 2023
Right to Information Act 2009
Work Health and Safety Act 2011

Related Documents

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
Complaints Management Policy
Confidentiality Policy
Media Relations Policy
QPP Privacy Policy
Strategic Risk Register