

Policy



STRATEGIC

SOCIAL MEDIA

Head of Power

Local Government Act 2009

Key Supporting Council Document

Lockyer Valley Regional Council Corporate Plan 2022-2027

- communicate our commitment of all five pillars and how we are working to achieve the outlined outcomes.

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.

Coordinator Engagement & Communications

refers to the role managing corporate communications, regardless of the role title.

<i>Council Official</i>	includes employees, Councillors, agents and contractors (including temporary contractors), administrators appointed under section 124 of the Local Government Act 2009 (QLD), members of Council committees, conduct reviewers, delegates of Council, 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>Social Media Accounts</i>	refers to the individual account or page created on a social media platform.
<i>Social Media Editors</i>	includes 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, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, TikTok and similar sites.
<i>Council</i>	Lockyer Valley Regional Council

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 and Elected Members; 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 professional use of social media platforms on behalf of Lockyer Valley Regional Council ("Council"), and personal use of social media by Council employees and councillors (elected members).

This policy applies to all employees of Council and Elected Members who use social media platforms either professionally or privately.

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 an important tool for Council to actively engage with our 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 increasing uptake of the use of social media platforms by employees and Elected Members for both professional and personal use.

Social Media Administrators

Council's Media and Communications Officer/s reserve the right to remain an administrator of any accounts created to ensure risk management measures to protect Council's reputation are satisfied.

Subsequent administrators of sites will require formal approvals from the Coordinator Engagement & Communications. Sites 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 CEO (or delegate) in liaison with the Coordinator Engagement & Communications.

The 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 and maintenance of their professional social media pages.

Ceasing Employment

Where an employee ceases employment with Council, access to Council's social media account must be removed within two business days of the relevant employee's last day of employment.

The responsibility of advising the Media and Communications Officer of the cessation of employment for any employee who does not function within the Corporate Communications team, will lie with the relevant coordinator.

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

General Use of Social Media

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

- only publish content that is classified as public information;
- content posted is accurate and has been approved by the Coordinator Engagement & Communications or delegate;
- content must not disclose personal, confidential or private information;
- 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 Media and Communications Officer or by other officers as directed by the Coordinator Engagement & Communications or the CEO;
- comments will be respectful of the community and portray the 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 platforms;
- 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 & 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 comment made through social media platforms.

Council's Social Media Editors will be responsible for monitoring comments or posts on the relevant social media platforms.

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, 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* (Qld), during the Caretaker Period, Council-owned social media accounts including, but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram 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 during work hours will not be permitted. Employees will only be permitted to access social media during work hours for work purposes with approval from management (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 will be allowed to access social media during morning tea and lunch breaks using their own devices. 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.

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 Coordinator Engagement & Communications.

Legal Considerations

General advice is provided to assist employees in complying with obligations set out in this policy. When in doubt, employees are encouraged to seek further guidance or clarifications from the Media and Communications Officer/s, the Coordinator Engagement & Communications, the Senior 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 2002 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 should be hidden where inappropriate or irrelevant, not deleted. Posts on social media containing election material must comply with the *Local Government Electoral Act 2011* if posted during an election period, regardless of whether they are posted on a personal or official social media platform.

Copyright

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

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 are in breach of Council's behavioural expectations and may result in disciplinary action being taken.

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

Refrain from posting material that may cause damage to another person, organisation, association or company's reputation and seek further guidance from the Media and Communications Officer/s, Coordinator Engagement & Communications or CEO if publication of such material is thought to be necessary.

Risk Management

Effective adherence to the outlined 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 utilise 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.

Related Legislation

Anti-Discrimination Act 1991

Information Privacy Act 2009

Local Government Electoral Act 2011
Public Records Act 2002
Queensland Human Rights Act 2019
Right to Information Act 2009
Work, Health and Safety Act 2011