



# Social Media Policy

Policy Number	C19
Responsible Officer(s)	Team Leader Community
Policy Adopted	November 2023
Next Review Date	November 2027
Minutes reference	2023/11-16
Applicable Legislation	<i>Local Government Act (SA) 1999; Freedom of Information Act (SA) 1991; Australian Human Rights Commission Act (Cth) 1986; Spam Act (Cth) 2003; Privacy Act (Cth) 1988; Civil Liability Act (SA) 1936.</i>
Related Policies	Behavioural Management Policy; ICT Acceptable Use Policy; Records Management Policy; HR: Code of Conduct for Council Employees.
Related Procedures	Council Decisions Internal Review Procedure.

## 1. POLICY PRINCIPLE

Wakefield Regional Council recognises the opportunities social media provides to engage in meaningful, two-way communication with the community, promote Council activities and encourage community pride. Social media can also provide a powerful tool in times of emergency.

## 2. POLICY OBJECTIVE

This policy aims to:

- Promote effective community engagement through social media;
- Provide guidance about the appropriate use of social media tools;
- Reduce the likelihood of miscommunication or inappropriate communications;
- Help Council manage challenges associated with social media such as speed and immediacy of information and risks of 'trolling' or negative commentary;
- Provide clarity about roles and responsibilities in relation to use, approval and monitoring of platforms;
- Inform the community of Council's rights and responsibilities in relation to the social media platforms on which it operates.

## 3. POLICY DETAIL

- 3.1 Social media covers electronic tools and platforms people use to publish, discuss and share information. Complementing existing two-way electronic communication techniques such as email and websites, it is a popular technology that is rapidly growing and constantly evolving.
- 3.2 This Policy applies to Council Members, Employees, contractors, agents and volunteers covering all current and future social media tools and channels where people comment, view, contribute, create, forward, post, upload and share content.

3.3 Recognising that individuals use social media for personal reasons and in many ways, this Policy relates only to the use of social media for:

- The purpose of conducting Council business and/or representing Council (and only when it is appropriate to do so); and
- Personal use where reference is made to Council Members, Employees, policies, activities, services, suppliers or other stakeholders.

3.4 At all times, use of social media by Council Members and Employees should be professional, in accordance with relevant policies and legislation (including Chapter 5, Part 4 and Chapter 7, Part 4 of the Local Government Act 1999), and consistent with the values of Council and relevant Code of Conduct and Behavioural Standards for Council Members. Users must maintain appropriate levels of confidentiality. Council Members and Employees should be aware social media content is public, and the requirements for its appropriate use apply both within and outside of work hours.

### **3.5 Proper use of social media – Council’s official social media sites**

3.5.1. Through Council’s social media platforms, formal statements and announcements will be made by the official spokesperson (i.e. the Mayor) or the Chief Executive Officer where appropriate, via Council’s Communications & IT Officer or another delegate.

3.5.2. Media enquiries via social media – or posts about potentially sensitive and/or political issues – will be referred to the Communications & IT Officer.

3.5.3. Any posts and comments which are customer requests or grievances in relation to Council’s services, roads or other infrastructure, must be directed to the customer request portal on the Council website or to the relevant officer, and the feedback must be recorded appropriately for action.

3.5.4. Posts to social media must not commit Council to actions or undertakings beyond the delegation of the delegated officers involved.

3.5.5. When using Council’s social media sites, Employees authorised by the Chief Executive Officer (or nominee) will post only content that is relevant, accurate, fair and of genuine interest to the community and, where possible, provide links to website information.

### **3.6 Proper use of social media – personal posts by Employees**

3.6.1. When making personal statements on social media in relation to Council, its activities, other Employees, contractors or volunteers, Employees should be mindful of the terms of their employment, HR policies and the code of conduct in place. This includes requirements for:

- Acting in a way that generates community trust and confidence in the Council;
- Not making improper use of information, including confidential information, acquired by virtue of their position;
- Only making public comment in relation to their duties when specifically authorised to do so, and restrict such comment to factual information and professional advice;
- Not making any public criticism of a personal nature of fellow Council employees or Council members.

3.6.2. It is entirely appropriate for employees to share or like content from Council’s social media accounts on their personal social media accounts.

- 3.6.3. Any personal opinions, beliefs and political views shared via personal social media profiles must in no way have the potential to be perceived as reflecting the opinions or decisions of Council.
- 3.6.4. Under no circumstances should the Council logo or branding be used on personal posts – nor should there be anything to suggest personal posts are endorsed by Council.

### **3.7 Proper use of social media – personal posts by Council Members**

- 3.7.1. When making personal statements on social media in relation to Council, its activities or decisions, Council Members should be mindful of the Behavioural Standards for Council Members. This includes requirements for Council Members to:
- Act in a way that generates community trust and confidence in the Council;
  - Act in a reasonable, just, respectful and non-discriminatory way when dealing with people;
  - Show respect for others if making comments publicly;
  - Ensure that personal comments to the media or other public comments, on Council decisions and other matters, clearly indicate that it is a private view, and not that of the Council.
- 3.7.2. It is entirely appropriate for Council Members to share, like or comment on content from Council's social media accounts on their own social media accounts.
- 3.7.3. Any personal opinions, beliefs and political views shared via personal social media profiles must clearly be shown as separate from Council business.
- 3.7.4. Under no circumstances should the Council logo or branding be used on personal posts – nor should there be anything to suggest personal posts are endorsed by Council.

### **3.8 Accessibility and responsiveness**

Only the Communications & IT Officer, subject to Senior Leadership approval, can create official Wakefield Regional Council social media sites. The Communications & IT Officer will:

- Monitor social media sites created and ensure they can be easily edited, improved or removed;
- Ensure that the profanity filter is always active and on the 'strong' setting;
- Respond according to target times, where possible – 24hrs (Mon-Fri) and 48hrs (Sat-Sun).

### **3.9 Council rights and responsibilities**

Council encourages public feedback but expects participants to behave legally and in a respectful way, in line with contemporary standards of decency. Council reserves the right to delete comments that are:

- False, misleading or malicious complaints or statements;
- Discriminatory material in relation to a person or group based on age, colour, creed, disability, family status, gender identity, nationality, marital status, parental status, political opinion/affiliation, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, race or social origin, religious beliefs/activity, responsibilities, sex or sexual orientation;
- Promotional or commercial in nature;

- Unlawful or incite others to break the law;
- Defamatory or harassing of Council Employees, Council Members, Volunteers or other participants in our channels;
- Information that may compromise the safety or security of the public;
- Other inappropriate content as determined by the Chief Executive Officer or their delegate.

### 3.10 Content standards

Under no circumstances is the following content permitted on Council social media channels:

- Abusive, profane or sexual language;
- Discriminatory material as described under 'Council rights and responsibilities' above;
- Illegal material or materials designed to encourage law breaking;
- Materials that could compromise Council, Employees or system safety;
- Materials which would breach applicable laws (defamation, privacy, trade practices, copyright, financial rules and regulations, fair use, trademarks etc.);
- Confidential information;
- Material that would offend contemporary standards of taste and decency;
- Material which would bring the Council into disrepute;
- Personal details or references to Council Members, Employees or third parties, which may be inconsistent with privacy laws or any Council policy;
- Spam, meaning the distribution of unsolicited bulk electronic messages.

- 3.11 Council takes the safety of its Employees, Council Members and community seriously. If violent or unwelcomed threats are directed towards an individual, or the organisation, they are to be forwarded to the CEO or Team Leader Community for immediate attention.

### 3.12 Security measures

The Communications & IT Officer, or in their absence, the Manager People & Governance, will see that the following security measures are carried out:

- Remove administrator access to any Council social media channels immediately when the relevant Employee ceases employment with the organisation;
- Former administrators must provide proof of inaccessibility via their primary cellular device (e.g. mobile phone) before leaving the organisation.

### 3.13 Adherence to Policy

Any Employee found breaching this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, performance management and/or review. Serious breaches may result in suspension or termination of employment or association in accordance with Council policies. Any content that breaches the policy will be recorded and kept on personnel records.

If you have any doubt about applying the provisions of this policy, check with the Communications & IT Officer or Team Leader Community before using social media to communicate.

## 4. REVIEW

This Policy shall be reviewed every 48 months, or more frequently if required by legislation or Council.

**Document history:**

Version	Adopted	Description of Change
1.0	November 2019	New Policy
2.0	November 2023	Reviewed.