

Policy No:	146
Policy Title:	Social Media Policy
Section Responsible:	Corporate Services
Minute No:	3011
Review Date:	30th June, 2014

1. Background

The dawn of social media has allowed people to communicate with each other in online environments. This allows them to share interests, information or friends (eg Facebook and MySpace). Social media is now frequently utilised by businesses and government organisations to promote their messages, events and products, depending on the rules of the particular social media tool.

Social media tools include:

- Social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace
- Video and photo sharing websites like Flickr and YouTube
- Micro-blogging sites like Twitter
- Weblogs, including personal blogs or blogs hosted by traditional media publications
- Forums and discussion boards such as Whirlpool, Yahoo! Groups or Google groups
- Online encyclopaedias such as Wikipedia
- Web sites that allow individual users or comp[anies to use publishing tools eg. Comments on news sites

Greater Hume Shire (GHS) also sees a need to use social media to promote what it does and currently has several Facebook sites in operation.

2. Purpose

The purpose of a Social Media Policy is to guide Council employees (including permanent, temporary and casual employees as well as volunteers and contractors to Council) and Councillors on the use of social media in the following ways:

- For work purposes (eg promoting events, news, projects etc) when issues refer to Council or statements are being made on Council's behalf;
- For personal use when making references to Council, its Councillors or staff or any other Council-related issue or subject;
- The Policy does NOT apply to personal use when no reference or inference is made to Council, Councillors, related issues or its staff.

3. Principals

Employees and Councillors use of social media

An employee's access to and use of the above tools outside the course of employment is a private matter for the employee and councillor, however issues may arise where GHS is mentioned on-line or where it is possible to link employees and councillors with their employment at GHS. In such cases, the following rules apply:

- Do not mix the professional and personal issues in ways that are likely to compromise the interests and reputation of GHS
- Do not imply GHS endorsement of your personal views
- Staff and councillors should be aware of the laws covering libel, defamation, privacy and the protection of intellectual property
- Staff and councillors should familiarise themselves with Council's Code of Conduct. Activities on social media may be subject to the requirements of the Code of Conduct. Staff and councillors who are identified as an employee of GHS, and post comments or pictures on social media that negatively impact GHS's reputation or brand and who can be identified as a employee of GHS, may be subject to disciplinary action.

4. Council's use of social media

The use of social media by Council to achieve its business aims will be overseen by the Executive Assistant/Tourism & Promotions. This role will be responsible for delegating authority to a restricted number of social media administrators within Council.

Employees and Councillors must NOT set up social media networks without the consultation and permission of the Executive Assistant/Tourism & Promotions and approval of the General Manager. If anyone has setup such a network without permission they should take it down immediately or discuss it with the Executive Assistant/Tourism & Promotions.

The Executive Assistant/Tourism & Promotions may, from time to time, authorise other employees to be social media administrators only when:

- The social media communication requires particular subject matter expertise not available to the staff authorised under this directive.
- There are other benefits in having the social media communication come from another staff member.
- The staff member presents a strong business case for being a social media administrator.
- The respective social media administrators are responsible for ensuring the appropriateness of published information.

Guidelines for delegated social media administrators are as follows:

- Social media administrators may only comment on topics within their own area of responsibility and only if they have delegated authority to do so.
- Social media administrators should ensure any Council related content that is published, is factually accurate and compliant with GHS policies and management directives (eg on confidentiality, privacy and copyright).
- Social media administrators should not reveal confidential or commercially sensitive information about GHS and only disclose publicly available information.
- If an employee receives an unwanted or threatening comment or approach in social media during the course of working at GHS, for example, from a disgruntled customer, they must report it to their manager in writing immediately.

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On-line published material from the public will not be treated as formal correspondence with council. For example, if a member of the public had a formal request, comment or enquiry, a complaint against council, council staff or councillors or a response to an item for community consultation they would be asked to contact Council in writing or via a phone call to Council's Customer Relations staff, so that the issues could be captured in Council's Customer Request Management (CRM) system. A Disclaimer advising users of this policy will be included on all Council auspiced social media sites.

5. Personal Use of social media sites - general guidelines

GHS recognises that Council employees and Councillors may wish to use social media in their personal lives. The Policy does not intend to discourage nor unduly limit personal expression or online activities.

However, users should recognise the potential for damage to be caused (either directly or indirectly) to the council in certain circumstances via personal use of social media when the user can be identified as a Greater Hume representative. Accordingly, users should comply with this policy to ensure that the risk of such damage is minimised.

Users are personally responsible for the content published in a personal capacity on any form of social media platform.

It is important that employees and Councillors note the following issues.

- Blog comments remain permanently accessible. Tracking tools can identify the contents of a website at a particular date and via ISP addresses, even if the contents are later deleted.
- A search of an organisation's name will produce a full list of any blogged comments about that organisation, so that anyone with internet access can find them.
- Similarly, a search using an email address or individual name will produce a full list of comments and other material made from that address or attributed to that individual.
- Personal revelations and comments, embarrassing photos, etc, that are accessible to current and prospective employers may be detrimental to a person's career prospects, depending on the context.
- Be aware of privacy settings and preferences to restrict access to content.

6. Records Management

Material published on Council's official social media sites must be recorded and stored in compliance with the State Records Act and Councils Records Management Policy and Procedures.

Where information is disseminated using multiple channels, eg Website, YouTube, Blogs etc, a record of where this information is stored should be kept.

Information posted by Council in social media is subject to the same legislative requirements as information held within Councils own network. Due regard should be given to ensuring this information can be easily located on InfoXpert.

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The particular social media administrator is responsible for the identification of record material and the proper archiving of that material within InfoXpert and in accordance with the Records Management Policy and Procedures.

7. Non Compliance Statement

Non-compliance with this Social Media Policy may have the potential to damage the reputation, image, competitive or financial position of GHS, and consequently, may result in disciplinary action. This may include termination of employment in serious cases and in accordance with Council's Policies and Procedures. Employees who breach the law may also be personally liable for their actions.

8. Related Policies

- Greater Hume Shire Council's Media Policy
- Greater Hume Shire Council's Records Management Policy
- Greater Hume Shire Council's Code of Conduct
- Greater Hume Shire Council's Computer and Internet Use Policy
- Privacy & Personal Information Protection Act 1998
- Greater Hume Shire Council Disciplinary Action Policy

POLICY DOCUMENT CONTROL

GHS Social Media Policy	First adopted	21 Mar 2012 Min 3011
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