

Document Name	Document Version Number	Review Date
Social Media Policy	1.0.1	June 2022
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Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide Greater Hume Council (GHC), Councillors and employees with standards of use as they engage in conversations or interactions using digital media. The intention of this policy is to ensure Council's use of social media platforms to communicate with various stakeholder groups is effective, informative and appropriate.

Scope

This policy will apply to all Councillors, Council employees (including permanent, temporary and casual employees as well as volunteers, consultants and contractors to Council).

Definitions

Nil.

Policy Content

The use of social media is expanding rapidly. Government bodies, individuals and organisations are embracing user-generated content, such as social networking, personal websites, discussion forums and message boards, blogs and microblogs.

Council needs to maintain professional standards and be aware of the implications of their actions, as in all professional circumstances, whether an online activity is able to be viewed by the public or is limited to a specific group of people.

Social media represents opportunities to achieve real value by engaging residents, listening more and harnessing local involvement.

Social media can:

- Enable engagement between residents, the community and Council
- Allow Council to be more active in its relationships with residents, partners and other stakeholders
- Has the potential to increase the level of trust in Council
- Reach targeted audiences on specific issues, events and programs
- Provide effective, fast communication channels during crises
- Provide insights into how Council is perceived

Use of social media in the workplace

This policy does not apply to Council employee personal use of social media, where employees make no reference to GHC and do not identify themselves as an employee of GHC or provide information that would enable them to be reasonably identified as a Council employee.

However, employees and Councillors that do comment via social media on issues regarding Council are therefore linked to Council. With this understanding employees and Councillors should be aware that comments made via social media are in the public domain, and use of such should be aligned to Council's Media Policy, Internet Email and Computer Use Policy and Code of Conduct.

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 GHC
- Do not imply GHC endorsement of your personal views
- Employees and councillors should be aware of the laws covering libel, defamation, privacy and the protection of intellectual property
- Employees 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.
- Employees and councillors who are identified as an employee of GHC, and post comments or pictures on social media that negatively impact GHC's reputation or brand and who can be identified as an employee of GHC, may be subject to disciplinary action.

Defamatory, disrespectful or deliberately misleading commentary provided on these platforms may bring employees or Councillors in breach of Council's Code of Conduct.

Council's use of social media

The use of social media by Council to achieve its business aims is overseen by the Executive Assistant/Tourism & Promotions. This role is 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 employee authorised under this directive.
- There are other benefits in having the social media communication come from another employee.
- The employee 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 GHC policies and management directives (eg on confidentiality, privacy and copyright).
- Social media administrators should not reveal confidential or commercially sensitive information about GHC 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 GHC, for example, from a disgruntled customer, they must report it to their manager in writing immediately (taking a screen shot of the comment will assist).
- 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. Due regard should be given to ensuring this information can be easily located on InfoXpert.
- Where information is disseminated using multiple channels, eg Website, YouTube, Blogs etc, a record of where this information is stored should be kept.

Moderation of public comments

Whilst Council actively seeks ideas, questions, complaints and feedback from the public, we encourage open conversation and debate, but expect participants to behave in a respectful manner.

Council reserves the right to delete comments that are:

- knowingly false or mischievous complaints or statements about individuals, companies or the government
- misleading, obscene, off-topic, sexist, racist or spam
- promotional or commercial in nature
- unlawful or incite others to break the law
- defamatory or harassing of our employees, volunteers or the participants in our channels
- information that may compromise the safety or security of the public
- repetitive posts copied and pasted or duplicated by single or multiple users
- any other inappropriate content or comments as determined by Greater Hume Council.

Enquiries via social media

Council will try to assist with simple questions or issues, many matters can't be resolved via social media.

Users should contact the Greater Hume Council via email, official website, by phone or in writing if you:

- have an enquiry
- need to request a service
- would like to give us official feedback
- wish to make a complaint.

Personal Use - general guidelines

GHC 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.
- Be aware that identifying GHC as your workplace on social media accounts makes you easily identifiable as a Council employee eg list Greater Hume Council as your workplace on Facebook.

Links to Policy

Records Management Policy
Code of Conduct
Media Policy
Information Technology Security Access Policy
Communications Policy
Internet, Email and Computer Use Policy

Links to Procedure

Information Technology Security Access Procedure
Records Management Procedure
Performance and Misconduct Procedure

Links to Forms

Nil.

References

Nil.

Responsibility

Director Corporate and Community Services

Document Author

Manager Corporate Services

Relevant Legislation

Local Government Act 1993
State Records Act 1998
Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998

Associated Records

Nil.