



Lifestyle and opportunity at your doorstep



Social Media Policy (Councillors)

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1. Scope and Purpose

This Policy provides guidelines for Councillors for Council business-related use of social media.

The City of Ryde is committed to communicating effectively with our community and recognises that social media represents an opportunity to participate in meaningful two-way dialogue with our residents, ratepayers and customers.

2. Administrative framework for Councillors' social media platforms

- 2.1 Councillors are responsible for the administration and moderation of their own social media platforms (in accordance with Parts 3 and 5 of this policy), and ensuring they comply with the record keeping obligations under the State Records Act 1998 (see clauses 7.1 to 7.4 of this policy) and council's records management policy in relation to social media.
- 2.2 Clause 2.1 also applies to councillors in circumstances where another person administers, moderates, or uploads content onto their social media platform.
- 2.3 Councillors must comply with the rules of the particular platform when engaging on social media.

Induction and training

- 2.4 Councillors who engage, or intend to engage, on social media must receive induction training on social media use as part of the councillor's Code of Conduct training.

Identifying as a councillor

- 2.5 Councillors must identify themselves on their social media platforms in the following format:

Councillor "First Name and Last Name".

- 2.6 A Councillor's social media platform must include a profile photo which is a clearly identifiable image of the councillor.
- 2.7 If a Councillor becomes or ceases to be the mayor, deputy mayor, or the holder of another position (for example, chairperson of a committee), this must be clearly stated on the councillor's social media platforms and updated within a week of a change in circumstances.

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Other general requirements for Councillors' social media platforms

- 2.8 Councillors should direct customer queries to Council's official customer service channels.
- 2.9 A Councillor's social media platform should include a disclaimer to the following effect:
- "The views expressed and comments made on this social media platform are my own and not that of the Council".*
- 2.10 Despite clause 3.10, mayoral or councillor media releases and other content that has been authorised according to the Council's media and communications protocols may be uploaded onto a Councillor's social media platform.
- 2.11 Councillors may upload publicly available Council information onto their social media platforms.

Councillor queries relating to social media platforms

- 2.12 Questions from councillors relating to their obligations under this policy, technical queries relating to the operation of their social media platforms or managing records on social media may be directed to the Help Desk/Social Media Coordinator (SMC) in the first instance, in accordance with Council's Councillor requests protocols. Councillors should direct customers raising Council-related queries to Council's official customer service channels.

Other social media platforms administered by Councillors

- 2.13 A councillor must advise the CEO of any social media platforms they administer on which content relating to Council or council officials is, or is expected to be, uploaded. The councillor must do so within:
- a) A week of becoming a councillor, or
 - b) A week of becoming the administrator.

3. Standards of conduct on social media

- 3.1 This policy only applies to Councillors' use of social media in an official capacity or in connection with their role as a council official. The policy does not apply to personal use of social media that is not connected with a person's role as a council official.
- 3.2 Councillors must comply with Council's code of conduct when using social media in an official capacity or in connection with their role as a council official.

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- 3.3 Councillors must not use social media to post or share comments, photos, videos, electronic recordings or other information that:
- a) is defamatory, offensive, humiliating, threatening or intimidating to other council officials or members of the public
 - b) contains profane language or is sexual in nature
 - c) constitutes harassment and/or bullying within the meaning of the Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW, or is unlawfully discriminatory
 - d) is contrary to their duties under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 and their responsibilities under any policies or procedures adopted by Council to ensure workplace health and safety
 - e) contains content about the Council, council officials or members of the public that is misleading or deceptive
 - f) divulges confidential Council information
 - g) breaches the privacy of other council officials or members of the public
 - h) contains allegations of suspected breaches of Council's Code of Conduct or information about the consideration of a matter under the Procedures for the Administration of the Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW
 - i) could be perceived to be an official comment on behalf of Council where they have not been authorised to make such comment
 - j) commits Council to any action
 - k) violates an order made by a court
 - l) breaches copyright
 - m) advertises, endorses or solicits commercial products or business
 - n) constitutes spam
 - o) is in breach of the rules of the social media platform.
- 3.4 Councillors must:
- a) where appropriate attribute work to the original author, creator or source when uploading or linking to content produced by a third party

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- b) obtain or have pre-existing written permission from a minor's parent or legal guardian before uploading content in which the minor can be readily identified.
- 3.5 Councillors must exercise caution when sharing, liking, retweeting content as this can be regarded as an endorsement and/or publication of the content.
- 3.6 Councillors must not incite or encourage other persons to act in a way that is contrary to the requirements of this Part.
- 3.7 Councillors must uphold and accurately represent the policies and decisions of the Council's governing body but may explain why they voted on a matter in the way that they did. (See section 232(1)(f) of the *Local Government Act 1993*).

4. Moderation of social media platforms

Councillors should be aware that they may be considered a 'publisher' of any content uploaded onto a social media platform they administer, including content that:

- is uploaded by a third party; and/or
- appears on their social media platform because they have 'shared' or 'retweeted' the content, or similar.

House Rules

- 4.3 Councillors' social media platforms may state or provide an accessible link to the 'House Rules' for engaging on the platform.
- 4.4 House Rules should specify:
 - a) the purpose of social media engagement referred to in Part 1 of this policy
 - b) the type of behaviour or content that will result in that content being removed or 'hidden', or a person being blocked or banned from the platform
 - c) the process by which a person can be blocked or banned from the platform and any rights of review
 - d) a statement relating to privacy and personal information (see clause 7.4 of this policy)
 - e) when the platform will be monitored (for example weekdays 8am – 4pm)
 - f) that the social media platform is not to be used for making complaints about Council or council officials and a link included to Council's complaints handling policy.

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- 4..5 For the purposes of clause 4.4(b), third parties engaging on social media platforms must not post or share comments, photos, videos, electronic recordings or other information that:
- a) is defamatory, offensive, humiliating, threatening or intimidating to council officials or members of the public,
 - b) contains profane language or is sexual in nature
 - c) constitutes harassment and/or bullying within the meaning of the Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW, or is unlawfully discriminatory
 - d) contains content about Council, council officials or members of the public that is misleading or deceptive
 - e) breaches the privacy of council officials or members of the public
 - f) contains allegations of suspected breaches of Council's code of conduct or information about the consideration of a matter under the Procedures for the Administration of the Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW,
 - g) violates an order made by a court
 - h) breaches copyright
 - i) advertises, endorses or solicits commercial products or business,
 - j) constitutes spam
 - k) would be in breach of the rules of the social media platform.

5. Use of social media during emergencies

- 5.1 To ensure consistent messaging both during and after an emergency, Councillors should avoid uploading content onto their social media platforms which contradicts advice issued by Council, the agency coordinating the emergency response, or agencies supporting recovery efforts.

6. Records management and privacy requirements

- 6.1 Social media content created, sent and received by Councillors acting in their official capacity is a council record and may constitute open access information or be subject to an information access application made under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009. These records must be managed in accordance with the requirements of the *State Records Act 1998* and the Council's approved records management policies and practices.

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- 6.2 You must not destroy, alter, or remove social media content unless authorised to do so. If you need to alter or remove social media content, you must do so in accordance with this policy, and consult with Council's records manager and comply with the requirements of the *State Records Act 1998*.
- 6.3 In fulfilling obligations under clauses 7.1 and 7.2, Councillors should refer to any guidance issued by the State Archives and Records Authority of NSW relating to retention requirements for Councillors' social media content.

Privacy considerations and requirements

- 6.4 Social media communications are in the public domain. Councillors should exercise caution about what personal information, if any, they upload onto social media.
- 6.5 The *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* applies to the use of social media platforms by Councillors. To mitigate potential privacy risks, Councillors should:
- a) advise people not to provide personal information on social media platforms
 - b) inform people if any personal information they may provide on social media platforms is to be used for official purposes
 - c) moderate comments to ensure they do not contain any personal information
 - d) advise people to contact Council through alternative channels if they have personal information they do not want to disclose in a public forum.
- 6.6 Councillors must ensure they comply with the *Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002* when engaging on and/or moderating social media platforms. In fulfilling their obligations, Councillors should refer to any guidance issued by the Information and Privacy Commission of NSW, such as, but not limited to, the Health Privacy Principles.

7. What constitutes 'private' use?

8.1 For the purposes of this policy, a Councillor's social media engagement will be considered 'private use' when the content uploaded:

- a) is not associated with, or does not refer to, Council, any other council officials, contractors, related entities or any other person or organisation providing services to or on behalf of Council in their official or professional capacities, and
- b) is not related to or does not contain information acquired by virtue of their employment or role as a Councillor.

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- 7.2 If a Councillor chooses to identify themselves as a Councillor, either directly or indirectly (such as in their user profile), then they will not be deemed to be acting in their private capacity for the purposes of this policy except in the case of the professional networking site LinkedIn.

8. Concerns or complaints

- 8.1 Concerns or complaints about the administration of Council's social media platforms should be made to council's Helpdesk/SMC in the first instance.
- 8.2 Complaints about the conduct of council officials (including Councillors) on social media platforms may be directed to the CEO.
- 8.3 Complaints about the CEO's conduct on social media platforms may be directed to the mayor.

9. Definitions

In this Social Media Policy, terms have the following meanings:

Council official	Councillors, members of staff and delegates of the council (including members of committees that are delegates of Council);
Minor	for the purposes of clause 4.4(b) of this policy, is a person under the age of 18 years
Personal information	information or an opinion (including information or an opinion forming part of a database and whether or not recorded in a material form) about an individual whose identity is apparent or can reasonably be ascertained from the information or opinion
Social media	online platforms and applications - such as but not limited to social networking sites, wikis, blogs, microblogs, video and audio sharing sites, and message boards - that allow people to easily publish, share and discuss content. Examples of social media platforms include, but are not limited to Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter), Snapchat, Yammer, YouTube, Flickr and Wikipedia

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10. References and Legislation

Office of Local Government Model Social Media Policy 2022

City of Ryde – Code of Conduct

City of Ryde – IT Email and Internet Use Policy

City of Ryde – Media Policy

City of Ryde – Anti-Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment Policy

Local Government (State) Award

Local Government Act 1993

Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009

State Records Act 1998

Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998

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