

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

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PREPARED BY:

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SUTHERLAND SHIRE

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to outline Sutherland Shire Council's (Council) approach to engaging with our community on Council's official social media profiles to optimise effective engagement and manage risks. It provides the principles that guide our management of social media accounts and articulates the roles and responsibilities of Council employees and elected representatives in utilising social media.

Council strives to engage with our community in an open and accountable manner through effective communication channels and we recognise social media plays an important role in this process. It increases community understanding of Council's purpose and goals, improves transparency, and builds trust.

2. APPLICATION

Councillors and Council Employees

This Policy applies to all Councillors, Council employees, contract workers, consultants, volunteers, business partners and others who engage with the community and stakeholders on Council's official social media accounts.

3. PRINCIPLES

3.1 Application of Principles

No one principle should be applied to the detriment of another. Principles must be collectively considered and applied to the extent that it is reasonable and practicable in the circumstances.

3.2 Encourage Participation

Council utilises social media to showcase how we're contributing and delivering for our community, and to encourage community participation and engagement on local Council initiatives.

We believe our community has a right to be informed about decisions that affect them and we are genuine, responsive, and transparent in seeking valuable input from the community where there are opportunities for our community to be involved in Council decision making, in-line with our Community Engagement Strategy.

We aim to assist and help resolve simple enquiries received through official social media profiles, however not all matters can be resolved through this channel. We may refer community members to alternative contact options to ensure their enquiry is addressed appropriately.

3.3 Timely and Accurate

We provide accurate and timely news and information to our community on Council's key services and facilities. We use social media for public announcements, to provide updates, promote engagement opportunities and to inform the community of any emergencies or incidents that may affect them.

3.4 Inclusive and Accessible

We aim to be inclusive and accessible to all stakeholder groups, incorporating all ages, abilities, genders and cultural backgrounds. We administer a range of social media accounts and create content to ensure the broadest possible range of stakeholders can access and participate.

3.5 Respectful

We act with integrity and listen to our community, operating in a transparent way. We encourage questions, feedback, open conversation and debate on social media and we expect all participants to behave in a respectful manner, in accordance with our social media guidelines. Each social media platform is also governed by its own Terms of Use, aligned to the platform's legal and governance frameworks. More information about the platforms we use, and their frameworks, is available on our [website](#).

3.6 Transparent

We are open and transparent in our communication and provide opportunity for participation in two-way conversation. Information published to social media channels by employees of Council must comply with the provisions of the [Code of Conduct](#), and must uphold confidentiality, privacy and copyright provisions.

3.7 Alignment to Strategy

We will plan and deliver content on Council's official social media platforms which align with the strategic commitments, decisions and legislative obligations of Council.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 Responsible Officer

The Responsible Officer for this Policy is Manager, Communication, Engagement & Customer.

4.2 Council Employees

i. Management of official social media accounts

Designated Council employees who are authorised to manage one or more of Council's official social media accounts are responsible for planning, publishing, and moderating content in-line with the principles outlined in this Policy. Onboarding training will be provided by the Communication & Engagement team.

ii. Personal use of social media

Under Council's [Code of Conduct](#), all employees must adhere to the following obligations in regards to personal use of social media where the employee chooses to make reference to Council, its business units, services, operations and/or employees, customers, or business-related stakeholders. Employees or contractors must not use social media to post comments, photos, sound recordings or other information that:

- compromises their capacity to perform their role in an unbiased manner
- could be perceived to be an official comment on behalf of Council
- has the capacity to damage Council's reputation or contains content about Council that may be misleading or deceptive
- divulges confidential Council information.

This Policy does not apply to personal use of social media when no reference or inference is made to Council or Council-related issues.

4.3 Councillors

Councillors are the elected representatives of the community and communicate and engage in a range of ways to inform, and hear the views, concerns, and aspirations of their constituents, including on social media.

Councillors may choose to use social media to communicate in their elected role. For any use of social media platforms to communicate in their elected capacity:

- i. A clear distinction must be maintained between personal and Councillor related use.
- ii. It is strongly recommended that Councillors establish a dedicated page representing their elected role, separate to any personal accounts they might hold. The establishment of a separate profile best supports a clear distinction between personal and Council-related social media use, assists in the protection of individual privacy and reputation, and assists to reduce potential legal liability.
- iii. Councillors are responsible for maintaining their social media account/s consistent with the Principles outlined in this Policy, in alignment with the Code of Conduct for Councillors and in adherence with the requirements of social media platforms.
- iv. 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 two weeks of a change in circumstances.
- v. Councillors are responsible to close any dedicated Councillor page at the conclusion of their term.

Councillors do not have access to, nor are they authorised to, publish content on Council's official social media profiles.

Technical support will be provided at the commencement of each term of Council to assist elected representatives with establishing social media accounts, as required.

4.4 Mayor

The current Mayor may choose to utilise social media to communicate in their capacity as Mayor. Given the Mayor serves a role as an official spokesperson for Council (See Media and Public Comment Policy, section 2.1), it is recommended that the Mayor utilise a dedicated page representing the Mayoral role, separate to any personal accounts they might hold. Therefore, a new Mayoral page will be established for an incoming Mayor. If an existing Councillor becomes Mayor, they will have the option of renaming their existing official Councillor page to a Mayoral page.

The current Mayor will be provided technical and communications support, if required, to deliver content on a Mayoral account. All engagement on Mayoral account/s (publishing, commenting, and moderating) must be consistent with the Principles outlined in this Policy and in alignment with the [Code of Conduct for Councillors](#).

For an outgoing Mayor, the following will apply:

- If the outgoing Mayor remains as a serving Councillor, their Mayoral page can be retained and renamed to reflect their role as Councillor. If the outgoing Mayor chooses not to rename their Mayoral page and instead reinstate or create a new Councillor page, they will be responsible for closing and archiving their official Mayoral page.
- If the outgoing Mayor is no longer serving on the Council, they will be responsible for closing and archiving their official Councillor and/or Mayoral page at the conclusion of their term, in-line with sections 3 and 6 of this Policy.

5. POLICY COMPLIANCE

The Social Media Policy will be reviewed and re-adopted by Council once every Council term or as required to ensure it remains relevant and current. If legislative requirements change, this Policy will be reviewed and updated accordingly.

6. RECORD KEEPING, CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

- i. Social media content created, sent and received by Council officials (including 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*, the *NSW State Records Act 1998*, *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (PIPPA)* and the *Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002 (the HRIPA)* through its *Access to Information Policy and Privacy Management Plan*.
- ii. 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 the Council's records manager and comply with the requirements of the *State Records Act 1998*.

- iii. When/if a Councillor's term of office concludes, the Councillor must contact the Council's records manager and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to manage/transfer records of social media content created during their term of office and comply with the requirements of the *State Records Act 1998*.
- iv. In fulfilling their obligations under clauses 6.i to 6.ii, Council officials should refer to any guidance issued by the State Archives and Records Authority of NSW relating to [retention requirements for Councils' and Councillors' social media content](#).
- v. Any personal information collected by Sutherland Shire Council is handled in-line with our [Privacy Statement](#).
- vi. No confidential information or information that is private in nature will be transmitted or stored online because of the use of social media sites. Council employees must comply with legal obligations related to copyright. When working in an official capacity or when representing Council, employees must be assured that permission has been obtained before transferring any information to a social media site that may be considered private, for example, photographs of minors or information about ratepayers.

Further details around data collection and management are outlined in the Schedule at the end of this Policy.

7. BREACHES OF POLICY

Breaches of this Policy will be managed in accordance with normal disciplinary procedures and in-line with Council's Codes of Conduct.

Breaches of this Policy by other users of Council's social media will be managed in accordance with relevant legislation.

8. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- [Community Engagement Strategy](#)
- [Privacy Statement](#)
- [Privacy Management Plan](#)
- [Code of Conduct for Council Staff](#)
- [Code of Conduct for Councillors](#)
- [Access to Information Policy](#)
- [Unreasonable Customer Conduct Policy](#)
- [Media and Public Comment Policy](#)

9. RELEVANT LEGISLATION, REGULATIONS AND GUIDELINES

- Local Government Act 1993 (NSW).
- State Records Act 1998 (NSW).
- Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW).
- Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW).
- Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002.

10. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Term	Meaning
Social Media	Website or application that enables a user to create, share and engage with content or participate in social networking. For the purpose of this Policy, it is an interactive digital website or application managed by Council to engage with our community.
Council Official	Councillors, members of staff and delegates of the council (including members of committees that are delegates of the council).
Community Manager	Council employee whose role duties include the use of, or engagement with, social media for work-related purposes. This can sometimes also be referred to as an 'Administrator', 'Moderator' or 'Content Author'.
Record	Letters, posts, comments, reports, documents, attachments, tapes, emails, video and audio recordings, graphics, slide presentations, online content and other forms of information, including computer-based information created or received.
Official social media accounts/ profiles	Council maintains a range of social media accounts that are aligned to best practice and responsive to our community's digital engagement needs. A list of current official social media accounts can be found on our website: sutherlandshire.nsw.gov.au/subscribe

End of Document

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ONLINE ADVERTISING AND ANALYTICS

Council makes use of online advertising and analytic services to better tailor our marketing and advertising content to improve the user experience, resulting in content that is relevant to our online audiences and local community.

This is done using Cookies, Pixels and Google Analytics. These services collect information about visitor internet usage or digital footprint including the device used (mobile, desktop or tablet), web pages visited, websites or advertisements interacted with and how.

By viewing Council's website or social media channels, users consent to non-personal web traffic data being collected while on Council's channels.

Council also utilises data collected by Google, Instagram and Facebook (Meta), and LinkedIn. The data collected by these remarketing services does not allow Council to personally identify users of our websites or social media platforms.

View [Google's Privacy Policy](#)

View [Meta's Data Policy](#)

View [LinkedIn's Privacy Policy](#)

Users can opt out of their non-personal information being collected by disabling or refusing cookies, disabling JavaScript, or using a third party opt-out service <http://www.aboutads.info/choices/> and selecting Google, LinkedIn, and Facebook.

End Document

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