



SOCIAL MEDIA



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CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER - PERFORMANCE & STRATEGY

POLICY OBJECTIVES

To provide a framework and guidelines in respect to the expectations of Council officials when engaging in social media in both an official and personal capacity.

POLICY STATEMENT

Social Media is a medium that allow groups to generate content and engage in peer-to-peer conversations and exchange of content. Examples include blogs, wikis, online video, photo sharing, micro-blog sites (Twitter) and social networking sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn. These web based technologies provide vehicles to facilitate conversations and information exchange between Council and the community. In using social media Council will:

- Be credible, accurate, fair, thorough and transparent;
- Be respectful, cordial, honest and professional at all times;
- Be responsive and share information where appropriate;
- Behave with honesty and integrity;
- Be consistent with other council information.

BACKGROUND

Definition of Social Media - the use of online tools for communication, promotion and conversation, blogs, microblogs (eg Twitter), social networks (eg Facebook), podcasts and video (eg YouTube) are all types of social media.

Definition of Council Official - includes councillors, members of staff of council, administrators, council committee members, conduct reviewers and delegates of council.

Information technology has changed the way in which people communicate and share information. Social media represents opportunities to achieve real value by engaging residents, listening more and harnessing local energy. Social media can:

- increase resident's access to Council;
- increase Council's access to residents and improve the accessibility of council communication;
- allow Council to be more active in its relationships with residents, partners and other stakeholders;
- 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.

COUNCIL'S USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS

Social Media tools are used by Gosford City Council within the framework of one or more of the following:

- a communications plan;
- a media strategy;
- a community engagement / consultation plan.

Gosford City Council selectively uses approved social media pages to:

- enhance Council's reputation;
- develop stronger relationships with community members;
- provide an informal and accessible way for the public to communicate with Council;
- support traditional media by broadening its reach and scope;
- promote selected services, events, projects, policies and activities;
- expand Council's community engagement opportunities;
- provide essential updates to the community during a crises or emergency.

Council also uses specific online media sites selectively to:

- protect Council's reputation by monitoring social media activity that relates to Gosford City Council' place Council's statements of facts directly onto the public record;
- respond or clarify an issue in detail.

APPLICATION

This policy applies to all council officials (including permanent, temporary and casual employees as well as volunteers and contractors to council) that make use of social media:

- in a work related capacity;
- when reference is made on behalf of council or representing council, or

- in a personal capacity where the council official chooses to make references to Gosford City Council, its people, customers or business related individuals or organisations.

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

Council officials who are residents, ratepayers or customers of council services are not precluded from participating in community debate about an issue that personally affects them. However, they must make it clear that they are commenting as a resident/ratepayer, not as a council official. It is important that readers of posts do not misconstrue personal comments as representing an official council position.

Any comments made in regard to Council, or Council operations, where the information was acquired through your position as a council official, should never be shared in a public forum.

ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT

There are numerous official social media accounts which represent Gosford City Council and its services/facilities. Council's Corporate Communications Unit manages the corporate council accounts and the individual units are authorised to manage their facility's accounts.

Facebook:

Gosford City Council
Laycock Street Theatre
Gosford Regional Gallery
Peninsula Leisure Centre
Gosford Pools
Central Coast Stadium

Twitter:

Gosford City Council
Gosford Pools
Central Coat Stadium

Instagram:

Gosford City Council
Peninsula Leisure & Gosford Olympic Pool
Central Coast Stadium
Patonga Camping Ground - account pending

Pinterest:

Gosford City Council

YouTube

Gosford City Council

Council officials who administer their own social media accounts (for example, council staff, Executive Leadership Team and Gosford City Councillors), are welcome to do so, provided that their application is in line with this policy.

CONDUCT

The conduct of council officials in their professional capacity, when at work or when using council equipment must always comply with Council policies and procedures, including Council's Code of Conduct.

Any comments and contributions made by council officials when posting in a private capacity also fall under Council policy, including the Code of Conduct, where those comments are made about Gosford City Council, its services, its people, its councillors and/or other business related individuals or organisations. Inappropriate comments, cyber bullying, harassment or intimidation of other Council employees, contractors, customers or providers may subject a council official to disciplinary action.

LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Information added to Social Media sites by council officials must comply with the provisions of the Code of Conduct, uphold confidentiality, privacy and copyright provisions and not subject Council to legal action. For example, where Council has obtained a photo from a third party it must be determined that any license associated with that agreement does not prevent the use of that photo online.

No confidential information or information that is private in nature should be transmitted or stored online as a result of the use of Social Media sites. Council officials must ensure 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.

DEALING WITH OFFENSIVE BEHAVIOUR

Gosford City Council will not tolerate content that is offensive, obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, bullying, discriminatory, hateful, racist, sexist, infringes copyright, constitutes contempt of courts, breaches a court suppression order, or is otherwise unlawful. Pages are monitored and such content will be moderated and may be removed. and Users who breach Council's Social Media Policy may be banned from accessing Council's social media pages. Council also reserves the right to moderate content from individuals who seek to monopolise and dominate Council's social media pages for their own purposes.

RECORDKEEPING

Records in all formats must be managed in accordance with legislation and council's recordkeeping program. Records that are created as a result of using Social Media should be stored in Council's corporate record keeping system.

When using web based tools, consideration should be given to whether the information that is being created or disseminated is a record. Where information is disseminated using multiple channels, eg website, YouTube, blogs etc, a record of where this information is held must be kept.

(Min No 2013/388 - 16 July 2013 - Review of Policies)
(Min No 2014/408 - 12 August 2014)