


## COUNCIL POLICY

Social Media	<b>Adopted By Council:</b>	19/12/19	
	<b>Date/s Revised:</b>	26/06/24	
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	<b>Document No:</b>	CP049	
	<b>Directorate:</b>	CEO	
	<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Communications Coordinator	

### CONTEXT

As part of the Borough of Queenscliffe's increased commitment to community consultation, Council has developed a social media presence to enhance communications with our residents, ratepayers and visitors.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to define the rules and regulations that Council's official social media channels operate within.

### DEFINITIONS

- **Social media channels:** Online tools for information, communication and ideas, including such platforms as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.
- **Staff:** Council officers, volunteers and contractors.
- **Councillors:** The current elected Mayor and Councillors of the Borough of Queenscliffe.
- **Users:** Everyone that participates on Council's social media channels, including members of the public, staff, and Councillors.
- **Public page:** A public page created with the intention of informing, connecting with and campaigning to constituents who may 'like' or 'follow' the page. Many MPs and Councillors around the state operate a public page.
- **Private profile:** A personal profile created with the intention of connecting with family and friends. These are nearly always private, and can be operated concurrently with a public page, or on its own.

### POLICY

#### 1. Involvement in social media

The Borough of Queenscliffe will use its social media channels to:

- Provide updates and information in a timely manner
- Answer questions or queries from residents about Council matters
- To raise community satisfaction and enhance confidence in Council through sincere dialogue with the community
- Gain insights from residents
- Promote the works of Council
- Promote the Borough of Queenscliffe as a whole
- Reach a different and/or greater audience than to which Council currently speaks
- Reach specific, targeted audiences through the use of geo-targeting
- Support and complement Council's other media activity

## **2. Account management**

Posts and comments created on Council's social media channels under the 'Borough of Queenscliffe' title, and other BoQ associated channels, can only be posted by a member of the Communications team, at the delegation of the CEO.

## **3. Personal social media use**

In order for Council to maintain clear and consistent messaging through its social media channels, guidance should be given to Councillors' personal social media use where the two could overlap. Identifying the difference between a Councillor's personal opinions and the official position of Council will be assisted by the following standards. These guidelines are consistent with Sections 5.2 & 13 in CP005 Councillors Code of Conduct and the CP021 Election Period Policy.

### **3.1. Councillors' personal social media – public pages**

- All Councillors should inform the Communications team and CEO of any existing public pages, or their intention to create any new public pages.
- Council staff shall not assist any Councillor with the creation or operation of any public pages unless approved by the CEO.
- All Councillors operating a public page should conduct themselves within the behaviours listed in CP005 Councillors Code of Conduct and CP021 Election Period Policy.
- All posts or comments created by Councillors on their public page should be consistent with the position agreed upon by Council at a prior date, and not compromise or pre-empt any future decisions.
- If a Councillor chooses to express a personal opinion or view that differs from Council's agreed position, the Councillor must clearly identify their opinion or view as their own. This is to avoid any blurred lines between the position of Council as a whole and the individual position of a Councillor, and is consistent with Sections 5.2 & 13 in CP005 Councillors Code of Conduct, which states that the Mayor is the "principal spokesperson for Council".

### **3.2. Councillors' personal social media – private profiles**

Council accepts that the use of private profiles by Councillors is generally outside the scope of employment. However, consideration must be taken when this overlaps with Council business.

- If a Councillor comments or posts in relation to a Council issue, they must clearly state that it is a personal opinion and does not represent the views of Council.
- Councillors must not refer to Council, their fellow Councillors, or Council staff in a negative or derogatory manner.
- Councillors must not post or comment anything that is likely to bring Council into disrepute.
- During the election period Councillors must follow the guidelines in CP021 Election Period Policy.

### **3.3. Staff's personal social media – private profiles**

Council accepts that the use of private profiles by staff is generally outside the scope of employment. However, consideration must be taken when this overlaps with Council business.

- If a staff member comments or posts in relation to a Council issue, they must clearly state that it is a personal opinion and does not represent the views of Council. Ideally, staff should only comment on a post after consulting with a supervisor and reviewing their message.
- Staff must not refer to Council, its Councillors, or its staff in a negative or derogatory manner.
- Staff must not post or comment anything that is likely to bring Council into disrepute.

Staff should also refer to the Social Media Organisational Policy for guidance on acceptable social media use.

#### **4. Operation**

- Council's social media channels will be monitored and active as per the Customer Service Hours of the Borough of Queenscliffe – Monday to Friday, 9:00am-4:30pm, excluding public holidays and the Christmas shutdown period.
- Council's Facebook page will employ the use of filters that automatically hide any posts or comments containing explicit language.
- However, Council disclaims responsibility and liability for any inappropriate content posted to its social media channels that cannot be removed in a timely manner.
- Content shared on Council's social media channels is at the sole discretion of Council and the final decision on any content shared will rest with the CEO.

#### **5. House Rules**

Regulations are applied to Council social media channels by which all users must abide. The Borough of Queenscliffe reserves the right to delete comments and/or posts that:

- Discriminate towards a person or group on the basis of their age, ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, religion, or any other attribute that may give rise to discrimination
- Harass, abuse, troll or threaten Council staff and/or Councillors; and/or incite others to do so
- Harass, abuse, troll or threaten fellow commenters and participants on Council's social media channels; and/or incite others to do so
- Are obscene, vulgar, offensive, or sexually explicit
- Are promotional or commercial in nature
- Contain knowingly false or mischievous complaints or statements about individuals, companies or the government
- Are unlawful or incite others to break the law
- Violate any confidentiality or privacy guidelines
- Contain information that may compromise the safety or security of the public
- Are repetitive or duplicated posts or comments
- Contain any other inappropriate content or comments as determined by Council.

Council also reserves the right to permanently ban or block any user that violates these guidelines.

#### **6. Incoming correspondence**

- All comments and posts will be monitored by the Communications team. Not all comments or posts require a response, nor may they be seeking one. Council will respond to comments and posts entirely at its own discretion.
- Council understands that a wide variety of views will be shared on the page, from praise to criticism, and Council does not intend to remove shared content unless it breaches the regulations listed in guideline no. 5: '*House Rules*'.
- Comments cannot qualify as an official complaint or inquiry. Where necessary, responses will be provided directing the contributor to visit Council's website to lodge a formal complaint or enquiry. All complaints must be registered and dealt with in accordance with CP035 Complaint Handling.

#### **7. Legality**

- Council will not post or share any content that violates any confidentiality or privacy guidelines.
- Council will not post or share any content that defames or breaches copyright.
- Council will not post or share any content that reveals any confidential or commercial-in-confidence information.
- Council may occasionally link to external websites. Council is not responsible for the content presented on these sites.
- All material made available via Council's social media channels is the property of the Borough of Queenscliffe and is protected under the *Copyright Act 1968*.

## **8. Records management**

- Records of content may be kept throughout the operation of Council's social media channels.
- Council will use its discretion to determine which posts and comments should be retained in a secondary format for archival purposes.
- Any content that is deleted by Council – be it a Council post/comment, or a public post/comment – will have a screenshot taken of it for archival purposes.

## **CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT**

This policy will be reviewed on a continuous basis, but as a minimum every three years from the date of adoption.

## **OTHER REFERENCES**

CP005 Councillors Code of Conduct

CP006 Customer Service Charter

CP021 Election Period Policy

CP035 Complaint Handling

*Copyright Act 1968*

**END**