

# General Policy

## Burke Shire Council

### Social Media Policy

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**Version History**

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131121.13	21 November 2013	New Policy
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## 1. Purpose

Burke Shire Council recognises that social media provides new opportunities for dynamic and interactive two-way communications which can complement existing communication and further improve information, access and delivery of key services.

The intent of this policy is to provide understanding and guidance for the appropriate use of social media platforms and tools by Council staff, Councillors and contractors for the purpose of conducting Council business.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees, councillors and contractors working for Council regardless of whether they are permanent, temporary, full time, part time or casual employees or volunteers. For the purposes of this policy, the term contractor includes on-hired temporary labour services (agency staff) and sub-contractors.

## 3. Date of Policy

This Policy applies from date adopted by Council.

## 4. Definitions

In this Social Media Policy, the following terms shall have the corresponding meaning:

<b>Authorised Employee</b>	means an Employee who has made application to and been given permission in writing from the Communication and Marketing Unit to use or manage social media on behalf of their facility or section of the organisation.
<b>Act</b>	means the <i>Local Government Act 2009 (QLD)</i> .
<b>CEO</b>	means Chief Executive Officer.
<b>Council</b>	shall mean the Mayor and Councillors of Burke Shire Council.
<b>Councillor</b>	shall mean a Councillor of a Burke Shire Council within the meaning of the <i>Local Government Act 2009</i> , includes the Mayor.
<b>Customer</b>	means a member of the community, ratepayer or other person engaged with, or who has reasonable potential to engage with the Council as a user of Council services or facilities.
<b>Employees</b>	shall mean all persons employed at Burke Shire Council on a permanent, temporary, volunteer or casual basis and may include persons engaged under a contract of service.
<b>Facility Pages</b>	means Facebook pages or other social media channels relating to Council facilities or specific services in addition to Council's endorsed corporate Facebook page and other social media.

<b>ICT</b>	means Information Communication Technology.
<b>Regulation</b>	means the <i>Local Government Regulation 2012 (Qld)</i> .
<b>Social Media</b>	<p>means the range of technology tools that readily allow people to engage in communication and to share information and resources via the internet or peer to peer electronic services. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Podcasts</li> <li>• Blogs</li> <li>• Wikis</li> <li>• Tagging</li> <li>• Online photograph and video sharing</li> <li>• Forums</li> <li>• Message boards</li> <li>• Answer services</li> <li>• Presentation sharing</li> <li>• Social bookmarking</li> <li>• Social reviews</li> <li>• Social networking sites (such as Facebook (Meta), Twitter (X), Instagram and LinkedIn)</li> <li>• Short form video platforms (such as Tik Tok)</li> </ul>

## 5. Policy Provisions

The policy outlines requirements for compliance with confidentiality, governance, legal, privacy and regulatory parameters when using social media to conduct council business.

It aims to:

- Inform appropriate use of social media tools for Council;
- Promote effective and productive community engagement through social media;
- Minimise miscommunication or mischievous communications; and
- Assist Council manage the inherent challenges of speed and immediacy.

As it is not possible to expressly refer to or list the specific sites or kinds of social media outlets, the absence of a reference to a particular site or kind of social media activity does not limit the application of this policy.

This policy is not intended to cover personal use of social media where:

- The author publishes information in their personal capacity and not on behalf of, or in association with Council; and

- No reference is made to Council, its councillors, staff, policies and services, suppliers or other stakeholders or council related issues.

## 5.1 Expectations

When using social media, council staff and contractors are expected to:

- Seek prior authorisation or delegated authority to approve content from the CEO;
- Adhere to Council codes of conduct, policies and procedures;
- Behave with caution, courtesy, honesty and respect;
- Comply with relevant laws and regulations; and
- Reinforce the integrity, reputation and values of Council.

## 5.2 Content Not Permitted

The following content is not permitted in accordance with this council policy:

- Abusive, profane or sexual language
- Content not relating to the subject matter of that blog, board, forum or site
- Content which is false or misleading
- Confidential information about Council or third parties
- Copyright or Trade Mark protected materials
- Discriminatory material in relation to a person or group based on age, colour, creed, disability, family status, gender, gender identity, nationality, marital status, parental status, political opinion/affiliation, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, race or social origin, religious beliefs/activity, responsibilities, sex or sexual orientation or identifying pronouns/preference
- Illegal material or materials designed to encourage law breaking
- Materials that could compromise council, employees or system (ICT) safety
- Materials which would breach applicable laws (defamation, privacy, trade practices, financial rules and regulations, fair use, trademarks)
- Material that would offend contemporary standards of taste and decency
- Material which would bring the Council into disrepute
- Personal details or references to councillors, council staff, ratepayers, businesses or any other third party not further identified which may breach privacy and/or information privacy laws
- Spam, meaning the distribution of unsolicited bulk electronic messages
- Statements which may be considered to be bullying or harassment of any internal or external party
- Content or materials that may result in a gain or preferential benefit to the original poster on behalf of council. This includes promotional materials or any similar content that does not conform to the Burke Shire Council Competitive Neutrality Policy.

Legal counsel will be sought in any instance where an authorised employee is unsure to the legal legitimacy or potential ramifications of any potential item of posting to be made via the means outlined by this policy.

### 5.3 Social Media Protocols

- Appropriate authorisation must be obtained before using social media including but not limited to uploading content and acting as a spokesperson on behalf of Council.
- Only publicly available information is to be disclosed and it is the responsibility of the publisher / editor to ensure that only this information is displayed. Any information provided must be factually accurate and comply with all Council policies.
- Disclosures will be free from personal opinion, views or biases.
- Written permission will be sought from anyone who appears in any photographs, video or other footage before sharing these via any form of social media. These individuals/third parties may request for such material to be removed at anytime of which council must oblige with this request.
- The authorised employee must seek permission from the creator or copyright owner to use or reproduce copyright material including applications, audio tracks (speeches, songs), footage (video), graphics (graphs, charts and logos), images, artwork, photographs, publications or music.
- The authorised employee must encourage online publishers to be open and transparent in how they engage with, or review council personnel, services or wares.
- Social media sites created or contributed to must be readily edited, improved or removed and appropriately moderated.
- False or fake personas may not be used.
- No reference is to be made to Council Customers, work colleagues, suppliers or sub-contractors without their express prior approval and according to privacy legislative requirements.
- Employees who become aware of any negative comment made about Council, its brand, products or services on any social media will not respond directly to such postings where their posting could be construed as having been made by them in their capacity as a Council Employee representing the view of the Council.
- Where a comment received via means of social media or external parties may be deemed as 'defaming' towards the Council, its brand, products or services regarding a topic or specific matter; such comments should be referred to the CEO for further comment or guidance. I.e., Where Burke Shire Council is the recipient of commentary which was intended for another organisation; the CEO should be consulted for guidance on how to resolve the matter and may delegate an Authorised Employee to assist in the resolution of the matter.

### 5.4 Roles and Responsibilities

- The Mayor is Council's official spokesperson on all matters.
- The Mayor or Chief Executive Officer may delegate Councillors, Directors or staff to act as a spokesperson for the Council when appropriate.

- Directors and the Chief Executive Officer should make themselves available to answer enquiries from media where such enquiries affect immediate area of operations and such answers should be confined to operational issues and approved Council Policy.
- Councillors may speak to media to express their personal views only.
- No staff or Councillor can speak to the media about an item to be considered at a meeting of Council prior to the meeting, except if approved by the Mayor or Chief Executive Officer.

## 5.5 Dealing with the Media

It is vital that all media inquiries be treated efficiently and courteously with due regard to the fact that all media work to stringent deadlines which require prompt responses.

All staff must direct any media enquiry to the CEO or to the Environmental Health, Local Laws and Facilities Manager.

Media releases must be approved by the Mayor, CEO, or Authorised Employee before posting on the Council's website.

Out of courtesy, any press release, media monitoring reports, or talk-back radio comments relating to specific projects, or divisions, are to be e-mailed to the relevant Councillors/Officers as a matter of policy.

## 5.6 Enforcement

Council actively monitors social media for relevant contributions that impact on Council, its operations and reputation. Council will be able to find, and act upon, contributions made by Councillors and staff if deemed necessary.

This policy will be published and promoted to Councillors and staff. Breaching this policy may result in disciplinary action.

Serious breaches may result in suspension or termination of employment or association. Council reserves the right to remove, where possible, content that violates this policy or any associated policies.

## 6. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed when any of the following occur:

1. The related documents are amended or replaced.
2. Other circumstances as determined from time to time by a resolution of Council.

Notwithstanding the above, this policy is to be reviewed at intervals of no more than three (3) years.

## 7. Key Responsibilities

Position	Responsibility
Mayor	To lead councillors in their understanding of, and compliance with, this policy.

Position	Responsibility
CEO	To lead staff (either directly or through delegated authority) in their understanding of, and compliance with, this policy.
Directors	To communicate, implement and comply with this policy.
Managers and Supervisors	To implement this policy and related procedures.
All Council staff	To comply with this policy and consider its implications for related projects and programs.

## 8. Related Documents

Legislation/Regulations	Awards	BSC Policies	Procedures
Information Privacy Act 2009 (QLD) Local Government Regulation 2012 (QLD) Local Government Act 2009 (QLD) Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) Public Records Act 2002 (QLD) Right to Information Act 2009		Burke Shire Council Code of Conduct Burke Shire Council Right to Information Policy Burke Shire Council Computer and Telecommunications Policy Burke Shire Council Competitive Neutrality Policy	