



**Social Media Policy**  
August 2016  
Office of the General Manager



# Social Media Policy

## 1.0 Purpose

This policy is designed to help employees, contractors, volunteers and students on placement to effectively utilise social media as an engagement tool, and to protect the personal and professional reputation of Council officials and Kiama Council.

Social media is a continually developing and evolving means of communication and provides further opportunity for engagement with residents, visitors and businesses within the Kiama Local Government Area.

Social media can be used to inform the community about Council's services and activities and to create avenues for greater and improved consultation and exchange of information, opinions, advice and promotion.

This policy applies to all forms of current and emerging social media. Social media may also take the form of podcasts or interactive video platforms, which may be used as an effective means of distributing Council information.

In addition there are many blog sites in the public domain inviting comment. These include sites hosted by traditional media outlets such as the 'opinions' section in online newspapers. Posting comments on these sites should only be done in a personal capacity without reference to Council, unless specifically authorised by the General Manager.

## 2.0 Objectives

The objectives of this policy are:

- To create a framework for employees, contractors, volunteers and students on placement to adopt and use social media for work related purposes and to ensure the use of social media meets the professional standards expected.
- To ensure all staff are aware of Council's use of social media as a legitimate form of communication with the community and to ensure the use of social media in a workplace context complies with Council's Code of Conduct and other relevant policies and legislation.
- Increased awareness that comments published on Council social media will be treated in the same way as any other public statement relating to Council and should only be made by authorised staff members. Authorised staff must be familiar with Council's Media Release Protocol and Media & Communications Procedure when posting content. All uses of social media must follow the same ethical standards as those outlined in the Code of Conduct, and Council's Fairness and Equity policy.

## 3.0 Scope

This policy applies to all employees, contractors, volunteers and students on placement, who are responsible for being aware of the policy and understanding their responsibilities when using social media in their professional and personal capacity.

## 4.0 References

This document should be read in conjunction with:

- Kiama Council Fairness & Equity Policy & Procedures
- Kiama Council Code of Conduct
- Kiama Council Privacy Policy
- Kiama Council Privacy Management Plan

## 5.0 Definitions

For the purpose of this document the following definitions apply:

- Authorised person - to be authorised, an employee must have documented permission from the Director of their department
- Authorised use – use by Council staff who have been authorised to speak for or on behalf of Council to promote Council activities or respond to queries directed to Council
- Council official – includes employees, committee members and delegates of Council
- Social media - means any platform for online publication, engagement, communication and comment. Social media includes social networking and blogging sites, podcasting and online forums. Some of the more common forms of social media used generally in the community for both professional and personal purposes are Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Flickr and Twitter.

## 6.0 Policy

The use of social media by Councillors is not considered under this policy, however with all social media interactions, both professional and personal, Councillors should be polite and respectful. Any behaviour that brings Council into disrepute will be assessed against Council's Code of Conduct.

Only authorised officers can engage in social media as a representative of Kiama Council.

To be authorised an employee, contractor, volunteer or student on placement must have documented permission from the relevant Director. This will enable staff to use social media at different access levels, where they can:

- Only participate in professional forums, for purposes related to their role
- Post events and activities on Council sites, but not engage in two way communication
- Post responses to enquiries and comments on Council sites following input from the relevant manager or director
- Conduct community consultation through a Council site after obtaining approval from their Manager or Director

Authorised persons should:

- Check and ensure the accuracy of information being shared
- If they make a mistake, correct it immediately
- Ensure that information is consistent with Council policies
- Ensure they have approval before launching any online activity
- Have liaised with Council's communications unit to obtain approval from the general manager or director before commenting on controversial, sensitive, confidential or political matters

- Post comments only within their area of knowledge and authority
- Consider the nature of the online community and be respectful in all comments
- Communicate in a style appropriate to the audience e.g. young people, professional colleagues, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- Be aware of appropriate legislation and its implications e.g. copyright, anti-discrimination, privacy
- Be aware of the terms of use for any particular social media platform or blog
- When interacting on professional sites, disclose that they are an employee/contractor of Kiama Council and use only their own identity
- Ensure passwords are provided to the communications unit or held by the account administrator.

Authorised persons should not:

- Express support for policy that has not been adopted by Council
- Engage in any discussion regarding tenders, contracts or on matters that involve or potentially involve NSW Police, NSW Workcover or on any matters that involve WHS or risk management related matters
- Post or respond to offensive material that breaches Council's Code of Conduct or is in breach of other relevant legislation
- Post any content that might cause damage to Council's reputation or bring it into disrepute
- Use or disclose any personal or confidential information
- Make changes or amend posts without clear indication that this has occurred and stating the reasons why

Staff responsible for social media sites are required to act to remove or edit content that is defined as inappropriate, namely but not limited to material that is:

- intentionally false or misleading
- an infringement of intellectual property rights or copyright
- inappropriate, off topic, repetitive or vexatious
- a deliberate provocation of other community members

When participating in external blogs or other social media, staff are doing so as private individuals and must not use their Council email address, Council's logo (it's brand) or anything that identifies them as a Council employee.

Any department undertaking two way communication or consultation utilising social media will ensure that an appropriate moderation process has been developed to monitor the conversation generated. This will include information relating to the times the site will be monitored and timeframes for staff to respond to public questions, as well as action that will be taken in the event of inappropriate comments being posted. This process must be easily understood and made available to all participants prior to inviting public comments to a Council site.

If the social media engagement has created a customer request that requires a maintenance or WHS action by another Department or

employee, this request should then be recorded in Council's Customer Request Management (CRM) system.

The use of Council information (words, images or other material) by non-Council staff or enterprises is subject to copyright and must not be used without obtaining approval from Kiama Council.

This policy does not restrict the private use of social media by employees. However, employees must adhere to the following:

- Comments and posts that relate to Council business operations should only be on Council's official social media sites and by authorised staff members
- When participating in external blogs or other social media, staff must expressly state that their views are personal and not representative of Council. Staff should not use their Council email address or include Council's logo when making private comment on social media sites
- In all social media interactions, both professional and personal, staff must behave politely and respectfully. Any behaviour that brings Council into disrepute or is considered a breach of Council's Code of Conduct may be subject to disciplinary action
- Private use of social media is permitted consistent with the provisions with Council's Code of Conduct.

## 7.0 Document control

<b>Directorate:</b>	Office of the General Manager
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