

1. Purpose & Scope

- 1.1 This Policy is designed to protect the interests of Charters Towers Regional Council (Council). The Policy sets out Council's protocols for using social media to undertake Council business, including guidelines for employees' personal use of social media. All Council employees must comply with this Social Media Policy to support the productive use of social media and limit inappropriate use and risk associated with using social media platforms.
- 1.2 This Policy is not intended to apply to the personal use of social media where employees publish information in their own personal capacity (i.e. not on behalf of, or in association with Council), or where no references regarding Council, elected members, employees, policies, services, stakeholders or any other matter related to Council, are made.

2. Commencement of Policy

- 2.1 This Policy will commence from 16 October 2024.

3. Application Of Policy

- 3.1 This Policy applies to all people engaged by Council who use social media in a professional and/or personal capacity, including:
 - Councillors or elected members
 - Full-time/part-time/casual employees
 - Temporary or agency staff
 - Contractors
 - Volunteers
 - Any other workers at Council sites

Managers should ensure employees are aware of and understand this Policy and its associated documents.

The protocols and guidelines outlined in this Policy should be applied to all social media tools and platforms as they arise, even if such tools or platforms are not explicitly referenced.

4. Definitions

Term	Definition
Authorised Employee	An employee who has been approved to post on social media on behalf of Council.
Employee	A person who works for Council, including employees, contractors or any other person who has access to Council's electronic systems and services.
Elected Member	An elected member who represents the local government authority e.g. a Councillor.
Contractor/Temporary or Agency Staff	A contractor and/or temporary/agency staff member engaged by Charters Towers Regional Council.
Social Media	Group term for a range of online communication platforms which enable interaction, content sharing and collaboration. These platforms include but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn, YouTube etc.) • Blogs • Podcasts • Photo sharing sites (e.g., Flickr, Snapchat, Instagram, Pinterest etc.) • Forums and discussion boards • Websites

5. Policy Provisions

5.1. Using social media for Council business-related purposes:

- a) Only authorised employees are allowed to make, publish, or distribute social media comment on behalf of Council.
- b) To become an authorised employee, you must receive prior written approval from Council's Chief Executive Officer (CEO).
- c) Authorised employees are granted permission to publish and comment on information already located in the public domain and within their area of expertise and authority, per Council's Social Media Policy.

Authorised employees sharing information on behalf of Council must ensure any social media activity:

- is accurate and not misleading
- is non-discriminatory, non-defamatory and non-derogatory
- does not bully, vilify, or harass
- is not offensive or objectionable
- complies with the AHPRA Advertising Guidelines and does not breach intellectual property (copyright) or privacy laws
- complies with Council policies and does not bring Council, its facilities, services, business activities, or employees into disrepute.

5.1.1. Refer to D0140 Social Media Guidelines for Authorised Employees. Importantly:

- All confidential information and material relating to Council must be kept confidential and treated with discretion, in any format, and at all times.

5.2. Using social media for personal purposes:

- When using social media in a personal capacity, Council employees are expected to consider that they are representatives of the organisation. Any reference made, whether directly or indirectly, to Council, its sites, services, employees, or activities, must comply with Council's Code of Conduct and other relevant policies, including this one.
- Council employees must not allow or participate in anything that will have, or is likely to have, a negative impact on Council's business activities or reputation.
- Personal comment/opinion must be clearly labelled as such and not be presented as Council comment/opinion.
- Council employees should not respond to negative or disparaging comments regarding Council or its activities. Such posts should be referred to the Executive Services Manager, who will decide how best to respond (if at all).
- Authorised employees should refrain from private communication with customers or any stakeholders through social media; however, if communications are initiated by a customer, all engagement is to be registered in Council's record management system.

5.3. Principles

Social media is primarily to be used to develop and maintain positive and collaborative relationships with Council customers and the community and to enhance opportunities for real-time two-way conversations.

Customers will continue to be referred to Council's website and customer service centre for detailed information, lodgement of requests, complaints, and/or and bookings for events. Where sufficient information is provided, an authorised Council employee will adopt a flexible approach to proactively address issues raised, and where appropriate, ask for a customer service request to be lodged.

5.4. Account Management

- a) Authorised employees will use their own accounts to manage Council social media sites.
- b) A social media business case must be submitted to the CEO for approval of any new Council social media accounts.
 - I. Business cases must be endorsed and supported by the Executive Services Manager and approved by the relevant Executive Leadership Team member and the CEO before implementation.
- c) Authorised employees will manage any obvious risks to Council’s reputation by removing posts of a derogatory, vexatious, or malicious nature.
 - II. **Prior to a post being removed**, the entire post will be copied and registered in Council’s records management system.
- d) All social media pages are monitored by the Executive Services Manager in addition to authorised employees.

5.5. Breaches

Breach of this Social Media Policy will be dealt with in accordance with Council’s Code of Conduct and may be subject to disciplinary action.

6. Variations

6.1 Council reserves the right to vary, replace, or terminate this Policy from time to time.

Associated Documents

- *Local Government Act 2009*
- *Local Government Regulation 2012*
- *Public Records Act 2002*
- *Right to Information Act 2009*
- *Information Privacy Act 2009*
- *Integrity Act 2009*
- *Crime and Corruption Act 2001*
- D0140 Social Media Guidelines for Authorised Employees
- S0016 Employee Code of Conduct
- S0012 Records Management Policy

Document Review			
Date Adopted by Council	16 October 2024	Council Resolution	4343
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ECM No.	755485	Document Contact	Executive Services Manager