



## Social Media Policy

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<b>Policy Category</b>	Administrative
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<b>Policy Owner</b>	Corporate Services
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Governance Manager

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance on the use of social media within Diamantina Shire Council for public communication purposes and clarify the appropriate process for communication of official Council decisions and positions. It also ensures that Councillors, and Council employees understand their responsibilities when using communications and social media platforms.

The policy aims to ensure that Council promotes an overall positive image and reputation in its external communications, through clear, timely, accurate, and consistent sharing of information.

### COMMENCEMENT OF POLICY

Commencement date will be the date of approval.

### SCOPE

This policy applies to all Councillors, Council employees and contractors of Council when responding to media enquiries or when seek to make comment on behalf of Diamantina Shire Council. This policy also applies to the professional and private use of social media platforms by Councillors, Council employees, and contractors of Council.

### HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITMENT

Council has considered the human rights protected under the Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld) (the Act) when adopting and/or amending this policy. When applying this policy, Council will act and make decision in a way that is compatible with human rights and give proper consideration to a human right relevant to the decision in accordance with the Act.

## POLICY STATEMENT

Council acknowledges the important role that print, broadcast and digital media play in sharing news and information of Diamantina Shire Council activities, decisions and updates. Council supports the use of official social media channels as part of an integrated approach to communication and community engagement. The use of social media must be consistent with this policy and the Employee Code of Conduct and the Code of Conduct for Councillors in Queensland.

Council respects the principle of freedom of the press and the right of media outlets to report on Council matters in a manner that they consider appropriate. Council respects the principle of freedom of speech and the right of individuals to express their personal opinion. Council expects individuals to do so in a respectful, constructive and non-discriminatory manner. Council will not publicly respond to editorial and/or public comment unless it is to correct misinformation.

This policy identifies principles and commitments which ensure timely, accurate, transparent, and consistent information is provided to the community through positive working relationships with media/news organisations and via Council's official communication channels.

## PRINCIPLES

The following principles are applicable to this policy:

<b>Principle</b>	<b>What it means for Diamantina Shire Council</b>
Accountability	<p>Employees have the right to contribute to public discussions on community and social issues in a personal capacity.</p> <p>Employees take reasonable steps to ensure that any published, forwarded or liked online content on social media, made in their personal capacity, is represented as their own views and not those of Diamantina Shire Council</p>
Confidentiality	<p>Employees follow information privacy legislation and maintain the confidentiality of information they have access to, that is not publicly available and use it only for its intended purpose.</p> <p>Employees obtain consent when using or disclosing personal information or images for work purposes.</p> <p>Employees do not use confidential or privileged information to further their personal interests.</p> <p>Employees continue to maintain the confidentiality of official and privileged information when they leave their employment.</p>
Safe & Inclusive Environment	<p>When using social media for work purposes, employees promote safe and inclusive online environments that are free from discrimination and harassment to ensure the wellbeing of other employees and members of the community.</p> <p>Employees contributing to public discussions on community and social issues in a personal capacity, ensure their online content is not disparaging towards colleagues and Council management, including elected members or the Council.</p>

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The below table outlines the responsibilities of Councillors, Council employees and others when engaging in media and communication activities including using social media platforms.

<b>Principle</b>	<b>What it means for Diamantina Shire Council</b>
Designated Spokesperson	<p>The CEO and Mayor are authorised by this policy to make comment on behalf of Council, including communicating decisions of Council, or Council's position on a particular issue.</p> <p>The CEO will be the designated spokesperson for matters concerning Council employees and contractors, and for the operational activities of Council.</p> <p>The CEO is responsible for authorising all media statements regarding operational matters.</p>
Lead Spokesperson	<p>The CEO may determine if a matter is an operational matter and choose to delegate a relevant Director to be the lead spokesperson.</p>
Administrators (Social Media)	<p>Are nominated by the CEO to be designated administrator of a Council social media account.</p> <p>Are required to ensure that adequate council employees are provided with appropriate levels of access and training to manage, moderate, and contribute content on a regular basis.</p> <p>Ensuring all content, comments and posts uphold a positive image and reputation for Council.</p>
Councillors	<p>The Mayor may choose to delegate a Councillor as the designated or lead spokesperson on a particular event, issue, activity, or other matter.</p>
Marketing Officer	<p>The Marketing Officer will provide advice and guidance to the CEO, Mayor, Councillor and Council employees on communication matters, including the use of social media.</p> <p>The Marketing Officer is authorised under this policy to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• post on behalf of Council's official communication channels.</li> <li>• create Council owned social media accounts</li> <li>• creating and remove access permissions</li> </ul>
Council Employees	<p>All media enquiries received by Council employees or contractors are to be referred to the Marketing Officer.</p> <p>Council employees and contractors who wish to contribute content for Diamantina Shire Council's official social media platforms must submit material to the Marketing Officer.</p> <p>All submissions are subject to the Marketing Officer's discretion and approval. Content may be edited or withheld to ensure consistency with Council's communication standards, branding and strategic objectives.</p> <p>Council employees and contractors are not to make any comments to the media on behalf of Council, unless they have been authorised as a spokesperson under this policy by the CEO or their delegate.</p>

## SOCIAL MEDIA USE

Council administers social media accounts across several platforms as part of a suite of communications tools used to engage with the community, provide updates on Council-related matters, and promote Council initiatives.

Any Councillor or Council officer, in the course of their own personal interactions on social media, could potentially be perceived to be communicating on behalf of Council.

Accounts are generally monitored during business hours, although some accounts may be monitored outside of these hours, depending on operational needs.

## MODERATION

Comments that are posted by members of the public on Council's social media pages can be of a positive, negative, or neutral nature.

Council understands the expectation of immediacy in relation to response times to comment made through social media platforms, however, acknowledges that it is impractical to monitor all social media accounts on a 24-hour basis.

Council's Social Media Administrators will be responsible for monitoring comments or posts on Council's social media platforms. Comments that ask a question about Council, or a matter related to Council will be responded to as soon as practicable. Where a matter is of a sensitive, private, or confidential nature, the Marking Officer has the discretion to hide the post and/or continue the conversation 'offline'.

Comments received outside of normal business hours will be responded to on the following business day where possible.

During times of disaster or emergency situations, Council will endeavour to respond to comments or questions posed via social media platforms outside of office hours.

When assessing comments, the following guidelines must be adhered to:

- comments by the public will be hidden at the discretion of the CEO or the Social Media Administrator if they are deemed to be offensive, obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, bullying, discriminatory, hateful, racist, sexist, mentions a person by name, infringes copyright, constitutes a contempt of court, breaches a court suppression order or is otherwise unlawful. Other comments that may potentially jeopardise Council's financial, legal, or operational capacity will be hidden at the discretion of the CEO or Social Media Administrator.
- comments or posts that are not Council-related and not deemed to be a public record can be removed. This includes promotion of commercial services, products, or entities.
- any post or comment deemed offensive, but which is classified as a public record under the Crime and Corruption Commission and Queensland State Archives guidelines must be hidden, and not deleted, for the satisfactory management of Council records.

All messaging during disaster events must align with the Diamantina Shire Council Disaster Management Plan. Only authorised officers, such as the Local Disaster Coordinator, CEO, or Marketing Officer, may post updates or responses related to the emergency.

## RECORD KEEPING

Council has a responsibility under the *Public Records Act 2023* to maintain accurate corporate records. As defined in Council's Records Management Policy, a corporate record is anything created, received, or kept by Council in the exercise of its statutory, administrative or other public responsibilities or for a related purpose.

In using communications tools, it is possible that corporate records will be created. It is essential that any corporate records created during the use of official communication channels are retained and managed in accordance with the Information Technology Policy and Right to Information and Information Privacy Policy.

## CARETAKER PERIOD

In accordance with section 90D of the *Local Government Act 2009* (Qld), during the Caretaker Period, Council-owned social media accounts including, but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, and YouTube, will not contain any material that could be construed or interpreted as election material.

## PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Personal use of social media during work hours should be kept to a minimum.

Employees will be permitted to access social media during work hours for work purposes with as directed by Management (e.g. to access posts on private pages that make reference to Council or Council activities). Access will be kept brief and must relate to a Council matter or Council business.

Employees will be allowed to access social media during morning tea and lunch breaks using their own devices.

Posting about Council on social media by employees is permitted but care must be taken to minimise the potential damage to be caused (directly or indirectly) to Council's reputation.

When using social media for personal use by employees, the following guidelines must be adhered to with respect to Council information:

- only disclose or discuss publicly available Council information;
- ensure all content is accurate and complies with all relevant Council policies;
- do not imply that you are authorised to speak as a representative of Council or give the impression that the views expressed are those of Council;
- do not use a Council email address or any Council logos or insignia;
- do not use the identity or likeness of another employee, contractor or member of Council;
- do not make comments, use location-based services (e.g. check-in) or post any material that might otherwise cause damage to Council's reputation.

Elected Members who maintain personal or community-facing social media pages must clearly indicate that these are not official Council platforms. Elected Members are responsible for the moderation and management of such pages in accordance with relevant legislation and defamation laws.

## **LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS**

General advice is provided to assist employees in complying with obligations set out in this policy. When in doubt, employees are encouraged to seek further guidance or clarifications from the CEO, the Governance Manager or the Marketing Officer or refer to the Diamantina Shire Council Code of Conduct.

The *Information Privacy Act 2009* contains rules, or privacy principles, that govern how Queensland Government agencies collect, store, use and disclose personal information. The *Public Records Act 2023* ensures public records are made, managed, kept and, if appropriate, preserved in a useable form for the benefit of present and future generations, with public access under the Act consistent with the principles of the *Right to Information Act 2009* and *Information Privacy Act 2009*.

Social media posts are public records and should be hidden where inappropriate or irrelevant, not deleted. Posts on social media containing election material must comply with the *Local Government Electoral Act 2011* if posted during an election period, regardless of whether they are posted on a personal or official social media platform.

## **PRIVACY, CONFIDENTIALITY, AND INFORMATION SECURITY**

Employees should only use personal information obtained in the course of their employment or engagement with Council in a manner consistent with the Diamantina Shire Council Code of Conduct and the *Information Privacy Act 2009*.

Employees must not publish or report on conversations or information that is deemed confidential or classified or deals with matters that are internal in nature.

## **USE OF PHOTOGRAPHS**

### **Photographs taken by Council**

Council respects the privacy of individuals and is committed to ensuring that any images published to our social media platforms comply with requirements of the *Information Privacy Act 2009*.

Council will provide a 'collection notice' before or during any community event advising that photos may be taken during an event and used on Council's website or social media platforms. The collection notice may be displayed on Council's website (with promotional material for the event), on the program agenda, on registration forms or on a sign placed in a visible location at the event itself. The collection notice is intended to make the public generally aware that they may be photographed during an event and that these photos may be published to Council's social media platforms.

Where individuals or groups are photographed face on, where practical, they will be verbally asked to provide permission to be photographed, and to allow Council to use and publish the image/s.

Council will not publish any image of a person where that person has expressly asked for their photograph not to be published. Likewise in instances where a person makes a request to have an image of them or their child or ward removed from Council's social media sites, Council will do so immediately.

### **Photographs Supplied to Council**

Where a photograph is supplied to Council from a third party, Council will endeavour to ensure that written permission has been granted for the photo to be provided to Council and published to Council's website or social media platforms.

Photos submitted to Council for photograph competitions are subject to the terms and conditions of those competitions.

### **Photographs as Part of Paid Campaigns or at Private Events**

Where individuals or groups are photographed as part of a paid campaign, for commercial purposes or at private events, they will be asked to sign a written consent form providing permission to be photographed and to allow Council to use and publish the image/s.

## **COPYRIGHT**

Social Media Administrators will respect copyright laws and attribute work to the original author/source wherever possible.

## **ONLINE CONDUCT OF COUNCIL OFFICIALS**

Online activities of Council Officials, including social media posts and comments, are subject to conditions of any relevant Code of Conduct, Council Policy, or Operational Standard. Abusive, harassing, threatening or defamatory postings are in breach of Council's behavioural expectations and may result in disciplinary action being taken.

Workplace bullying and harassment includes any bullying or harassing comments employees make online, including on their own private social networks and when out of office hours.

## **BREACH OF POLICY**

Any breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action under Council's Code of Conduct or relevant industrial instruments. This includes inappropriate use of Council social media accounts, posting unauthorised content, or engaging in conduct that damages Council's reputation.

## **DEFAMATION**

Refrain from posting material that may cause damage to another person, organisation, association, or company's reputation and seek further guidance from the Marketing Officer if publication of such material is thought to be necessary.

## DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
Staff	Full time, Casual, Part Time and Contractors
<b>Social Media</b>	<p>Digital communication services where people may comment, contribute, create posts, upload, and share content including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blogs and micro blogging sites (including, but not limited to, Threads, X)</li> <li>• Social Networking sites (including, but not limited to, Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace)</li> <li>• Instant messaging facilities (including, but not limited to, Snapchat, Whatsapp)</li> <li>• Video and photo sharing sites (including, but not limited to, YouTube, Instagram)</li> <li>• Forums and discussion boards (including, but not limited to, Reddit, Yahoo Answers)</li> <li>• User moderated web content (including, but not limited to, Wikipedia, TripAdvisor, Yelp)</li> </ul>
<b>Page</b>	An account held by organisations on a Social Media service as defined above
<b>Profile</b>	An account held by an individual on a Social Media service as defined above
<b>Administrator</b>	One or more Staff with delegated responsibility for monitoring social media activity and maintaining the integrity of content
<b>Post</b>	An individual piece of content hosted on a Profile or Page as defined above
<b>Communication</b>	Includes all forms of communication to both the media and public, for example, but not limited to, interviews, press statements, emails, facsimiles, letters, phone calls, tweets, etc.
<b>Council Business</b>	Includes any matter that has been, or is being, considered by Council as having appeared in Council's business papers or can be reasonably expected to appear in Council's business papers. This includes the time between when a decision of Council is made and when the resolution is communicated to stakeholders via 'Official Correspondence'.
<b>Personal Statement</b>	A statement made which is made from the perspective of the individual, as a Councillor.
<b>Editorial and/or Public Comment</b>	Statements, written or verbal, expressing privately held opinions relating to Council business, made by journalists or members of the public.
<b>Misinformation</b>	Information that is, whether intentionally or unintentionally, incorrect or misleading.

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

<b>Legislation</b>	<i>Local Government Act 2009</i> <i>Public Records Act 2023</i> <i>Information Privacy Act 2009</i> <i>Local Government Electoral Act 2011</i> <i>Right to Information Act 2009</i>
<b>Council Policies</b>	Code of Conduct Risk Management Policy Workplace Bullying Policy Information Technology Policy Records Management Policy
<b>Supporting Documents</b>	Social Media Procedure
<b>Council Forms</b>	Media Consent Form

**VERSION CONTROL**

<b>Version</b>	<b>Adopted</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>eDRMS #</b>
1	31 May 2024	2024.05.31-OM-22	
2	17 Nov 2024	CNL/25/272	329752