



DATE ADOPTED: 28 OCTOBER 2014

VERSION: 1.0

POLICY OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Establish the purpose of Council's involvement with social media.
- Outline the management and use of social media for Council.
- Provide for the inclusion of social media as a tool in the delivery of Council's services and activities.

POLICY SCOPE

This policy applies to councillors, the general manager and staff as it pertains to Council's managed social media presence and the representation of Council on social media.

POLICY STATEMENT

Maitland City Council is committed to connecting with the community. Social media represents the fastest growing of all communications platforms and has fundamentally changed the dynamics of communication from largely one way, to both two way and multiple contributor exchanges. It provides the opportunity to communicate and engage in real time. Council will proactively pursue social media opportunities to connect in a genuine way with both the community and a broader audience.

1. Council's involvement in social media

There is a large range of social media platforms available on which Council could have a presence, however, to ensure it is achieving best value from its social media efforts the focus will be on platforms that have the greatest reach for targeted audiences.

Social media allows Council to be open and engaging, transparent and accountable and to provide better and faster service and communication.

Maitland City Council will use social media to:

- assist in efficient and effective service delivery.
- Promote, inform and educate the community on policies, projects, services and activities of Council.
- develop stronger relationships with the community.
- provide an informal, timely and accessible way for the public to communicate with Council.
- support traditional media by broadening its reach and supporting key messages.
- seek input into Council's decision making.
- provide essential updates to the community during a crisis or emergency.

2. Management of social media

Council will proactively resource and manage its social media presences during business hours. To assist in the management of these presences a consistent set of House Rules has been developed and detail acceptable behaviour by contributors.

Council's related existing policies will also apply in the management of social media.

Council will employ a hub and spoke model in the ongoing management of social media.

A Social Media Guide and Language and Writing Style Guide, delegations and training have been developed to aid consistency of communications.

Staff access, authority and delegation

Council will, within the capacity of IT infrastructure, proactively provide access to social media for staff to enable them to remain abreast of content as it pertains to their role. Staff representing Council on social media are required to have the appropriate authority and delegations in accordance with Council's delegations register.

Personal use of social media

Council recognises that staff may wish to use social media in a personal capacity. The general manager and staff are personally responsible for content they publish on any form of social media. They should take measures to ensure their personal comments cannot be mistaken for the official view of Council, impact Council's reputation, offer views on councillors or other staff members or affect the staff member performing their role within Council.

Councillors

Councillors engage with the citizens of Maitland through various forums including social media. Councillors have the responsibility to ensure that their use of social media is appropriate. This includes:

- Making it clear they are expressing their personal opinion and not purporting to represent the position of Council.
- Not using Council presences as a forum for political debate or making comments that impact Council's reputation.
- Actively sharing Council posts for the purposes of promoting initiatives and projects rather than releasing the information independently before Council has distributed through official channels.

Posting

Content on Council's social media presences will, where appropriate:

- Be available on Council's websites
- Include links directing users back to the corporate website for in depth information, documents, forms or online services necessary to conduct business with Maitland City Council.

Council may decide to post to third party presences for information, promotion or service delivery activity or to provide factual clarification in response to third party information as it pertains to Council.

Responding

Not all posts on Council's social media presences are a direct enquiry to Council or seeking a response. If a response is required it does not necessarily need to be an answer to a question, or a resolution of a problem. Where a response is required, posts will be acknowledged advising that Council is working to respond.

Where a response is required enquiries will receive an acknowledgement within one business day.

Complaints will be managed in accordance with Council's Complaint Management Policy and will not be accepted via social media.



Moderation of information

Maitland City Council will not tolerate content that is offensive, obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, bullying, discriminatory, hateful, racist, sexist, infringes copyright, constitutes a contempt of court, breaches a court suppression order or is otherwise unlawful. Such content will be removed.

Posts that make specific mention of confidential material about Council or individuals or mention staff by name on Council's social media presences will be removed.

Council has developed and published consistent House Rules on each of its social media presences that outline the rules of engagement for users.

Consideration in decision making

When using social media to actively seek feedback for formal decision making through Council's social media presences, comments received will be considered as valid and will be presented in their entirety.

Recording of information

Council will collect, retain and dispose of social media content in line with the State Records Act 1998 and Council's Records Management Policy.

3. Social media as a communication tool

Whilst a powerful tool, social media should not be used in isolation. Therefore at Maitland City Council social media will be used within the framework of one or more of the following:

- a communications strategy or plan.
- a media strategy or plan.
- a marketing or promotional plan.
- a community engagement / consultation strategy or plan.
- an attraction and engagement strategy or plan.

POLICY DEFINITIONS

Business hours:	Monday to Thursday 8.30am – 5.00pm and Friday 8.30am – 4.30pm excluding public holidays and the period between Christmas Day and New Year's Day inclusive.
Council presences:	Official Council social media accounts that are managed or auspiced by staff of Council.
House rules:	The guide set of principles outlining acceptable participation on Council's social media presences. These are available on each presence.
Official channels:	Council issued media releases and updates on Council's social media presences.
Social media:	Online platforms that facilitate social networking, discussion and information sharing between and amongst people and organisations.
Staff:	Includes all Council employees, volunteers and contractors.



POLICY ADMINISTRATION

BUSINESS GROUP:	Planning Environment and Lifestyle
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	Manager, Marketing and Communications
COUNCIL REFERENCE:	Ordinary Council Meeting 28 October 2014 – Item 10.4
POLICY REVIEW DATE:	Three (3) years from date of adoption
FILE NUMBER:	111/13
RELEVANT LEGISLATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW Local Government Act 1993 • NSW Defamation Act 2005 • Privacy Act 1988 • Government Information Public Access Act 2009 • NSW Privacy and Personal Information Act 1998 • NSW State Records Act 1998
RELATED POLICIES / PROCEDURES / PROTOCOLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Code of Conduct • Complaints Management Policy • Privacy Management Plan • Unreasonable complainant conduct Policy • Provision of information and interaction between councillors and staff Policy • Internet and email use Policy • Right to information Policy • Records Management Policy • Work Health and Safety Policy • Equity, Diversity & Respect Policy • Community Engagement Strategy • Compliments and Complaints Management Protocol • Violent, aggressive and threatening behaviour procedure • Social Media Guide • Media Policy • Media Guide • Language and Writing Style Guide



POLICY HISTORY

VERSION	DATE APPROVED	DESCRIPTION OF CHANGES
1.0	28 October 2014	New policy adopted

