

# MITCHELL SHIRE COUNCIL



## COMMUNICATIONS AND IMPROVEMENT

### SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

ISSUE	DATE	CHANGE	APPROVED	REVIEW
A	20 February 2013	Initial Issue	Manager Economic Development, Marketing and Communications	November 2014
B	28 October 2014	Update	Manager Business Transformation	October 2015
C	23 December 2014	Inclusion of responsibilities	Digital Strategist	October 2015
D	19 March 2015	Update of Document	Digital Strategist	October 2015

**Produced by  
Communications and Improvement for**

**MITCHELL SHIRE COUNCIL**



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

STATEMENT .....	4
1 PURPOSE .....	4
2 APPLICATION .....	4
3 SOCIAL MEDIA ACCESS PROTOCOL .....	5
4 REPORTING .....	6
5 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES .....	7
6 DEFINITIONS .....	9
7 REFERENCES .....	10
8 EXECUTION.....	11
8.1 PROHIBITED BEHAVIOUR AND ACTIONS.....	11
8.2 STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS.....	12
8.2.1 Authorisation.....	12
8.2.2 Expertise.....	13
8.2.3 Disclosure.....	13
8.2.4 Accuracy.....	13
8.2.5 Identity .....	13
8.2.6 Opinion .....	13
8.2.7 Privacy.....	13
8.2.8 Intellectual Property.....	14
8.2.9 Defamation .....	14
8.2.10 Reward.....	14
8.2.11 Transparency .....	14
8.2.12 Political bias .....	14
8.2.13 Respect .....	14
8.2.14 Discrimination.....	14
8.2.15 Language .....	14
8.2.16 State of Mind .....	14
8.2.17 Be safe .....	14
8.2.18 Media .....	15
8.2.19 Addition, Modification and Moderation .....	15
8.2.20 Access.....	15
8.2.21 Be timely in your response .....	15
9 APPENDIX .....	15
10 AUTHORISATION .....	16

# STATEMENT

Mitchell Shire Council continues to seek ways of improving customer engagement in its services and initiatives. Social Media is an essential communication channel through which Council can connect with its communities.

## 1 PURPOSE

Mitchell Shire Council recognises that social media provides opportunities for dynamic and interactive two-way communications. This has the potential to complement existing communication methods and further improve information, access and the delivery of key services if managed correctly.

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

## 2 APPLICATION

This policy applies to all Councillors, employees, contractors, agents and volunteers of Mitchell Shire Council who purport to use social media on its behalf. This policy will also apply to agencies and individuals who provide services to Mitchell Shire Council, and will be included in all relevant external supplier contracts.

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:

- Outline the appropriate use of social media tools.
- Promote effective and productive community engagement through social media.
- Minimise miscommunication or mischievous communications.
- Help Mitchell Shire Council manage the inherent challenges of speed and immediacy.

The policy applies to those digital spaces where people may comment, contribute, create, forward, post, upload and share content, including but not limited to:

- Blogs.
- Bulletin boards.
- Citizen journalism and news sites.
- Forums and discussion boards.
- Instant messaging facilities.
- Microblogging sites (e.g. Twitter).
- Online encyclopaedias (e.g. Wikipedia).
- Podcasts.
- Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn,).
- Video and photo sharing sites (e.g. YouTube, Vimeo).
- Video podcasts.
- Wikis.

- Any other websites that allow individuals to use simple publishing, communication tools or new technologies emerging from the digital environment.

As it is not possible to expressly refer to or list all 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 Mitchell Shire Council; and
- No reference is made to Mitchell Shire Council, its Councillors, staff, policies and services, suppliers or other stakeholders or Council related issues.

Check with your manager for guidance on acceptable use of social media during work hours. This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies and procedures of Mitchell Shire Council.

### **3 SOCIAL MEDIA ACCESS PROTOCOL**

Mitchell Shire Council's primary social media platforms include (but are not limited to):

- Mitchell Shire Council Facebook Page
- Mitchell Shire Council Twitter Account
- Mitchell Shire Council Fire Information Facebook Page

Approved secondary pages run by independent departments include:

- Animals of Mitchell Shire Council
- Mitchell Youth Services (and associated grant pages)
- Mitchell Library Service
- Mitchell Shire Leisure Services

Access to all Mitchell Shire Council related Facebook pages will be granted to Facebook accounts connected with the Mitchell Shire email address only. Personal accounts will not be granted access to Shire owned social platforms.

There are two states by which access to Mitchell Shire Council social media primary platforms will be determined.

#### **Standard practice**

In normal operation, the permissions of Mitchell Shire Council's primary social media platforms will be restricted to the Communications and Improvement (C&I) team/ Primary ownership of content development, curatorship and strategy is with the Digital Strategist.

Should additional support be required, trained C & I staff are able to assist with posting and editing social content.

Levels of access will be granted as follows:

Admin Access: Manager Business Transformation, Digital Strategist

Editor Access: All C & I staff

## 4 REPORTING

To measure the success of our social media initiatives, we will report to the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) every quarter using the following performance indicators:

Objective	Performance indicators
<p>To better understand the community's activity and metrics as the Mitchell Shire Council social platforms evolve</p>	<p>Twitter - Tweets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement</li> <li>• Link Clicks (including average per day)</li> <li>• Retweets (including average per day)</li> <li>• Favourites (including average per day)</li> </ul> <p>Twitter – Followers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary of followers</li> <li>• Interests (top 3)</li> <li>• Location breakdown</li> <li>• Gender breakdown</li> <li>• Cities breakdown</li> </ul> <p>Facebook – Insights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Page Likes</li> <li>• Where Likes Happened</li> <li>• Page Reach (total, Organic and Paid)</li> <li>• Likes Comments Shares</li> <li>• Visits – External References</li> <li>• Posts – List successful posts</li> <li>• People – The people who like your page graph</li> <li>• City/Location of audience</li> </ul> <p>YouTube</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current Subscribers</li> </ul>

## 5 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Role	Responsibilities
Staff, Contractors and Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In an instance where a Facebook Event on the primary Mitchell Shire Council Facebook page is not appropriate, a Facebook page dedicated to an event or conference may be developed. The application process is as follows:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek initial advice from the C&amp;I team / Digital Strategist about whether the use of social media is appropriate for particular business issue.</li> <li>• Make a formal request to your manager or director.</li> <li>• Complete an <b>Application for Social Media Platform</b> for final approval with the Digital Strategist.</li> <li>• Develop a content strategy with the C&amp;I team to support business strategies.</li> <li>• Develop templates and appropriate branding with the C&amp;I team</li> <li>• C&amp;I team will register your platform and retain admin access and a security log of passwords and logins.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Seek training and development for using social media.</li> <li>• Read, understand and comply with the provisions in this policy and associated guidelines.</li> <li>• Support the maintenance and recording of passwords, email addresses, comments, 'friends', followers. Send printed copies or electronic 'screen grabs' to the C&amp;I team when using externally hosted sites.</li> <li>• Seek advice from the C&amp;I team if unsure about applying the provisions of this policy.</li> <li>• Ensure contractors are provided with a copy of this policy.</li> <li>• Familiarise yourself with the End User Licence Agreements of any external social media tools being used.</li> </ul>
Department Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approve business initiatives, programs and strategies that incorporate the use of social media.</li> <li>• Ensure all social media best practices are adhered to.</li> <li>• Ensure staff consult the C&amp;I team on any planned use of social media.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure contractors are provided with a copy of the Social Media Policy.</li> <li>• Offer training for staff using social media.</li> <li>• Advise IT of approval to access social media for business purposes.</li> </ul>
IT Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate secure access to support delivery of Council business via social media.</li> <li>• Regularly back up and archive internally hosted social media sites.</li> </ul>
Communications & Improvement team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authorise and advise on the use of and strategies for social media.</li> <li>• Provide advice and assist with the development of communication plans using social media.</li> <li>• Arrange for the establishment of all social media platforms, including developing the initial associated collateral (profile images, header images, background images etc.) to ensure the project, initiative or program has consistent branding.</li> <li>• Educate Councillors, staff and contractors about this policy and their responsibilities when using social media.</li> <li>• Advise on appropriate precautions e.g. disclaimers.</li> <li>• Maintain a register of social media being used for conducting Council business including records of the business case for using social media, its strategic imperative, the intended administrator, URL, login, password and audience.</li> <li>• Provide quarterly reports on social media performance.</li> <li>• Assist staff to retain records explaining the context or purpose of social media, and a sample of posts where it is impractical to retain large volumes of screen grabs.</li> <li>• Monitor social media accounts/tools/sites registered for conducting Council business.</li> <li>• Monitor social media for references to Mitchell Shire Council.</li> <li>• Seek legal advice as appropriate where an issue is likely to be contentious or may create legal risk for Council.</li> <li>• Conduct regular monthly Security, Design and Functionality checks.</li> </ul>

All content published or communicated by or on behalf of Mitchell Shire Council using social media must be recorded (including the author's name, date, time and

media site location), and kept on record by the Department responsible for the creation of the social media pages in accordance with Council's Records Procedure.

Mitchell Shire Council actively monitors social media for relevant contributions that impact on the municipality, its operations and reputation. Mitchell Shire 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 of Mitchell Shire Council, its contractors and official volunteers.

Breaching this policy may result in disciplinary action being taken up to and including the termination of employment.

Mitchell Shire Council reserves the right to remove, where possible, content that violates this policy or any associated policies.

## 6 DEFINITIONS

<b>Social Media</b>	Forms of electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content including video.
<b>Blogs</b>	A website that contains an online personal journal with reflections, comments, and often links to further reading provided by the writer; also: the contents of such a site. Blog = Verb. Blogger = noun (writer)
<b>Bulletin Boards</b>	A public electronic forum that allows users to post or read messages, post or download files that are accessed online via communication devices such as iPads, smart phones or laptops etc. over a network connection.
<b>Citizen Journalism and News Sites</b>	Also known as public, participatory, democratic, guerrilla or street journalism. Public citizens, non-professional journalists, playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analysing and disseminating news and information without accreditation.
<b>Forums and Discussion Boards</b>	Online discussion site where people can hold conversations in the form of posted messages.
<b>Instant Messaging Facilities</b>	Online communication that offers an instantaneous transmission of text based messages from sender to receiver.

<b>Microblogging Sites</b>	Microblog sites allow users to exchange small elements of content, such as short sentences, individual images, or video links (Twitter, Tumbler)
<b>Online encyclopaedias</b>	Encyclopaedia accessible via the World Wide Web.
<b>Podcasts</b>	Digital media consisting of an episodic series of audio, video, PDF or ePub files subscribed to and downloaded through web syndication or streamed online to a computer or mobile device.
<b>Social Networking Sites</b>	An online service, platform or site that focuses on facilitating the building of social networks or social relations among people who share interests, activities, backgrounds or real-life connections.
<b>Video and Photo Sharing Sites</b>	An online site used for the publishing or transfer of a user's digital photos online, thus enabling the user to share them with others both publicly and privately.
<b>Video Podcasts</b>	Video clips or web television media distributed through, subscribed to, and downloaded via web syndication or streamed online to a computer or mobile device.
<b>Wikis</b>	A website which allows its users to add, modify or delete its content via a web browser, usually using a simplified mark-up language or a rich-text editor.

## 7 REFERENCES

This section is used to define any references used to create the documents i.e.: Australian Standards and legislation.

Councillors and Staff of Mitchell Shire Council are expected to demonstrate standards of conduct and behaviour that are consistent with relevant legislation, regulations and policies. Council policies and guideline provisions which must be adhered to in relation to the use of social media include the following:

- Mitchell Shire Council acceptable use policies for email, internet, digital equipment, electronic communications.
- Mitchell Shire Council Code of Conduct.
- Mitchell Shire Council Harassment and Bullying Policy.
- Mitchell Shire Council Information Technology Policy.
- Mitchell Shire Council Communications Policy.
- Mitchell Shire Council Internet and Email Policy.
- Mitchell Shire Council Community Engagement Policy.

Provisions of the following Acts apply to this policy:

- *Copyright Act 1968* (Cth).
- *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic).
- *Defamation Act 2005* (Vic).
- *Fair Trading Act 1999* (Vic).
- *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth).
- *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Vic).
- *Local Government Act 1989* (Vic).
- *Equal Opportunity Act 2010* (Vic).
- *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986* (Cth).
- *Information Privacy Act 2000* (Vic).
- *Spam Act 2003* (Cth).
- *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth).
- *Public Records Act 1973* (Vic).
- *Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001* (Vic).
- *Wrongs Act 1958* (Vic).

## **8 EXECUTION**

When using social media, Councillors, Council staff, contractors employed by Mitchell Shire Council and official volunteers are expected to:

- a. Seek prior authorisation from their Director and notify Council's C & I team of the page or group pages being set up or used.
- b. Adhere to Mitchell Shire Council codes of conduct, policies and procedures.
- c. Behave with caution, courtesy, honesty and respect.
- d. Comply with relevant laws and regulations.
- e. Reinforce the integrity, reputation and values of Mitchell Shire Council.

### **8.1 PROHIBITED BEHAVIOUR AND ACTIONS**

When using social media, Council staff, contractors and volunteers must not, under any circumstances engage, participate in or contribute to the following:

- a. Abusive, profane or sexual language.
- b. Content not relating to the subject matter of that blog, board, forum or site.
- c. Content that is false or misleading.
- d. Confidential information about Council or third parties.
- e. Unauthorised use of Copyright or Trademark protected materials, including photos.
- f. Discriminatory material in relation to a person or group based on age, colour, creed, disability, family status, gender, nationality, marital status, parental status, political opinion/affiliation, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, race or social origin, religious beliefs/activity, responsibilities, sex or sexual orientation.
- g. Illegal material or materials designed to encourage law breaking.

- h. Materials that could compromise Council, employee or system safety.
- i. Materials which would breach applicable laws (defamation, privacy, trade practices, financial rules and regulations, fair use, trademarks).
- j. Material that would offend contemporary standards of taste and decency.
- k. Material which would bring the Council into disrepute.
- l. Personal details or references to Councillors, Council Staff or third parties, which may breach privacy laws.
- m. Spam, meaning the distribution of unsolicited bulk electronic messages.
- n. Statements which may be considered to be bullying or harassment.
- o. Communicating in private messages outside of approved messaging.
- p. Providing un-verified information on Council's behalf.
- q. Accidentally commenting on personal timelines or matters via a Mitchell Shire Council owned platform.
- r. Liking or connecting with un-related pages, groups, causes or individuals.
- s. Negatively publically commenting on Mitchell Shire Council matters either using staff's own personal social media account or owned platforms.

The same limitations and guides apply to social media as they do to publication media.

Any content published on Facebook, Twitter, Vimeo, YouTube or otherwise is representative of the Council's message in the public domain. Any misleading, disruptive, negative or opinionated messaging, including the restricted actions above, are not to be shared via Council's Facebook or other social media account.

Where individuals have abused their access to social media platforms, Council will review the severity and may pursue disciplinary action.

In the event that staff, contractors and official volunteers encounter such material, they must immediately notify the C&I Coordinator.

If you have any doubt about applying the provisions of this policy, check with the C&I team and/or Manager Business Transformation before using social media to communicate. Depending upon the nature of the issue and potential risk, it may also be appropriate to consider seeking legal advice.

## **8.2 STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS**

### **8.2.1 Authorisation**

Ensure appropriate authorisation protocols are adhered to at all times, prior to using social media.

Appropriate accesses are outlined in times of standard practice and states of Emergency. Please refer to the **Social Media Access Protocol Guide**.

This includes, but is not limited to, uploading content and acting as a spokesperson on behalf of Council, granting others access and permissions to the page, advertising or promotion posts

### **8.2.2 Expertise**

Do not comment outside your area of expertise. Do not commit Council to actions or undertakings.

Refer always to the resources provided in support of Social Media Governance.

### **8.2.3 Disclosure**

Only discuss publicly available information. Do not disclose confidential information, internal discussions or decisions of Council, employees or third parties. This includes publishing confidential, personal or private information where there is sufficient detail for potential identification of Councillors, Council staff or third parties.

### **8.2.4 Accuracy**

Be accurate, constructive, helpful and informative. Correct any errors as soon as practicable. Do not publish information or make statements which you know to be false or may reasonably be taken to be misleading or deceptive.

Ensure any responses requiring internal or external advice are verified and approved before commenting using the appropriate **Tone of Voice Guide**.

### **8.2.5 Identity**

Be clear about professional identity or any vested interests. Do not use fictitious names or identities that deliberately intend to deceive, mislead or lie. Do not participate anonymously or covertly via a third party or agency.

### **8.2.6 Opinion**

Clearly separate personal opinions from professional ones and be mindful of Council's Code of Conduct when discussing or commenting on Council matters. In general, don't express personal opinions using Council hash tags or other identifications.

Only where this is not possible, consider using a formal disclaimer to separate official Council positions from personal opinions and distance Council from comments made by public and other outside interests.

### **8.2.7 Privacy**

Be sensitive to the privacy of others. Seek permission from anyone who appears in any photographs, video or other footage before sharing these via any form of social media. If asked to remove materials do so as soon as practicable.

### **8.2.8 Intellectual Property**

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.

Also, seek permission before publishing or uploading material in which the intellectual property rights, such as Trademarks, are owned by a third party e.g. company logos. Seek permission from the website's owner wherever possible before linking to another site (including a social media application).

### **8.2.9 Defamation**

Do not comment, contribute, create, forward, post, upload or share content that is malicious or defamatory. This includes statements which may negatively impact the reputation of another.

### **8.2.10 Reward**

Do not publish content in exchange for reward of any kind.

### **8.2.11 Transparency**

Do not seek to buy or recompense favourable social media commentary. Encourage online publishers to be open and transparent in how they engage with, or review Council personnel, services or wares.

### **8.2.12 Political bias**

Do not endorse any political affinity or allegiance.

### **8.2.13 Respect**

Always be courteous, patient and respectful of others' opinions, including detractors.

### **8.2.14 Discrimination**

Be mindful of anti-discrimination laws and do not publish statements or information which may be discriminatory.

### **8.2.15 Language**

Be mindful of language and expression. Please refer to the **Tone of Voice guide**.

### **8.2.16 State of Mind**

Do not use social media when inebriated, irritated, upset or tired.

### **8.2.17 Be safe**

Protect your personal privacy and guard against identity theft.

### **8.2.18 Media**

Do not issue statements or make announcements through social media channels unless authorised. Do not respond directly if approached by media for comment through social media. Refer the inquiry to the C & I team as per Council's Communications Policy.

### **8.2.19 Addition, Modification and Moderation**

The creation of all social media platforms, for all departments, activities or projects, should be approved by the Digital Strategist, to ensure the platform is correctly utilised, exhibits the correct permissions and is governed with a consistent practice in-line with all other social platforms and an approved Mitchell Shire Council voice.

Request an **Application for Social Media Platform** from the Digital Strategist.

All social platforms should keep up to date records of the current logins and passwords on a **Record of Social Logins** owned by the Digital Strategist.

### **8.2.20 Access**

Be mindful of the requisite government web standards for accessibility. Information made available via non-compliant platforms should be made accessible in another form where practical.

When making links back to the Mitchell Shire Website, approved government agencies and official authoritative websites, ensure appropriate and approved #hashtags or @Tags are used.

### **8.2.21 Be timely in your response**

Refer to all the **Social Media Guidelines and Policy Documents** and respond in a timely and professional manner. It is expected that each platform is inspected at least twice every work day.

For matters that require investigation or advice, respond with an acknowledgement and indicate that the issue is being followed up. Make it easy for audiences to reach Council via other methods by publishing Council's phone number, generic email, Facebook and Twitter accounts.

## **9 APPENDICES**

Due to the dynamic nature of Social Media and its associated platforms, regular training will be provided to Councillors, staff, Contractors employed by Mitchell Shire Council and official volunteers.

## **10 AUTHORISATION**

This policy has been endorsed and approved for use at Mitchell Shire Council by the Chief Executive Officer.