

Policy: SOCIAL MEDIA

CR-POL-7

Service: Media & Communications

Responsible Officer: Media & Communications Officer

1. INTRODUCTION

To provide a framework and guidelines in respect to the expectations of Council Officials when engaging in social media in both an official and personal capacity.

2. POLICY OBJECTIVE

Information technology has changed the way in which people communicate and share information. Social media represents opportunities to increase engagement with residents, listen more and directly harness local opinions.

Social media can:

- a) Increase resident's access to Council
- b) Increase Council's access to residents and improve the accessibility of Council communication
- c) Allow Council to be more active in its relationships with residents, partners and other stakeholders
- d) Increase the level of trust in Council
- e) Reach targeted audiences on specific issues, events and programs
- f) Provide effective, fast communication channels during crises
- g) Provide insights into how Council is perceived

3. POLICY SCOPE

This Policy applies to all Council Officials, which includes Councillors, staff (permanent, temporary or casual), volunteers, contractors, administrators, council committee members, conduct reviewers and delegates of council.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

4.1. Guiding Principals

Document No: CR-POL-7	Created/Revised:13/07/2017	Review date: Sept 2020
Version No: 2	Author: Media & Communications Officer	Doc Type: 30
File Name: CR-POL-7 Social Media Policy	Approved By: Council Meeting 26 July 2017	

Yass Valley Council uses approved social media pages to:

- a) Develop stronger relationships with community members
- b) Provide an informal and accessible way for the public to communicate with Council
- c) Support traditional media by broadening its reach and scope
- d) Promote selected services, events, projects, policies and activities
- e) Expand Council's community engagement opportunities
- f) Provide essential updates to the community during a crises or emergency
- g) Respond or clarify an issue in detail
- h) Protect Council's reputation by monitoring social media activity that relates to Council
- i) Enhance Council's reputation

4.2. Content

To ensure accurate distribution of Council information it is requested that Council Officials only share information;

- a) That is publicly available on Yass Valley Council's website or social media channels.
- b) In adopted policies.
- c) Resolutions of Council.

If Council Officials become aware that there is an information gap they are to notify the Media & Communication Officer immediately so that accurate information is sourced and made available as soon as possible.

4.3. Application

This policy applies to all Council Officials that make use of social media:

- a) In a work related capacity.
- b) When reference is made on behalf of Council or representing Council, or
- c) In a personal capacity where the Council Official chooses to make references to Yass Valley Council, its people, customers or business related individuals or organisations.

This policy does not apply to personal use of social media when no reference or inference is made to Council related issues.

When using social media in an official capacity on behalf of Council, Council Officials must:

- maintain the high standard of professionalism expected of all employees;
- never engage in behaviour that is harassing, bullying, illegal or in breach of Council's Code of Conduct whether using an official or private social media account;
- represent Council professionally when publishing content in an official capacity; and

Document No: CR-POL-7	Created/Revised: 13/07/2017	Review date: Sept 2020
Version No: 2	Author: Media & Communications Officer	Doc Type: 30
File Name: CR-POL-7 Social Media Policy	Approved By: Council Meeting 26 July 2017	

- under no circumstances disclose information or make commitments on behalf of Council unless authorised to do so.

Council Officials who are residents, ratepayers or customers of Council services are not precluded from participating in community debate about an issue that personally affects them. However, they must make it clear that they are commenting as a resident/ratepayer, not as a Council Official. It is important that Council Officials do not provide personal comments that can be misconstrued by readers as representing an official Council position.

Any comments made in regard to Council, or Council operations, where the confidential information was acquired through your position as a Council Official, should never be shared in a public forum.

Council Officials who administer their own personal social media accounts are welcome to do so, provided that their application is in line with this policy and Yass Valley Council's Code of Conduct.

4.4. Yass Valley Council's official social media platforms

Facebook:

- Yass Valley Council
- Yass Caravan Park
- Yass Valley Library
- Yass Valley Animal Shelter
- Yass Valley Home Living Support Service
- Visit Yass Valley
- Country Roads Safety
- Yass Valley Youth Council (closed group)
- Yass Animal Officer (profile)
- Gill Yvc Comms (profile)
- Yass Valley Tourism Industry (closed group)
- Matt Yvc Trainee (profile)

Twitter:

- YVC Mayor
- Visit Yass Valley

LinkedIn:

- Yass Valley Council

Google+

Document No: CR-POL-7	Created/Revised:13/07/2017	Review date: Sept 2020
Version No: 2	Author: Media & Communications Officer	Doc Type: 30
File Name: CR-POL-7 Social Media Policy	Approved By: Council Meeting 26 July 2017	

- Yass Valley Visitor Information Centre

YouTube

- Yass Valley Visitor Information Centre

Instagram

- Visit Yass Valley

The creation of additional social media accounts must first seek approval from the General Manager.

4.5. Conduct

The conduct of Council Officials in their professional capacity, when at work or when using Council equipment, must always comply with Council policies and procedures, including Council's Code of Conduct.

Any comments and contributions made by Council Officials when posting in a private capacity also fall under this Council policy, including the Code of Conduct, where those comments are made about Yass Valley Council, its services, its people, its Councillors and/or other business related individuals or organisations.

Inappropriate comments, cyber bullying, harassment or intimidation of other Council employees, contractors, customers or providers may subject a Council Official to disciplinary action.

4.6. Legal Responsibilities

Information added to Social Media sites by Council Officials must comply with the provisions of the Code of Conduct, uphold confidentiality, privacy and copyright provisions and not subject Council to legal action. For example, where Council has obtained a photo from a third party it must be determined that any license associated with that agreement does not prevent the use of that photo online.

No confidential information or information that is private in nature should be transmitted or stored online as a result of the use of Social Media sites. Council Officials must ensure that permission has been obtained before transferring any information to a social media site that may be considered private, for example, photographs of minors or information about ratepayers.

4.7. Dealing with Offensive Behaviour

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

Pages are monitored and such content will be moderated and may be removed and users who breach Council's Social Media Policy may be banned from accessing Council's social media pages.

Document No: CR-POL-7	Created/Revised: 13/07/2017	Review date: Sept 2020
Version No: 2	Author: Media & Communications Officer	Doc Type: 30
File Name: CR-POL-7 Social Media Policy	Approved By: Council Meeting 26 July 2017	

Council also reserves the right to moderate content from individuals who seek to monopolise and dominate Council's social media pages for their own purposes.

4.8. Record Keeping

Records in all formats must be managed in accordance with legislation and Council's record keeping program. Records that are created as a result of using Social Media must be stored in Council's corporate recordkeeping system.

Council Officials who administer their own personal social media accounts need to be responsible for and use their own judgement on what should be recorded officially.

5. IMPLEMENTATION

5.1. Roles and Responsibilities

The following Council Officials are responsible for the implementation and the adherence to this policy:

- The Media & Communications Officer manages the corporate Council accounts and oversees the individual services who are authorised to manage their corporate accounts.
- The Economic Development & Tourism Manager manages the Tourism related social media platforms and is authorised to delegate responsibility to staff within that service.
- Council Officials who administer their own personal social media accounts are free to do so, provided that their application is in line with this policy and Yass Valley Council's Code of Conduct.
- Councillors can post on social media opinions/views/positions on matters relevant to Council, identifying that it is provided as their own personal opinion/view/position, and not the official opinion/view/position of Council, unless delegated by the Mayor as spokesperson.
- If an official statement is required on social media, it will be issued by the Mayor or General Manager.
- The creation of additional, official social media accounts can only be approval from the General Manager.

5.2. Communication

This Policy will be communicated to the community and staff in accordance with Council's GOV-OP-1 Policy/Procedure Development and Review Procedure and Council's regular Business Paper process. Following adoption by Council the Policy will be made available on Council's website.

5.3. Associated Documents

The following documentation is to be read in conjunction with this policy.

- CR-POL-8 – Public Communications Policy

Document No: CR-POL-7	Created/Revised:13/07/2017	Review date: Sept 2020
Version No: 2	Author: Media & Communications Officer	Doc Type: 30
File Name: CR-POL-7 Social Media Policy	Approved By: Council Meeting	26 July 2017

- Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW

6. REVIEW

Review of this policy will incorporate relevant legislation, documentation released from relevant state agencies and best practice guidelines.

The standard review period will be every four years from the effective date.

The Media & Communications Officer is responsible for the review of this policy.

7. LEGISLATIVE AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the following:

- Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW
- CR-POL-8 – Public Communications Policy
- *Copyright Amended Act 2006*
- *Privacy Legislation Amendment Act 2006*
- *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*
- *State Records Act 1998*

Council Officials shall refrain from personal activities that would conflict with proper execution and management of Council's CR-POL-7 Social Media Policy. Council's Code of Conduct provides guidance for recognising and disclosing any conflicts of interest.

Document No: CR-POL-7	Created/Revised:13/07/2017	Review date: Sept 2020
Version No: 2	Author: Media & Communications Officer	Doc Type: 30
File Name: CR-POL-7 Social Media Policy	Approved By: Council Meeting 26 July 2017	

8. DEFINITIONS

Social Media is the use of online tools for communication, promotion and conversation – blogs, microblogs (eg Twitter), social networks (eg Facebook), podcasts and video (eg YouTube) are all types of social media.

Council Official includes Councillors, staff (permanent, temporary or casual), volunteers, contractors, administrators, council committee members, conduct reviewers and delegates of council.

9. HISTORY

<i>Minute No</i>	<i>Date of Issue</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Checked By</i>
268	26 October 2016	Written	Gill Elphinston	Council Meeting
194	26 July 2017	Adopted	Gill Elphinston	Council Meeting

Document No: CR-POL-7	Created/Revised:13/07/2017	Review date: Sept 2020
Version No: 2	Author: Media & Communications Officer	Doc Type: 30
File Name: CR-POL-7 Social Media Policy	Approved By: Council Meeting 26 July 2017	

Document No: CR-POL-7	Created/Revised:13/07/2017	Review date: Sept 2020
Version No: 2	Author: Media & Communications Officer	Doc Type: 30
File Name: CR-POL-7 Social Media Policy	Approved By: Council Meeting	26 July 2017