

Social Media Policy

Corangamite Shire

April 2021



**CORANGAMITE
SHIRE**

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Council Policy



Social Media Policy

Introduction

This policy provides guidelines for Councillors when using social media for work purposes at Corangamite Shire Council.

Purpose

Corangamite Shire recognises that social media provides opportunities for dynamic and interactive two-way communications which can complement existing communication and further improve information, access and delivery of key services.

Councillors are encouraged to use social media to engage with residents and promote Council's wide variety of initiatives and services.

The intent of this policy is to provide understanding and guidance for the appropriate use of social media by Councillors for the purpose of conducting Council business.

Scope

This policy applies to all Corangamite Shire Councillors who use social media as part of their role as a Councillor. This includes both personal social media accounts and accounts defined as a Councillor social media account.

The policy outlines requirements for compliance with confidentiality, governance, legal, privacy and regulatory parameters when using social media to conduct Council business. It will:

- Inform appropriate use of social media tools for Corangamite Shire Councillors
- Promote effective and productive community engagement through social media
- Minimise miscommunication or mischievous communications
- Help Corangamite Shire manage the inherent challenges of speed and immediacy for Councillors using social media

The policy applies to those digital spaces where people may comment, contribute, create, forward, post, upload and share content, including:

- Blogs
- Bulletin boards

- Citizen journalism and news sites
- Forums and discussion boards
- Instant messaging facilities
- Microblogging sites
- Online encyclopaedias
- Podcasts
- Social networking sites
- Video and photo sharing sites
- Video podcasts
- Wikis
- Any other websites that allow individuals to use simple publishing tools or new technologies emerging from the digital environment.

As it is not possible to expressly refer to or list 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 should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies and procedures of Corangamite Shire.

“It is considered that this policy does not adversely impact community members or employees of different genders and has been developed in accordance with the *Gender Equality Act 2020*.”

It is considered that this policy does not impact negatively on any rights identified in the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act (2006)*.

References

Corangamite Shire Councillors are expected to demonstrate standards of conduct and behaviour that are consistent with relevant legislation, regulations and policies. A list of relevant legislation which may be used as a guide is included in Annexure A. Council policies and guideline provisions which must be adhered to in relation to the use of social media include the following:

- Corangamite Shire acceptable use policies for email, internet, digital equipment, electronic communications
- Corangamite Shire Councillor Code of Conduct
- Corangamite Shire Equal Employment Opportunities Policy
- Corangamite Shire Media Relations Policy
- Corangamite Shire Information Privacy Policy
- Corangamite Shire Procurement Policy

Policy Detail

When Councillors are using social media in their role as a Councillor at Corangamite Shire they are expected to:

- Adhere to Corangamite Shire codes of conduct, policies and procedures
- Behave with caution, courtesy, honesty and respect
- Comply with relevant laws and regulations
- Reinforce the integrity, reputation and values of Corangamite Shire.

The following content is not permitted under any circumstances:

- Abusive, profane or sexual language
- Content not relating to the subject matter of that blog, board, forum or site
- Content which is false or misleading
- Confidential information about Council or third parties
- Copyright or Trademark protected materials
- 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
- Illegal material or materials designed to encourage law breaking
- Materials that could compromise Council, employee or system safety
- Materials which would breach applicable laws (defamation, privacy, trade practices, financial rules and regulations, fair use, trademarks)
- Material that would offend contemporary standards of taste and decency
- Material which would bring the Council into disrepute
- Personal details or references to Councillors, Council staff or third parties, which may breach privacy laws
- Spam, meaning the distribution of unsolicited bulk electronic messages
- Statements which may be considered to be bullying or harassment

If you have any doubt about applying the provisions of this policy, check with the Growth and Engagement Manager 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.

Expertise

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

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.

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.

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.

Opinion

Be mindful of the Councillor Code of Conduct when discussing or commenting on Council matters. In general, don't express personal opinions using Council # 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.

Privacy

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

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.

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.

Reward

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

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.

Respect

That Councillors must treat all persons with respect and have a due regard to the opinions, beliefs, rights and responsibilities of other Councillors, Council staff and other persons. Always be courteous, patient and respectful of others' opinions, including detractors.

Discrimination

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

Language

Be mindful of language and expression.

Modification and moderation

Ensure that any social media sites created or contributed to can be readily edited, improved or removed and appropriately moderated.

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.

Be responsive

Specify the type of comments and feedback that will receive a response and clearly communicate a target response time.

Personal views

If a Councillor is using a personal social media account for conducting Council business it is important to understand that any comments made via their personal account can be considered to be relating to their role as a Councillor.

Enforcement

Corangamite Shire actively monitors social media for relevant contributions that impact on the municipality, its operations and reputation. Corangamite Shire will be able to find – and act upon – contributions made by Councillors if deemed necessary.

This policy will be published and promoted to Corangamite Shire Councillors. Breaching this policy may result in disciplinary action in line with the Councillor Code of Conduct.

The Mayor/Council reserves the right to ask Councillors to remove, where possible, content that violates this policy or any associated policies.

Annexure A

Relevant legislation

- Australian Consumer Law and Fair Trading Act 2012 (Vic)
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)
- Copyright Act 1968 (Cth)
- Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)
- Defamation Act 2005 (Vic)
- Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic)
- Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)
- Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Vic)
- Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic)
- Local Government Act 2020 (Vic)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)
- Public Records Act 1973 (Vic)
- Racial and Religious Tolerance Act 2001 (Vic)
- Spam Act 2003 (Cth)
- Wrongs Act 1958 (Vic).

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