

Social Media Policy

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1. Overview

Randwick City Council is committed to engaging with our local community. We recognise that social media is part of modern life and it's appropriate that Council uses social media to communicate and engage with local residents, employees (current, past and future) visitors and business owners.

2. Definitions

Staff: A Randwick Council employee, contractor, intern.

Councillors: The current elected Mayor and Councillors of Randwick City Council.

Social media: Social media is defined in this policy as all online and digital media which allow user participation and interaction. Examples include, but are not limited to: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and Yammer. Social media also includes forums and commenting on websites such as news websites.

3. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Outline how Council will use social media;
- Provide guidelines for staff and Councillors about the personal and professional use of social media; and
- Protect and promote the interests of Council through social media.

4. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Staff and contractors using personal social media accounts.
- Councillors
- Staff and contractors authorised to administer, or contribute to Council's official social media sites;

5. Policy content

5.1. Council use of social media

Social media is used by Randwick City Council in a strategic capacity as part of communication, community engagement and customer service with the broader community.

Council uses social media as part of its communication strategy to inform the community about Council services, projects and events.

Council also uses social media to help achieve our vision of a Sense of Community by interacting with the community and celebrating Randwick City through dynamic social content.

We respect the community's right to interact with Council using the communication channels (including social) they prefer at their preferred time and we will be flexible and accommodating in how we deliver customer service and respond to requests.

In the event of an emergency, social media will become the main communication channel to inform and communicate with the community.

Authorisation to use social media on behalf of Council is by way of delegation by the General Manager.

The creation of any new Randwick Council social media accounts must be approved by the General Manager.

The following applies to authorised users of Council social media sites:

- Council staff and contractors must not express personal or political opinions when using social media for official purposes that may damage Council's reputation;
- Posts on Council's official social media channels are to be non-political in nature unless stating a resolved position of Council;
- Posts should be fair, objective and courteous, reflecting our values of integrity and respect;
- When referencing Council, posts must not contain any statement or comment that will bring Council or any of its Council officials into disrepute;
- Posts must not commit Council to any action or initiative without appropriate authority/Council resolution; and
- Content posted must have the relevant approvals where appropriate.

5.2. Staff use of social media in a personal capacity

Randwick Council staff who use social media are personally responsible for content they publish on any channel. Staff should be aware that even content posted in a personal capacity without reference to Randwick Council, can, in some instances become work-related.

Council staff are encouraged and welcome to follow Council social media channels and share our posts as a way of staying in touch with Council activities. In addition, Council's Communications Team welcomes content ideas to help keep the community informed of what we're doing at Council.

Staff using social media in a personal capacity must:

- Not publish content that may have the potential to damage the reputation of Council;
- Not make negative references to Randwick Council, other Council officials, services or any business-related individual or associated organisation;
- Take measures to ensure their personal comments cannot be mistaken for the official view of Council;
- Take measures to ensure personal comments cannot impact on the staff member performing their role within Council;
- Be aware that any social media activity between two or more staff may become a matter for Council and Council's responsibility to investigate and address;
- Not post material that is obscene, pornographic, defamatory, threatening, harassing or discriminatory to any individual, group or organisation;
- Not disclose any sensitive or confidential information obtained through employment with council;
- Ensure that any use of social media is conducted in a professional, polite and respectful manner at all times; and
- Not speak on Council's behalf (unless with express authority) when posting on other sites, making clear that any views are their own personal opinions and not those of Council.

5.3. Councillor use of social media

Randwick Council recognises that social media for Councillors is an important communication, engagement and customer service channel.

Social media provides a platform to encourage dialogue between Councillors and the community, and enable Councillors to gain insight into the community and its needs via public feedback.

Councillors should be aware that any social media activity or interaction, either official or personal, is public, often permanently available, traceable and able to be reproduced elsewhere.

Councillors should also be aware that whether they intend it or not, what they post online in a private capacity may reflect on Randwick Council and their role as a Councillor, and they should therefore behave in a way at all times that upholds the values and reputation of Council, consistent with the Code of Conduct and other policies.

Councillors are reminded that 'shares', 'likes' or 'retweets' may be viewed as an endorsement of the original post.

Councillors are responsible for the preparation, posting and management of their own content on their own social media sites.

Councillors can make personal comments on their social media platforms, but must make clear that any views are their own opinions as an individual and not those of Council. However Councillors should bear in mind that a disclaimer does not necessarily provide legal protection for comments posted on social media.

When commenting on an issue, Councillors are required to provide an accurate account of the relevant Council resolution or decision. This is ideally achieved by publishing the full Council resolution.

Councillors should be aware that they may be legally liable for their comments and the comments of others published on a Councillor's social media site and as such Councillors are encouraged to ensure prompt removal of inappropriate content from third parties.

In using social media, Councillors must not:

- Breach the privacy of other Council officials or those that deal with Council;
- Post content that is offensive, humiliating, misleading or deceptive, threatening or intimidating to other Council officials or those that deal with Council;
- Divulge confidential Council information; or
- Post content that contains allegations of suspected breaches of the Code of Conduct or information about the consideration of a matter under the Procedures.

Councillor use of social media is also governed by the Code of Conduct.

6. Breaches

Breaches of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, in line with our Code of Conduct and disciplinary policy and procedure.

7. References

Tips on social media good practice: Code of Conduct, Workplace Bullying and Harassment Policy, Privacy Act and Randwick Council educational video – Social Media MIND your step.

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