

## 1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear framework of what is an appropriate use of social media and how information for social media is coordinated and approved.

## 2 OBJECTIVE

This objectives of this policy are:

- a) To protect Council's reputation and branding through a defined policy framework.
- b) To set appropriate standards, roles and responsibilities in relation to creating and managing Council's social media sites.
- c) To clearly state what is expected from elected members and moderators when using social media.

## 3 SCOPE

This policy extends to:

- a) Elected members of the Burnie City Council
- b) Employees of the Burnie City Council who have a role in moderating social media sites on behalf of the Council.

## 4 DEFINITIONS

**Administrator** means the person authorised to oversee the creation and management of Council's social media sites. Unless otherwise stated, the Administrator will be the Communications Officer.

**Moderator** means a person who has been given permission to post on behalf of Council (or a business unit of Council) and to moderate the content on that council site. It is the responsibility of the Media and Communications Officer to act as the primary moderator for the Council.

**Moderate** means to monitor content by removing posts or responding to posts on behalf of Council (or a business unit of Council).

**Social media** is a collection of internet based tools which facilitate conversations through the construction of words, pictures, videos and audio. Social media sites are platforms such as Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube and Twitter.

**User** means a member of the general public who may communicate with any of Council's social media sites by viewing and/or posting to that site.

**Post** means to place information on a social media site.



## 5 POLICY

### 5.1 Key principles of social media use

Social media will be used by the Burnie City Council as a communication tool, appropriate to the message/s being conveyed or sought. Social media is not the driver of a communication strategy, rather it is a tool that can be used in facilitating communication depending on the specific communication need and audience.

Council information disseminated through social media will be accurate, posted only by a Council moderator and aligned with council strategies, policies and decisions.

Private information will be protected and copyright, privacy and other applicable laws will be taken into account when interacting with social media.

In developing, posting and responding to content, moderators and elected members will uphold the values of the Council by acting with honesty, integrity, courtesy and professionalism.

### 5.2 Corporate use of Social Media

#### 5.2.1 Roles and responsibilities

In relation to Burnie City Council social media sites, the following table sets out the roles and responsibilities applicable to various people connected with Council's social media sites.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	
Mayor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Should seek advice from the General Manager and/or Media and Communications Officer regarding tools available and should be communicating in their role as outlined in 27(1)(b) of the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> (ie act as spokesperson of the Council).</li><li>• Should clarify clearly when communicating that a view is their own, when not speaking on behalf of the Council.</li></ul>
General Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Should ensure responsibilities/delegations in relation to Social Media are clearly defined and act as a source of advice to the Mayor.</li><li>• Should approve the use of council branding.</li><li>• Should ensure compliance with social media provider conditions.</li><li>• Should act as the spokesperson on operational issues or issues of fact.</li><li>• Should clarify clearly when communicating that a view is their own, when not speaking on behalf of the Council.</li><li>• Legal advice.</li></ul>



## Social Media Policy

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Doc Controller: **Director Corporate and Commercial Services**

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Elected Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Should seek advice from the Mayor or General Manager and be sure not to speak on behalf of the Council as this is the Mayor's role.</li><li>• A person authorised by the Mayor to comment on behalf of the Council may be limited to a particular topic or specific types of social media or both.</li><li>• Comment only on topics within their area of expertise and authority.</li><li>• Should clarify clearly when communicating that a view is their own, when not speaking on behalf of the Council.</li><li>• Elected members must not post or respond to material that is offensive, obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, bullying, discriminatory, hateful, racist, sexist or infringes copyright.</li><li>• Must ensure their social media interactions comply with Part 6 Legislation of this document and the Councillor's Code of Conduct.</li><li>• Acknowledge that the use of social media is an elected members' personal responsibility regardless of whether the social media is undertaken during the course of Council business or out of hours, and irrespective of whether a Council device is used or personal technology.</li><li>• Elected members must not establish fictitious names or identities when communicating through social media.</li></ul>
Media and Communications Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Undertake the role of Administrator, and primary moderator for Council's social media platforms.</li><li>• Establish and review principles of moderating.</li><li>• Training in the appropriate use of social media for moderators.</li><li>• Assist moderators to develop targeted strategies for each of Council's sites.</li><li>• Ensure that appropriate disclaimers are provided where necessary.</li><li>• Oversee record keeping requirements as needed.</li><li>• Monitoring of social media platforms.</li></ul>
Moderators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Apply principles of moderating according to established house rules, as follows:</li><li>• Moderators are required to ensure they adhere to <i>Guidelines for Moderators</i> [PRO-CBS-SG-047], and will be accountable to the Media and Communications Officer for the management of the sites.</li></ul>

### 5.2.2 House Rules

- Do not harass, abuse or threaten other visitors, people or organisations
- Do not post comments that are likely to offend others, particularly in reference to an individual's race, age, gender, sexuality, political leaning, religion or disability
- Do not use obscene or offensive language
- Do not post repeat comments continuously
- Do not promote anything that may constitute spam, such as commercial interests, solicitations, advertisements or endorsements of any non-governmental agency

### **5.2.3 New social media sites**

A social media site for Council must not be established without consent from either the General Manager or the relevant Director.

### **5.2.4 Posting content**

Council will provide established plans as to who will write and post content, who will moderate and approve content, and who will respond to negative and positive posts, and how. Corporate content will only be posted by moderators, who will ensure the information posted is accurate and not misleading in any way.

When developing, posting and responding to content, moderators MUST:

- uphold the values of the Council by acting with honesty, integrity, courtesy and professionalism, in accordance with all policies and guidelines;
- ensure that all relevant legislation has been complied with and that there is adherence to Council codes, policies and procedures;
- avoid political bias;
- ensure the Council's reputation, that of its employees or the safety system are not compromised;
- ensure copyright and ownership of materials published have appropriate approval;
- act in a timely manner; and
- take steps to avoid real or potential conflicts of interest.

We know that social media is a 24/7 medium, however our moderation capabilities are not. While our page is monitored closely, there may be some posts which have commenting capabilities turned off or user contributions restricted.

### **5.2.5 Removing content**

Material that is reasonably critical of Council will not be deleted. Users contributing to Council social media sites must act within Council's social media 'house rules' as shown on each of its sites.

Council reserves the right to remove certain content such as illegal or offensive material. Council also reserves the right to remove a person from their site if that person repeatedly posts illegal and or offensive material or operates outside of the 'house rules'. Council will when possible state why a post or content was removed regardless of who posted it.

### **5.2.6 Branding**

The brand is the corporate identity of Council and can take many forms (name, sign, symbol, colour combination, slogan). A clear brand is an essential tool in online communications and subsequently the Council's Style Guide must be adhered to at all times – refer GL-CBS-SG-001.

The Council logo should always be attached to corporate content. Social media sites belonging to business units of Council that have their own branding must always carry their relevant logo, such as the Burnie Arts and Function Centre.

### **5.2.7 Community engagement**

Social media tools may be used for community engagement as appropriate. Consideration will first be given to what the desired outcome is, the resources available and relevance of social media tools.

Use of social media for community engagement must be supported by a communications plan which clearly articulates how the process will be managed.

### **5.2.8 Procedural matters**

Council is not to use social media to communicate or disclose any detail, deliberation or determination in relation to individual matters that must follow a legislative, regulatory, permit or approval process, a public notification process, or a judicial appeal or review process, including but not limited to:

- Building control and compliance
- Disposal of public land
- Land use planning processes, including amendment to a planning scheme, assessment and determination of a permit application, appeals, and enforcement action
- Parking infringements
- Dog control
- Public health, including for environmental nuisances, food premises and immunisation
- Fire hazard abatement
- Tender processes

In relation to such matters, elected members should not provide comment, regardless of whether they are aware or otherwise of an issue actively under consideration by a Council officer.

The Council may choose to use social media to provide generic advice in relation to any obligation it is required to observe or enforce, or any process which may be required under legislation.

However, social media should not be used as a platform for conduct of any statutory process or for disclosing information or opinion in relation to any individual matter for which it is actively or likely to become actively involved. The basic premises for such

a restraint are natural justice, and the statutory protection of personal information. In addition, most statutory processes prescribe a method by which to undertake an action, and any departure from the prescribed process may be determined as a breach of the rules and principles for procedural fairness, for which all subsequent action is void.

### **5.2.9 Copyright**

Material which is copyrighted must not be used unless prior written consent is obtained from the creator or copyright owner and the original author or source of the material is acknowledged.

Moderators will be diligent in their consideration of brand, copyright, fair use and trademarks.

### **5.2.10 Information Management (Recordkeeping)**

With regard to social media sites established, the Council will make all reasonable endeavours to comply with the requirements of the *Archives Act 1983* and with reference to the State Archives advice on social media records.

### **5.2.11 Evaluation and reporting**

Council's social media activity will be monitored through simple metrics which are sustainable and related to the desired outcomes. Council will be provided reporting on social media activity as part of the quarterly reporting program.

## **5.3 Use of Social Media by Elected Members**

### **5.3.1 Personal use of social media**

Council will not require elected members to hand over credentials to a personal social media account. However, personal use must comply with this policy.

### **5.3.2 Council email not permitted for personal sites**

Elected members are not permitted to use a council email address (for example myname@burnie.net) as the contact address for a personal social media site. A personal email address must be used for personal sites.

### **5.3.3 Considering a post**

The following questions provide an elected member an effective litmus test for whether a post is appropriate or not. When commenting, consideration should be given to the following:

- a) Could what you are doing harm the reputation of your Council?
- b) Are you disclosing Council material that you are not authorised to disclose?

- c) Have you made it clear to others when your contribution is as a private individual, not an elected member of the Council?
- d) Are you willing to defend your post to your fellow Councillors?
- e) Would you be comfortable saying it to a stranger at a bus stop or posting it on a public shop window?
- f) Are you behaving with integrity, respect and accountability?

#### **5.4 Penalties for breach of policy**

An elected member breaching this policy may be subject to a Code of Conduct complaint (as per the *Local Government Act 1993* and the *Local Government (General) Regulations 2005*).

#### **5.5 Legal Issues and Liabilities**

##### ***5.5.1 Defamation / offensive or obscene material***

Social media can appear to blur private and public spheres but activities on social media websites should be considered public activities. Despite the availability of privacy functions on social media websites, the possibility exists for content to be shared beyond intended recipients. Additionally it should be noted that the terms and conditions of use for most social media sites state that all content becomes the property of the site on which it is posted.

##### ***5.5.2 Privacy and confidentiality***

In using social media, moderators and elected members will be cognisant of requirements under the *Personal Information Protection Act 2004* and the *Local Government Act 1993*.

Personal and sensitive information cannot be published without permission of the person to which that information belongs.

Moderators and elected members will not disclose confidential Council information, including but not limited to matters relating to closed meetings of Council, unless this has been approved in writing by the General Manager.



## COUNCIL POLICY

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## 6 LEGISLATION

Archives Act 1983  
Defamation Act 2005  
Commonwealth Criminal Code Act 1995  
Tasmanian Criminal Code 1924  
Personal Information Protection Act 2004  
Local Government Act 1993  
Copyright Act 1968  
Work Health and Safety Act 2012  
Anti-Discrimination Act 1998

## 7 RELATED DOCUMENTS

Guidelines for Moderators [PRO-CBS-SG-047]  
Aldermen's Code of Conduct [CP-CBS-SG-024]  
Burnie City Council Logo Style Guide [GL-CBS-SG-001]

## 8 OTHER REFERENCES

LGAT Social Media animation

Policy Endorsement	
Responsibility:	It is the responsibility of individual Councillor to ensure the integrity of this policy is maintained. It is the responsibility of the General Manager to enforce this policy and refer formal complaints through the Code of Conduct process. It is the responsibility of Corporate Governance Unit to administer and maintain this policy.
Minute Reference:	AO089-22
Council Meeting Date:	24 May 2022
Strategic Plan Reference:	Strategy 7.1.1 Formulate policy that is equitable, inclusive and responsive to current needs, and ensure decision-making is informed and accountable.
Previous Policies Replaced:	This policy replaces the previous <i>Social Media Policy CP-CBS-SG-045 v1.0</i> dated 20 October 2015 (Item AO254/15) and as amended to v1.1 on 28 September 2020.
Publication of policy:	Members of the public may inspect this policy at the City Offices or access on Council's website ( <a href="http://www.burnie.net">www.burnie.net</a> )