



Burwood
Inc.1874

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

PO Box 240, BURWOOD NSW 1805
2 Conder Street, BURWOOD NSW 2134
Phone: 9911-9911
Email: council@burwood.nsw.gov.au
Website: www.burwood.nsw.gov.au

Corporate Document
Approved by Council: 27 October 2020
Content Manager : 20/46772
Version No.: 3
Ownership: Communications

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Purpose 3
Background..... 3
Scope 3
Definitions 3
Policy Guidelines 3
Administrative Responsibilities 4
Legal..... 5
General Enquiries and Complaints..... 5
Media Enquiries through Social Media 5
Personal Use of Social Media 5
Privacy 6
Related Information..... 6
Record Keeping 6
Review 6
Contact 6

Purpose

To outline the formal process to ensure that communication carried out by Burwood Council on social media is managed professionally and appropriately.

Background

Social media is used to engage with the greater community and provide a two way communication flow. The key objective of Burwood Council's use of social media is to promote a positive public image in line with Council's corporate objectives. This is achieved through an informal, 'personal' voice directly targeted at the community.

Social media allows Council to manage and control what information is distributed to the public, bypassing traditional methods of communication. Social media allows greater access to information for residents and shows transparency in operations. Other uses include providing feedback and promotion of events and initiatives in a timely manner.

For this purpose, the Council has identified the Media and Communications Team as having the expertise and programs in place to facilitate the above.

Scope

This Policy applies to Councillors, Council officers, volunteers, consultants and contractors.

Definitions

Social Media

In this policy "social media" refers to (but not limited to):

- Social networking services e.g. Facebook
- Video and photo sharing websites e.g. YouTube, Instagram
- Micro-blogging sites e.g. Twitter
- Blogging sites e.g. Wordpress, Tumblr
- Forums and discussion boards e.g. Yahoo! Groups
- Social media management sites e.g. HootSuite
- Mobile social apps e.g. WeChat
- Survey, petition and competition websites e.g. Survey Monkey, Go Petition
- Online encyclopedias e.g. Wikipedia
- Any other web site or online application which allows individuals, users or organisations to publish material

Terms

- "**Publication**" and other derivatives of the word refer to any item which has been made public online
- "**Platform**" is used to refer to specific forms of social media
- "**Post**", "**upload**", "**share**", "**like**" and "**comment**" are platform specific terms used for publishing material online
- "**Administration**" and other variations of the term refer to the account operator of a social platform who publishes content
- "**Block**" refers to removing or denying a user access to Council's social media platforms

Policy

Users of social media must abide by the policy listed below:

- Published material should be positive and unifying, creating an image of Burwood Council to the community that is encouraging, professional and strong.
- Burwood Council will provide accurate responses to all social media matters which are of public interest in a timely manner.
- Communication must remain professional and appropriate.
- The publication of any inappropriate content may breach Burwood Council's *Code of Conduct* and could therefore be considered as a serious offence. Inappropriate content on social media includes:
 - Profane language or content
 - Material which discriminates against a person or group (*Anti-Discrimination Act 1977*)
 - Defamatory or contemptuous material
 - Illegal content
 - Content obtained illegally
 - Content which violates copyright or legal ownership of a third party
 - Content which discloses personal information without the person's consent
 - Content which is graphic or sexually explicit
 - Content which solicits finance
 - Unrelated content e.g. spam, advertising, comments which do not relate to the topic of discussion
 - Frequent interaction with any person or group who do not share Council values
 - Outright attacks on other Councils, organisations or individuals
 - Negative material, bullying or content which has an aggressive tone
 - Content promoting or opposing any person/party campaigning for election to a political office
- Communication may not be made on behalf of the Mayor or Councillors through Burwood Council social media platforms without their authorisation.
- Communication may not be made by Council Officers on behalf of the Mayor or Councillors on their personal social media platforms.
- Social media sites should be maintained and updated on a regular basis and are constantly monitored.
- Records of all information which are published on social media platforms should not be deleted.

Administrative Responsibilities

Authorised Users

- Authorised users are determined by the Group Manager Corporate Strategy and Communications
- Authorised users must be trained in use of social media by the Media and Communications Officer
- Authorised users must adhere to the Terms of Use of social media platforms
- Authorised users comment only on their area of expertise and authority
- Councillors are entitled to create, maintain and update their personal social media pages, subject to the information outlined in this policy

Administrative Voice

- To engage with social media users, Council communication may be less business like however should not include messaging abbreviations
- Staff may not publish any personal material on Council's social media platforms
- Administrator and other authorised users must disclose they are an employee of council if the social media platform requires identification but they may not provide any personal details publicly

Published Material

- As one of Council's social media objectives is to give transparency in its operations, any negative comments published on a Council platform should not be deleted if they are not deemed to be inappropriate (refer to policy).

Content Removal

- Council reserves the right to remove content which is in violation of the Policy
- Council should remove any inappropriate content within 24 hours of publication or at the soonest time possible
- Council will inform the author of the content why the content was removed in a prompt manner as appropriate

Legal

Information published on social media forms part of the public sphere and is therefore subject to defamation (*Defamation Act 2005*) and contempt.

The authorised users should exercise caution when publishing material which they deem may be defamatory or contemptuous. This includes personal or private messages.

In the event that the item must be published and the administrator is uncertain of the potential legal ramifications, legal advice should be sought prior to any action being taken.

General Enquiries and Complaints

Social media provides residents with a direct point of contact to Council. Due to its accessibility, many residents use social media to lodge an enquiry or complaint and thus bypass Customer Service.

As social media is an informal channel of communication, Council is unable to respond to formal complaints and service requests online, however, comments of this nature will be forwarded to the relevant department. A task will be forwarded to the appropriate department, the administrator should inform the resident that the comment has been forwarded to the relevant officer.

It must be noted that the fast paced nature of social media means that users expect an immediate response from Council. Therefore, responses should be made in a timely manner, in line with Council's *Customer Service Charter*.

In the event that a user persistently posts inappropriate comments (refer to the policy) or Council receives comments from a user who has been classified as an unreasonable and persistent complainant, Council reserves the right to block the user from Council's social media pages. This action will be considered as a final resort following the issue of a warning notice to the user.

Media Enquiries through Social Media

Council must treat media enquiries made through social media as a legitimate media request. If contact details are not provided by the enquirer, Council must request contact details prior to providing any information to communicate off line.

Authorised users should refer any media enquiry to the Media and Communications Team.

Personal Use of Social Media

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

There is no such thing as a 'private' social media platform, regardless of the privacy settings. Any comment about Council on social media is considered public comment. Council employees and Councillors have the right to enter public debates and comment on political, social or any other issues. However any comment made must avoid any reference to employment at Council. If individuals choose to identify themselves as Council employees either directly or as part of a user profile, they are commenting as representatives of Council. Employees and Councillors are personally responsible for the use of social media in a personal capacity, including the content they publish.

Any content which reflects negatively on Council's public image can have significant consequences for the organisation and may lead to disciplinary action under Burwood Council's Code of Conduct. This includes any discriminatory content published regarding employees, Councillors, Council or any content which undermines the public's perception of Council.

Council supports any promotion of Council initiatives or events on personal social media platforms, provided they are positive and unifying.

For personal use of social media during work hours refer to Council's Use and Monitoring of Network, Email and Internet Corporate Practice.

Privacy

Council respects the privacy of social media users. Personal details of users will only be kept when necessary i.e. when an enquiry or request is made, or if the policy is breached, in order to assist Council in its operations.

The disclosure of personal information, use and security of confidential information and general conduct obligations are outlined in Burwood Council's *Code of Conduct*. Under no circumstance can staff or Councillors publicise Council material online which is sensitive or confidential.

Users should be aware of the privacy guidelines of specific social media platforms prior to engaging in social media as the terms of use vary from platform to platform.

Related Information

Related Legislation and Policies:

- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977*
- *Archives Act 1983*
- Burwood Council Code of Conduct
- Burwood Council Employee's Handbook
- Burwood Council Media Policy 2019
- Burwood Council Communications Policy 2019

- Burwood Council Community Engagement Policy 2012
- Burwood Council Customer Service Charter
- *Defamation Act 2005*
- *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (GIPA)*
- *Local Government Act 1993*
- NSW Ombudsman's Managing Unreasonable Complainant Conduct Manual 2012
- *Privacy Act 1988*
- *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*
- Burwood Council Use and Monitoring of Network, Email and Internet Corporate Practice
- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines V2.0
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (WHS)*

Record Keeping

Specific inquiries or complaints made via a Council social media platform will be entered into Content Manager.

Review

Policy to be reviewed every four years.

Contact

Media and Communications Officer - 9911 9819