

Program: Corporate Communications & Marketing
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Scope

This Policy applies to all Councillors and Mackay Regional Council (MRC) Staff.

Objective

The objective of this Policy is to enhance the use of social media, ensuring that Councillors, MRC Staff and the community understand their responsibilities when using social media platforms.

Policy Statement

MRC acknowledges:

- That there is a need to enhance the use of social media using best practice standards whilst ensuring that Councillors, Staff and the community understand their responsibilities when using social media platforms;
- That there is growing popularity of social media both as a communication and educational tool; and supports its appropriate use;
- The benefits of engaging with the community through social media platforms as well as the potentially harmful interactions indirectly with the Councillors, Staff and members in the community through the inappropriate use of social media;
- Social media is a public forum, and Staff and Councillors have a duty to ensure that content and comments published on social media adhere to appropriate standards for personal and official use.

Council considers that to the extent this Policy engages and limits, or potentially limits, any human rights, that limitation is reasonable in that it is proportionate and justified.

This process to remain in force until otherwise determined
by Mackay Regional Council

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1.0 Principles

1.1 Personal Use of Social Media

It is recognised that Councillors and Staff may wish to use social media in their personal life. This Policy does not intend to discourage nor unduly limit personal expression or online activities.

Councillors and Staff should recognise the potential for reputational harm caused (either directly or indirectly) to MRC or Council in certain circumstances via their personal use of social media when they can be identified as a Councillor or Staff.

Information published externally on behalf of MRC or Council on corporate social media accounts will be the responsibility of the Corporate Communications & Marketing (CC&M) Team or other delegated authorised officers. If Staff are requested to disclose information externally, please consult with the CC&M Team.

Staff and Councillors are personally responsible and accountable for any content published in a personal capacity on their personal social media accounts.

1.2 Outside Operated Social Media

Outside Council-operated social media platforms, other groups and individuals will at times make comment on Council activities.

Council does not have the capacity to actively monitor all social media sites, however, would expect that any items that are publishing incorrect information regarding Council operations, and are receiving significant community interest, should be reported by Councillors or Staff to Corporate Communications, with the view to ensuring that correcting information is published on those posts and/or Council's social media platforms.

Where any posted items are considered offensive, or cause personal issues or concern given content, they should be reported via appropriate management channels, including potentially lodging as a safety incident, depending on personal impact.

1.3 Misuse of Social Media

MRC Staff and Councillors need to be mindful of the misuse of social media platforms. Any misuse of social media platforms will constitute a breach of the Code of Conduct, and disciplinary action may be taken.

Misuse of social media undermines MRC's and the Councillors' ability to share information effectively with the community and to assist community members in communicating with MRC and Council. Misuse of social media could:

- create the wrong impression by using humour, irony or satire, which can be misunderstood in impersonal or abbreviated formats;
- mislead the community by publishing information that is inaccurate, incomplete, out of context or confusing;
- lead to the unlawful release of confidential or personal information;
- cause reputational loss by destroying public confidence in MRC and Councillors;
- damage MRC's and Councillors' relationships through unprofessional use of internal social media;
- be detrimental to the effective delivery of services to the community;
- hamper MRC's and Councillors' ability to be open and accountable to the community.

1.4 Corporate Social Media Accounts

MRC has the exclusive right to set up, administer, monitor, create and delete all MRC corporate social media accounts, including but not limited to all MRC branded and managed social media accounts.

In this context – "Monitor" means to check the quality of the information for public records and to ensure it meets the procedure.

1.5 Control of Social Media Accounts

The CC&M Team are the custodian of all corporate social media accounts and pages.

The Manager CC&M must approve the creation, use and closure of any corporate social media accounts.

The CC&M Team will manage all logins created for corporate social media accounts and must be for legitimate work purposes and not for personal benefit, personal gain or intentional misuse.

1.6 Publishing Content on Corporate Social Media Accounts

MRC business can be topical, sensitive and controversial, and there is a process to be followed when making public comments.

The CC&M Team will administer MRC's corporate social medial accounts.

Any communications posted or responses to posts on any corporate social media account should be of the highest professional standard, consistent and ethical.

All content published must:

- Think about what is being said or written and how it might be perceived.
- Avoid any comment that may be perceived as being made on behalf of MRC and Council rather than a personal view.
- Ensure that comments do not compromise their ability to be unbiased in their work and decisions.
- Avoid comments that compromise the ability of Staff to undertake their duties impartially.
- Avoid any comments that amount to criticism sufficiently strong or persistent in giving rise to the public perception that they need to prepare to implement or administer the policies of MRC or the Government of the day as they relate to their duties.
- Avoid comments that amount to criticism or perceived criticism of MRC and Council decisions, operations or direction.
- Not lead to a breach of confidentiality.
- Be mindful that they show respect for the opinions of others and do not injure a person's reputation or create a basis for a defamation action.
- Not breach the relevant Code of Conduct.

In the interests of remaining neutral and transparent, third-party content will only be published if a formal partnership or sponsorship arrangement is in place.

1.7 Councillor's Use of Social Media

MRC respects the right of Councillors to maintain personal social media accounts and interact on their social media, noting that this articulates their personal view as a Councillor and not that of the Council or MRC.

Councillors must be mindful that all content published on social media accounts must comply with the Code of Conduct for Councillors in Queensland.

Councillors should also be mindful of moderating content of posts on social media accounts and remove any inappropriate posts in a timely manner.

Councillors who believe an organisational response is required to comments made by other parties on MRC's corporate social media accounts may refer the matter to the CEO in the first instance rather than responding directly.

1.8 Local Government Elections

In accordance with section 90D of the *Local Government Act 2009*, during the Caretaker Period, any posts on social media regarding election material or campaigning must not be used on any Corporate Social Media account. Election material includes anything able to or intended to influence an elector about voting at an election or affect the result of an election.

It is acknowledged that the Mayor has a personal Facebook account which has been endorsed and resourced in accordance with the Councillors Reimbursement of Expenses and Provisions of Facilities Policy. All Council provided support and resourcing will be ceased during an Election Caretaker Period so as to ensure that Council resources are not used for campaigning activities.

Councillors may use their personal Facebook accounts during their election campaign, provided that there are no Council resources (such as Council provided photo/documents) utilised for campaigning activities.

2.0 **Community Interaction on Corporate Social Media Accounts**

2.1 Posting of Comments or Questions by the Community

MRC's corporate social media accounts aim to provide a safe and positive environment for community members to receive factual information about MRC, Council and the Mackay Region.

MRC's corporate social media promotes the Mackay Region, including initiatives and events relevant to the community.

MRC welcomes all community members to place comments on its social media accounts; however, content posted on MRC's corporate social media accounts will be monitored to ensure it is appropriate and complies with this Policy.

MRC may remove posts in languages other than English if the message cannot be translated.

When contributing content to the MRC page, comments should not:

- (a) Harass, bully, incite violence, abuse, attack, threaten or discriminate against other users, particularly about an individual or group's age, disability, gender, political leaning, race, religion or sexuality;
- (b) Participate in trolling, baiting, disrupting a conversation or not be in relation to the original topic;

- (c) Be false or misleading;
- (d) Include profanities, obscene or offensive language;
- (e) Provide other people's personal information - this is a breach of privacy, and the content may be removed at MRC's discretion under MRC's Information Privacy Policy;
- (f) Comment or share anything that may constitute spam, such as advertising, appeals, petitions, requests or endorsements, or promote commercial or political interests. This also includes repeated posts and comments;
- (g) Speculate and/or comment on legal matters;
- (h) Upload materials that breach the intellectual property rights of others;
- (i) Upload malicious software or files;
- (j) Violate the terms of use of social media platforms;
- (k) Break the law (including violation of copyright laws) or encourage others to do so;
- (l) Encourage or incite rioting, picketing or any other actions which may amount to public nuisance.

Failure to adhere to the above may result in moderation, un-tagging, removal of posts or comments, and users being blocked from MRC's social media accounts. MRC may also refer any comment it deems unlawful to the Queensland Police.

MRC reserves the right to remove comments and take the discussion 'offline' or into a private message if the content is personal or affects the page's enjoyment for other visitors.

MRC cannot control comments posted on private or community notice board pages. Please report any inappropriate or inaccurate comments concerning MRC or Council to the CC&M Team.

2.2 Council Response to Questions and Enquiries Made via MRC's Corporate Social Media Accounts

MRC's corporate social media accounts are unattended between 4.30 pm and 8.00 am on weekdays, public holidays and all hours on weekends.

Whilst MRC encourages comments on its corporate social media accounts, all questions and issues should be reported to 1300 MACKAY (1300 622 529). Contacting MRC Customer Service Team ensures that your request can be tracked and followed up quickly with the relevant area within MRC.

3.0 Record Keeping

In accordance with the *Public Records Act 2002* and the MRC Records Management Policy, MRC has a responsibility to ensure its public records are made, managed and kept and, if appropriate, preserved in a usable form for the benefit of present and future generations.

All content on any corporate social media account related to MRC business is considered public and must be recorded in MRC's electronic records management.

4.0 Complaints

Any complaints relating to a decision or a service relating to this Policy will be assessed and managed per MRC's Administrative Action Complaints Policy, a copy of which can be found on MRC's website.

When an individual feels they are the subject of MRC's failure to act compatibly with human rights, they can directly complain to MRC. These complaints will be assessed against the Human Rights Act 2019.

Complaints may be made as follows:

In writing to
Chief Executive Officer
Mackay Regional Council
PO Box 41
MACKAY QLD 4740

Via email - complaints@mackay.qld.gov.au

In-person at the following MRC Client Services Centres:

- MRC Mackay Office – 73 Gordon Street, Mackay
- MRC Sarina Office – 65 Broad Street, Sarina
- MRC Mirani Council Office – 20 Victoria Street, Mirani

5.0 Definitions

CC&M Team shall mean the Corporate Communications & Marketing Team.

CEO shall mean the Chief Executive Officer of MRC.

Council shall mean all elected representatives of MRC.

Councillors shall mean an individual elected representative of MRC.

MRC shall mean Mackay Regional Council.

Personal Facebook Account shall mean an individual's personal account which has been set up and managed personally by the Councillor or staff member where they can post updates, upload photos, share videos, maintain a friends list and provide information.

Personal use is an individual or private user publishing comments on an individual's social media platforms and is not attributable to corporate or professional use.

Social Media includes but is not limited to:

- Social networking sites, such as Facebook, , Twitter, LinkedIn, and any other social networking sites as they develop in the future;
- Video, picture and photo sharing sites, including TikTok, Instagram, Snap Chat, Pinterest and YouTube, and any other video, picture or photo sharing sites as they develop in the future;
- Blog sites, including professional and personal blogs;
- Online forums, text-based chat rooms and interactive sites, including Google Groups;
- Online encyclopedias, such as Wikipedia or Wikispaces;
- Virtual worlds and mashups, including Second Life and other sites that allow Users to create a physical identity and socialise with other users;
- Messaging technologies/apps (e.g. WhatsApp); and
- Other websites enable comments to be posted publicly or via email.

This definition of Social Media is not exhaustive, and MRC may deem a particular medium or platform to constitute Social Media from time to time.

Staff shall mean all persons employed by MRC on a permanent, temporary, or casual basis or otherwise engaged by MRC, including those under a contract of service or a volunteer program.

6.0 Review of Policy

This Policy will be reviewed when any of the following occurs:

- The related documents are amended or replaced.
- Other circumstances as determined from time to time by a resolution of the Council.

Notwithstanding the above, this Policy will be reviewed at intervals of no more than three (3) years.

7.0 Reference

- *Copyright Act 1968 (Cth)*
- *Information Privacy Act 2009 (Qld)*
- *Defamation Act 2005 (Qld)*
- *Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth)*

- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992(Cth)*
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)*
- *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)*
- *Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)*
- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld)*
- *Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth)*
- *Public Records Act 2002 (Qld)*
- *Local Government Act 2009 (Qld)*
- *Local Government Regulations 2012 (Qld)*

This Corporate Standard must be read in conjunction with the following MRC documents:

- Mackay Regional Council – Staff Code of Conduct
- Councillor Code of Conduct
- COU029 – Media Policy
- OP008 - Acceptable Usage of Council Information Communication and Technology (ICT) Systems Policy
- OP009 - Disciplinary Procedure Policy
- OP044 – Records Management Policy
- OP023 – Information Management Policy
- MRC's Communication & Marketing Plan

Version Control:

Version	Reason / Trigger	Change	Adopted	Date
1	Renewed/updated		ORD-2023-270	25/10/23