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1 Policy

1.1 Policy Statement

The purpose of this policy is to encourage agencies to make greater use of social media and empower public sector staff to use these tools where it assists in improving service delivery.

Agencies are to develop and implement targeted social media policies, governance structures, and guidance, including appropriate training and support for staff, to meet their business needs.

This policy is intended to align with existing departmental policies, such as the code of conduct, media policies, and policies on acceptable use of information technology. This policy does not supersede existing agency policies, however, agencies may review and update current policies to reflect the guiding principles outlined in this document.

Those performing work for the NSW Government should be aware that the use of social media even in a personal capacity, may be governed by agency policies and authorisation protocols, as for any public comment or media strategy.

It is acknowledged that the implementation of social media across agencies will vary according to business needs and service delivery priorities.

1.2 Context

Social media has become an essential part of our personal and work lives. It has created a fundamental shift in how we communicate and relate to friends, colleagues, government, business and communities.

NSW 2021 is the NSW Government business plan to return quality services and restore accountability to government. The plan sets out actions to improve customer services, increase access to information, and find more ways to involve people in government decision making. Additionally, the Government direction for agencies to make greater use of social media is communicated to Ministers and Directors-General in the Premier’s memorandum M2012 - 10 Open Government.
The *NSW Government ICT Strategy 2012* outlines a new approach to the way the NSW Government uses, manages and buys information and communications technology. This includes a commitment to engaging with the community and industry through social media, in order to deliver improved services and enhance transparency and participation.

### 1.3 Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Recognise social media as integral to contemporary business communication and provide a framework for its use in the NSW Government.
- Guide and support public sector staff to be responsible and proactive digital citizens.
- Enable agencies to maximise the effective use of social media, recognising the diversity of business needs and approaches.
- Enable collaboration and engagement with the public, with industry and across Government.

### 1.4 Guiding principles

The NSW Government encourages agencies to use social media in a way that is consistent with five guiding principles. In using social media, agencies should be open, collaborative, responsive, reliable and appropriate.

**Open**

Use social media to share and promote access to information and services and be transparent and accountable.

**Collaborative**

Create opportunities to listen to and engage with staff, the public, local communities, and industry in community and capacity building, policy design and implementation and service delivery.
Responsive

Empower public sector staff to use social media to respond quickly to customers and emerging issues.

Reliable

Support a consistent and quality experience.

Appropriate

Use social media in a manner that is consistent with public sector values, legal requirements, related policies, and our codes of conduct.

1.5 Scope

This policy applies to all officers, consultants, contractors and outsourced service providers performing work for the NSW Government.

State Owned Corporations are encouraged to use social media in a manner that is consistent with this policy.

This policy applies to the use of social media accounts for work undertaken for the NSW Government. Staff use of personal accounts is governed by agency acceptable use of technology policies where it affects employee responsibilities. Personal comments made by staff are governed by agency codes of conduct and communications policies.

1.6 Definitions

The term social media refers to user-generated content that is shared online through technologies “that promote engagement, sharing and collaboration” (Matthew Tommasi). It transforms users “from content readers into publishers” (Brian Solis).
Examples of social media applications include:

- Micro-blogging sites (examples: Twitter, Yammer)
- Social and professional networking sites (examples: Facebook, LinkedIn)
- Video and photo sharing websites (examples: YouTube, Flickr, Pinterest)
- Weblogs, or ‘blogs’ - online diaries for pictures and updates (examples: Tumblr, Blogger)
- Wikis - libraries of collaborative documents that anyone can edit (example: Wikipedia)
- Forums and discussion boards (examples: Google Groups, Ning, Whirlpool)
2 Guidelines for agencies

2.1 Create opportunities to listen to and engage with staff, the public and industry in community building, policy discussion and service design

- Research the target audience to ensure your strategy and its implementation meets needs and expectations.
- Use social networking sites to present policy discussions and capture feedback from stakeholders. Early feedback contributes to effective policy and program development and saves time in the longer term.
- Produce content about the agency’s area of expertise.
- Tap into other customer touchpoints, such as call centres, to share knowledge and reduce duplication.

2.2 Empower public sector staff to use social media to respond quickly to customers and emerging issues

- Establish or review existing business rules to discover, evaluate and respond to online comments.
- Act quickly to remove offensive, defamatory, bullying or other unacceptable comments.
- Set and meet timeframes for service delivery.
- Have processes in place to ensure complaints and other feedback are correctly defined, triaged and addressed.
- Put in place a critical issue management plan outlining staff responsibilities.
- Within resourcing restraints, respond to changes in technology and public demand. Use platforms familiar to your audience.
2.3 Support a consistent and quality experience

- Ensure the decision to implement a social media communication strategy is adequately scoped and resourced. Many social media tools are free to use and quick to set up. However, ongoing effort is required to manage accounts to deliver a consistent, dedicated customer service. Consider the investment in staff time and other resources involved in moderation, creating content and responding to comments.

- Establish a governance mechanism to guide, monitor and evaluate social media management. Consider the lifecycle of your social media account and plan for decommissioning requirements.

- Measure and analyse your social media strategy.

- Branding and messaging across all communications channels (social media, websites, print publications), should be consistent.

2.4 Social media approaches

The approach taken by agencies will vary to suit business needs and particular situations. The level of activity adopted by your organisation may be described as passive, active or engaged. Information in this section is adapted from material produced by the New Zealand Government, licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 New Zealand licence.

2.4.1 Passive

In some cases, it may be appropriate to take a passive approach to the use of social media. Your organisation may simply listen to conversations taking place online for the purpose of gathering information, monitoring a situation, or understanding an audience. A passive approach may be a starting point before a more active approach is adopted.

2.4.2 Active

Many people are active users of social media. This approach means becoming more involved in online discussions and sharing links and other useful information. Agency policies should require staff to identify themselves as representatives of the organisation if they post messages on work-related topics.
2.4.3 Engaged

A fully engaged approach is recommended to make the most of social media. This level of activity describes a proactive dialogue with the audience. There is a higher expectation of responsiveness and participation at this level.

2.5 Checklist

Agencies will make arrangements for the implementation of their own social media policy, giving consideration to:

- Governance, including staff education and training, monitoring, risk assessment, evaluation and policy review.
- Business operating conditions and allied policies and programs.
- Privacy, intellectual property and records management.
- Resourcing for all activities and at all levels of the organisation.
- Change management.

Outlined below is a checklist of steps to consider in the development of a social media policy.

2.5.1 Planning

- Determine the existing policies that will be impacted by the introduction of a new social media policy.
- Identify the communication and engagement goals for the organisation, and design indicators for measuring success against these.
- Identify and research the target audience.
- Include a risk assessment to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the intended approach.
- Research similar approaches that may be relevant to the organisation.
- Scope set-up and ongoing requirements including human and financial resources.
- Evaluate and install products.
2.5.2 Implementation

- Establish a governance model for content development and account management.
- Define roles and responsibilities.
- Develop terms of use and determine the appropriate level of engagement. These may include hours of operation, response times, moderation actions, and privacy guidelines.
- Communicate the policy to organisation staff.
- Provide authorised staff with training in the use of social media.

2.5.3 Management

- Adopt the guiding principles outlined in this document.
- Evaluate and report on the agency’s use of social media.
- Promote social media accounts.
- Keep appropriate records and manage the account lifecycle.
- Integrate social media with other communications and customer service channels.

For additional guidance, a resource library of social media policies from other jurisdictions is provided at the Department of Premier and Cabinet website <http://advertising.nsw.gov.au/strategic-communications/social-media>.

2.6 Examples

Examples of government use of social media include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Twitter</th>
<th>Facebook</th>
<th>YouTube</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Office of Fair Trading</td>
<td>NSW Police Force</td>
<td>Taronga Zoo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@NSW_FairTrading</td>
<td>facebook.com/nswpoliceforce</td>
<td>youtube.com/user/TarongaSydney</td>
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<tr>
<td>Australian Museum</td>
<td>TAFE NSW</td>
<td>Museum of Contemporary Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@austmus</td>
<td>facebook.com/TAFENSW</td>
<td>youtube.com/user/MCAustralia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of Water</td>
<td>DEC School A to Z</td>
<td>Fire and Rescue NSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>@OfficeofWater</td>
<td>facebook.com/schoolatoz</td>
<td>youtube.com/fireandrescuensw</td>
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3 Guidelines for staff

3.1 Use official accounts proactively and responsibly

- Ensure that you have the appropriate authority to use social media in an official capacity, consistent with your agency’s code of conduct.
- Be quick to admit and correct mistakes.
- Respect privacy and confidentiality. Only publish information that is approved to be in the public domain. Acknowledge copyright and attribute the source of material you share.
- Be a responsible digital citizen. Protect your reputation online and the reputation of your colleagues and your organisation. Be mindful that information posted online is public and permanent.
- Use social media to work together with your customers, community and colleagues.
- Be transparent. Identify yourself as an employee of your agency when discussing work-related issues.

3.2 Use social media in a manner that is consistent with public sector values, legal requirements, related policies, and codes of conduct

- The Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002 establishes an ethical framework for a merit-based, apolitical and professional public sector that implements the decisions of the Government of the day. The Act outlines core values for the public sector based on the principles of integrity, trust, service and accountability.
- Make sure you understand the Code of Conduct, and any other relevant policies, for your agency or department. Your conduct online should not adversely reflect on your employer, your colleagues, or yourself as a public sector employee.
- If you communicate with clients, maintain professional boundaries as you would with other forms of work communication.
3.3 Examples

For examples of guidelines for staff use of social media see the Department of Education and Communities social media guidelines at:


For further guidance on using social media see the Department of Education and Communities’ guideline – *What staff need to know about social media and technology* at:

## Sources of Authority

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personnel Handbook</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSW 2021</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSW Government ICT Strategy 2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>M2012-10 Open Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M2009-11 NSW Standard on Digital Recordkeeping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Records Act 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Agency/Department) Code of Conduct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Agency/Department) Media Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Agency/Department) Acceptable Use of Technology Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Agency/Department) Privacy and Records Management Policy</td>
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