Digital Media Policy

Policy Approval and Distribution

Approved by	Council resolution
Responsible Officer	Communications Officer, Linda Wiles
Council Service Unit	Community Engagement
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Version Control

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0.1	24 06-2018	Presented to Council for adoption	122/2018

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to guide and inform Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council (CGRC) employees about Council's expectations in relation to the acceptable use of online and social media (digital media), and to promote the responsible use of these technologies within the organisation.

This policy refers to all social media engagement in relation to CGRC, our services, our people, our stakeholders and Council's relationships with other individuals and/or organisations.

This policy also:

- Informs employees about how social media should be used to communicate initiatives and activities.
- Defines how Council will promote key messages to the community in a transparent manner that promotes conversation and return engagement.
- Defines how CGRC's position in the community can be strengthened via social media.
- Recognises social media as integral to contemporary business communication and provides a framework for its use.
- Aims to maximise the effective use of social media.

Scope

This policy applies to all CGRC employees, Councillors, Committee members, contractors and consultants. It includes those who are authorised to use social media and Council's website, as well as those who use it in a personal capacity. Please note this policy does not apply to employees' personal use of social media where the employee makes no reference to CGRC or CGRC related issues.

Definitions

Social media: Social media refers to user-generated content that is shared online. Social media is an array of internet-based tools and platforms that act as channels for sharing and communicating information easily and, often, instantaneously among social media users.

Online Communities: The online audience that subscribes and/or contributes to Council's social media accounts.

Official social media use: Any social media activity conducted by an employee on behalf of CCGRC. This activity is not restricted to Council owned-computers/hardware or during an employee's work hours.

Personal social media use: Using social media in a personal capacity without reference to CGRC or identifying as a Council employee.

Owned online platform/website: Council's external website that can be accessed by the public and where public council information is stored and accessed.

Moderator: An authorised staff member, or designated work group, who manages content and information on any of Council's social media accounts. Moderators are responsible for supervising and engaging with comments and messages.

Community Manager: A senior member who has the authority to approve or deny staff from using social media for official use. The manager also authorises the development of new social media accounts and is responsible for online sentiment and upkeep.

Social networks / social platforms: Social networks include a range of communication mechanisms, including but not limited to: Facebook, LinkedIn, Myspace, Google+, Flickr, YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram, Blogspot, Blogger, Wordpress, Tumblr, Twitter, Vine, Snapchat, etc.

Social media moderator: authorised representative from CGRC responsible for posting and responding on behalf of the Council.

Related CGRC Policies

Media Policy
Code of Conduct Policy
Use of Information Technology and Communication Devices Policy

Related CGRC Procedure

The following documents outlines the procedures associated with this policy.
- Digital Media Guidelines
- Style Guide
- Writing Style Guide

Review Period

This document is to be reviewed every twelve (12) months to ensure that it remains relevant and meets legislative requirements.

Policy Statement

Digital communications improve the ability of Council to inform, engage and connect with customers and ratepayers as well as community, business and other stakeholders. These tools are part of everyday life and customers and stakeholders expect to be able to interact with the Council in this way.

Digital communications such as Websites, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram provide valuable channels for Council to engage with the community and to deliver key messages. Digital media also has the flexibility to rapidly respond to or communicate issues that arise in an emergency situation and proactively identifying issues that may be important by monitoring community sentiment.

A functional and interactive website is fundamental and should act as a central hub (and single source of truth) and include up to date information and services for residents, local business, potential investors and visitors to the region. It is important this site is maintained and information (including links) is kept up to date and valid.

It is important that the correct digital channel is used for each message and that Council understands audience needs and designs digital communications with the end user in mind. Some messages may not be suited to social media at all, others may need to be communicated in a number of ways such as face-to-face, letter, print media or email, as well as via the website or Facebook. Digital media should therefore be considered as one very important channel for delivering messages, and monitoring community sentiment.

The instantaneous and widely available nature of social media means that expectations of timeliness of communication via this channel are high. Council needs to balance this expectation with the need to ensure that considered responses are provided and appropriate approval processes are followed.

By its nature, digital media is dynamic so when using this channel, it is important to use a style of writing that is easy to read and succinct and use imagery where appropriate to engage the viewer. All communication from Council should present in a consistent way and be fit for purpose.

Authorisation

Council's Communications officer is responsible for all public social media platforms and online communications on behalf of Council.

Those authorised to represent CGRC on social media are:

- General Manager
- Communications Officer
- Back-up delegates for the Communications Officer
- Delegates for the Visitor Information Centres

Additional pages created for other branches of Council may be granted with approval from the Communications Officer. If approved, the Communications Officer reserves the right to remain an administrator of any pages created to ensure risk management measures to protect Council's reputation are satisfied.

Approved branch pages include:

- Cootamundra Library
- Gundagai Library
- Gundagai Visitors Information Centre
- Gundagai Local
- Cootamundra Local

Principles

The guiding principles for CGRC's digital communication includes:

- The relevant digital communication channel will be identified when considering the message, information and audience to be engaged;
- Content will be accurate, clear, intuitive and accessible so that users understand and can use it successfully, first time and every time;
- Content will be consistent with the writing style guide for CGRC;
- Intellectual property laws and privacy considerations will be upheld at all times;
- Systems will be established to ensure information is kept up-to-date and relevant;
- Appropriate approvals or delegations will be followed before material is published;
- Audience feedback will be monitored and used to improve the performance of digital channels.

Employee and Councillor Use of Social Media

CGRC recognises there is a difference between *speaking on behalf of* and *speaking about.* These guidelines refer to *personal or unofficial* online activities where you might refer to CGRC.

1. Adhere to Council's Code of Conduct and other applicable policies

   Employees and Councillors are subject to CGRC's Code of Conduct and other policies which govern behaviour with respect to communication. These policies are applicable to your personal activities in the public domain, including online.

2. You are responsible for your actions online

   It is your responsibility to ensure that any information you post about CGRC and Council services is factually accurate. If you state your personal opinion, state that it is your personal opinion.

3. Be a 'scout' for compliments, criticisms and opportunities

   Our employees are one of our most vital assets for monitoring social media. If you come across positive or negative remarks about CGRC, share them with the Communications Officer.

   Further, if you identify opportunities for Council to promote or advertise the work or activities of Council, please notify the Communications Officer.

4. Do not respond to negative comments

   Council's Communications Officer will respond in relation to negative comments. Do not respond or react yourself unless you are an official representative of Council with responsibility within the relevant area.

5. Be conscious of mixing your personal and business lives

   In the online environment, your personal and business personas are likely to intersect. CGRC respects employees' rights, but as colleagues and members of our wider community have access to online content, NEVER disclose confidential or non-public information about CGRC. Taking public positions online that are counter to CGRC's interests may cause conflict.

6. You are personally accountable for the content you post online.
   - Any information posted about CGRC and Council services is factually accurate. If you wish to state your opinion, please state that it is your personal opinion.

- If you are offering your personal perspective on a matter related to Council, ensure your commentary and opinion does not cause damage to CGRC.
- When commenting online it is your responsibility to ensure that you reference only publicly available information, such as what is available on www.cgrc.nsw.gov.au

7. Be transparent in your representation

When communicating online you are required to:

- Identify yourself as a CGRC employee if you refer to Council, our people, or services.
- Ensure that you do not imply in any way that you are authorised to speak on CGRC's behalf. If someone requires an authorised comment, please contact the Communications Officer, or designated Manager.

8. Respect the people with whom you communicate.

When communicating online you are required to:

- Be respectful of the individuals and communities with which you interact.
- Be polite and respectful of others' opinions.
- Adhere to a site's specific Terms of Use.

Respect copyright, privacy, financial disclosure and other applicable laws when publishing on social media platforms.

Non-Compliance

Non-compliance with the Digital Media Policy by Council representatives will be managed through the relevant Code of Conduct and disciplinary systems.