POLICY 2.20
Governance
Social Media
Version: 2 **| Next Review:** November 2030

DISTRICT COUNCIL of TUMBY BAY

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media is recognised as an important channel to communicate, listen and engage with the community and enhance the delivery of services. The District Council of Tumby Bay (the Council) recognises the opportunities that social media provides to engage in meaningful, two-way communication with the broader community. This can complement and enhance existing communication, customer service and consultation methods, and further improve access to, and delivery of, key services.

The Council also recognises the value of social media to the organisation provided through networking, recruitment, professional development, employee engagement, collaboration and innovation.

At all times, use of social media by council employees and Council Members should be done in a professional manner, in accordance with relevant policies and legislation, and consistent with the values of the Council.

2. POLICY OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this Policy is to provide clear guidance on the appropriate use of social media platforms and tools, and to support and encourage their use by Council Members and Council employees when undertaking official Council business.

This Policy aims to:

- promote effective and productive community engagement through social media,
- provide guidance about the appropriate use of social media tools at the Council,
- reduce the likelihood of miscommunication or inappropriate communications, and
- help Council manage new challenges associated with social media such as speed and immediacy, record keeping, privacy and security, and
- provide clarity about roles and responsibilities in relation to use, approval and monitoring.

3. POLICY SCOPE

This Policy applies to all Council Members and council employees, who purport to use social media on behalf of the organisation.

The Policy applies to all current and future social media tools and channels. That includes all digital spaces where people comment, view, contribute, create, forward, post, upload and share content, such as:

- blogs, forums, discussion and bulletin boards, instant messaging facilities and citizen journalism and news sites which facilitate public comment,
- microblogging sites,
- social networking sites,
- podcasts, video podcasts, video and photo sharing sites,
- online encyclopaedias,

- online collaboration platforms,
- artificial intelligence platforms for creation, and
- any other websites that allow individuals to use simple publishing tools or new technologies emerging from the digital environment.

As it is not possible to expressly refer to or list all specific sites or kinds of social media activity, the absence of a reference does not limit the application of this Policy.

This Policy applies only to the use of social media for:

- the purpose of conducting Council business and representing Council, and
- personal use where reference is made to Council Members, council employees, policies and services, suppliers or other stakeholders or Council related issues.

Limited personal use of social media is permitted during paid working hours provided it is incidental. Use must not affect the expected levels of performance and productivity, output and work responsibilities, and must comply with relevant policies.

4. LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Council Members and council employees of the Council are expected to demonstrate standards of conduct and behaviour that are consistent with relevant legislation, regulations and policies.

In particular, the *Local Government Act 1999* (the Act) establishes the overarching governance framework for councils and sets out the roles, responsibilities and conduct expectations of Council Members and council employees, including obligations relating to ethical behaviour, accountability, and the appropriate use of information and communication platforms such as social media.

Council Members and council employees of the Council are expected to demonstrate standards of conduct and behaviour that are consistent with relevant legislation, regulations and policies. Relevant legislation includes but is not limited to, the list contained in clause 11 (further information) of this Policy.

Council policies and guideline provisions that must be adhered to in relation to the use of social media include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Elected Member Behavioural Management Policy
- Employee's Code of Conduct
- Employment Contracts
- Community Engagement Policy
- Records Management Policy
- Elected Members Record Management Policy

5. SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

5.1. Speak how you would like to be spoken to

a) Be courteous, patient and respectful of others' opinions, including detractors.

b) Use your own voice, but be mindful of language and expression.

c) Do not make statements or forward, share or upload content that is malicious, defamatory or may negatively impact the reputation of another.

d) Be mindful of anti-discrimination laws and do not publish statements or information which may be discriminatory.

5.2. Stick to the Facts

a) Only comment about matters within your area of expertise.

b) Be accurate, constructive, helpful and informative, and correct any errors as soon as practicable.

c) Only publish content and statements that you know are true, clear and not likely to mislead or deceive.

d) If you make an error, be up front and correct it quickly.

5.3. Keep your opinion, beliefs and political views separate from Council business

a) Only publish content on Council's social media channels that is apolitical, in line with official Council positions and Council's values, and free from personal opinions, beliefs and political views.

b) Council employees using private social media channels outside of work hours to comment about Council related matters should clearly identify their comments as their own personal opinions, be accurate and factual and not disparage Council, Council Members, council employees or contractors etc.

c) Council Members should use social media in accordance with Council's Elected Member Behaviour Management Policy. Generally, Council Members should not express personal opinions on Council decisions or Council business nor be critical of the Council. If it is not possible to separate official Council positions from personal opinions, Council Members should consider using a formal disclaimer to separate interests.

d) Council Members must not comment, post, forward, share, like or upload any content which may be considered malicious or defamatory. This includes statements or posts which may negatively impact relationships or the reputations of the Council.

5.4. Stay within your level of authorisation

a) Only use social media channels in the manner for which you have been authorised and do not commit Council to actions or undertakings.

b) Leave formal statements and announcements to the official Council spokespeople, and if you are unsure, check with the Chief Executive Officer.

c) Refer any media enquiries via social media or posts about potentially sensitive/political issues to the Chief Executive Officer.

5.5. Be fair and transparent

a) Be clear about your professional identity and any vested interests and refrain from covert, anonymous or deceitful representation including via a third party.

b) Encourage open, honest and transparent engagement and feedback by the online community.

c) Refrain from any behaviour which could be seen as biased, showing undue favour or in response to real or perceived compensation or reward.

5.6. Maintain confidentiality and respect the privacy and property of others

a) Only discuss publicly available information and maintain the confidentiality of internal discussions, confidential decisions of Council, and personal or private information about Council Members, council employees or third parties.

b) Seek permission from anyone who appears in any photographs, video or other footage before sharing via any form of social media and if asked to remove material, do so as soon as practicable.

c) Only use or reproduce copyright material, or the intellectual property of others, including applications, sound recordings (speeches, songs), footage (video), graphics (graphs, charts and logos), images, artwork, photographs, publications or music if you have permission from the creator or owner.

5.7. Be responsible, accessible and responsive

a) Appropriately monitor any social media sites created and ensure they can be easily edited, improved or removed.

b) Specify the type of comments and feedback that will receive a response and clearly communicate a target response time.

c) Make it easy for audiences to reach Council via other methods by publishing Council's phone number, generic email, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn accounts.

d) Ensure information on social media meets government web standards for accessibility and/or is available in another form where practical.

e) Do not use social media when intoxicated, irritated, upset or tired.

f) Protect your personal privacy and guard against identity theft.

5.8. Uphold acceptable content standards

Under no circumstances is the following content permitted on Council social media channels, and if found, formally report, record and then delete it immediately:

a) Abusive, profane or sexual language.

b) Discriminatory material in relation to a person or group based on age, colour, creed, disability, family status, gender identity, nationality, marital status, parental status, political opinion/affiliation, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, race or social origin, religious beliefs/activity, responsibilities, sex or sexual orientation.

c) Illegal material or materials designed to encourage law breaking.

d) Materials that could compromise Council, council employee or system safety.

e) Materials which would breach applicable laws (defamation, privacy, trade practices, copyright, financial rules and regulations, fair use, trademarks).

f) Confidential information about Council or third parties.

g) Material which would bring the Council into disrepute.

h) Personal details or references to Council Members, council employees or third parties, which may be inconsistent with Council's privacy guidelines.

i) Statements or content that may reasonably be considered bullying, harassing, intimidating, or otherwise inappropriate toward any individual or group.

5.9. Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Social Media Communications

The Council acknowledges the growing role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in content creation, communication, and digital engagement. To ensure transparency, integrity, and alignment with Council's values, the following principles apply to the use of AI in Council's social media activities:

a) Responsible Use of AI

AI tools may be used to support social media tasks, including but not limited to drafting captions, creating graphics, automating responses, analysing engagement, and scheduling posts. These tools are to be used as aids, not replacements, for human oversight, strategic decision-making, and community engagement.

b) Transparency and Disclosure

Where AI-generated content forms a significant portion of a social media post or campaign, it should be reviewed and approved by a designated council employee before publication. If appropriate, the use of AI-generated material will be disclosed to the audience to maintain transparency and trust.

c) Content Accuracy and Accountability

All AI-assisted content must be fact-checked, contextually relevant, and aligned with the Council's tone, values, and communication objectives. Final responsibility for published content rests with the authorised council employee or team, not the AI system. **Confidential or sensitive Information should not be used in any AI Tools when generating social media content**.

d) Ethical Considerations

The use of AI must comply with relevant privacy laws, copyright obligations, and community standards. AI should not be used to mislead, impersonate, or produce harmful or discriminatory content.

Council remains committed to adapting responsibly to emerging technologies while maintaining the integrity of its public communications.

If any doubt arises about applying the provisions of this Policy, Council Members and council employees must check with the Chief Executive Officer before using social media to communicate. Depending upon the nature of the issue and potential risk, it may also be appropriate to consider seeking legal advice.

6. SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT

6.1. Approval

The establishment of new social media sites must be approved by the Chief Executive Officer. Approval of new social media sites should consider the identified business objective, audience, proposed use in line with this Policy, resourcing requirements and ensure alignment with Council's branding and style guidelines.

A Social Media Permission Release Form is to be used in conjunction with this Policy to ensure consent is given when the use of footage or photos are released on the Council's social media

platforms.

6.2. Security

To protect from unauthorised use of Council's social media channels, login information should be kept secure and changed at regular intervals:

- Choose passwords that combine upper and lower case letters and numbers.
- Store login information in a secure location and the Chief Executive Officer will maintain a centralised list of all Council's social media with appropriate access restrictions.
- Change passwords every six months or when a council employee with access to a Council social media channel leaves the organisation, whichever occurs first.

6.3. Monitoring

Council's social media channels should be regularly monitored and maintained to ensure appropriate use. Where necessary keep formal records of social media activity in line with Council's Records Management Policy.

Council and non-Council social media channels should be monitored for information, research and insight into issues circulating in the community and/or matters that impact on the Tumby Bay District, its operations or reputation.

6.4. Evaluation & Continuous improvement

Use of Council's social media channels should be reviewed at regular intervals to ensure they are achieving business objectives and to seek opportunities for further improvement. This includes review of qualitative (feedback, comments) and quantitative data (likes, reach, audience make-up, number of comments, click through to Council websites etc.).

7. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

7.1 Council Members

a) Seek authorisation from the Chief Executive Officer on using social media.

b) Seek approval for Council branding of social media.

c) Register social media account/tools/site with the Chief Executive Officer.

d) Understand and comply with the provisions in this Policy.

e) Seek training and development for using social media.

f) Seek advice from the Chief Executive Officer if unsure about applying the provisions of this Policy.

7.2 Council Employees

a) Seek approval from your Manager for business strategy incorporating social media.

b) Seek advice/authorisation from the Chief Executive Officer on using social media and developing a communications plan to support business strategy.

c) Seek approval for Council branding of social media.

d) Register social media account/tools/site with the Chief Executive Officer.

e) Seek training and development for using social media.

f) Understand and comply with the provisions in this Policy.

g) Maintain records of email addresses, comments, 'friends', followers and printed copies or electronic 'screen grabs' when using externally hosted sites to the extent practicable.

h) Seek advice from the Chief Executive Officer if unsure about applying the provisions of this Policy.

i) Ensure contractors are provided with a copy of this Policy.

j) Familiarise yourself with the *End User Licence Agreements* of any external social media tools being used.

7.3 Council's Executive Management Team

a) Approve business strategy incorporating use of social media.

b) Ensure council employees consult/obtain authorisation from the Chief Executive Officer on their planned use of social media.

c) Ensure contractors are provided with a copy of this Policy.

d) Ensure the demands of moderating and responding to user comments can be adequately resourced.

e) Offer training for council employees using social media.

f) Ensure regular review and evaluation of social media channels in line with business objectives and for the purpose of continuous improvement.

7.4 Information Technology (IT) Support

a) Facilitate secure access to support delivery of Council business via social media.

b) Regularly back up and archive internally hosted social media sites.

7.5 Chief Executive Officer

a) Authorise use of social media tools for conducting Council business.

b) Provide advice and assist with the development of communication plans using social media.

c) Approve the design and branding of social media.

d) Educate Council Members, council staff and contractors about this Policy and their responsibilities when using social media.

e) Advise appropriate precautions (e.g. disclaimers).

f) Maintain a register of social media being used for conducting Council business including records of the business case for using social media, its strategic imperative, the intended administrator, URL, login, password and audience.

g) Assist staff to retain a record explaining the context or purpose of social media, and a sample of posts where it is impractical to retain large volumes of screen grabs.

h) Monitor social media accounts/tools/sites registered for conducting Council business.

i) Monitor social media for references to the Council.

j) Regularly conduct qualitative and quantitative review and evaluation of social media

channels and advise on best practice.

k) Seek legal advice as appropriate through the Chief Executive Officer where an issue is likely to be contentious or may create legal risk for Council.

8. ADHERENCE TO THIS POLICY

Council reserves the right, for legal compliance purposes, to monitor social media usage on its systems without advance notice and consistent with any applicable state, federal or international laws.

The Council will actively monitor social media for relevant contributions that impact on the Council, its operations and reputation, and remove, where possible, content that violates this Policy or any associated policies. This Policy will be published and promoted to Council Members and council employees.

Breaches of this Policy by Council Members or council employees may constitute a breach of their respective Behavioural Standards. Any Council Member or council employee who are found to have breached this Policy may be subject to disciplinary action or performance management. Serious breaches may result in suspension or termination of employment in accordance with Council policies. Any content that breaches the policy guidelines will be recorded and kept on personnel records.

If Council Members or council employees become aware of any comments that breach these guidelines, they must report them to the Chief Executive Officer and include a link or reference to, and/or a screenshot, of the offending material.

9. POLICY REVIEW

This Policy will be reviewed every four (4) years. The Council has the right to review this policy at any time, if considered desirable.

10. AVAILABILITY OF POLICY

This Policy will be available for inspection at the Council's Office during ordinary business hours and via the Council's website, www.tumbybay.sa.gov.au. Copies will also be provided to the public upon request and upon payment of a fee in accordance with the Council's Schedule of Fees and Charges.

11. FURTHER INFORMATION

File reference	R26/9869
Responsibility	Chief Executive Officer
Version	2
Effective date	14/07/2026
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Applicable Legislation	*Local Government Act 1999* *Local Government (Elections) Act 1999* *Copyright Act 1968 (Cth)* *Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935* *Defamation Act 2005* *Fair Trading Act 1997* *Fair Work Act 1994* *Freedom of Information Act 1991* *Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (SA)* *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)* *Spam Act 2003 (Cth)* *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)* *State Records Act 1997* *Civil Liability Act 1936*
Related Policies	Discretionary Code of Conduct Elected Member Behavioural Policy Community Engagement Policy
Related Documentation	Social Media Permission Release Form

AUTHORITY: Adopted by Council: 12/05/2020 {Motion 3c/52020}
Adopted by Council 14/07/2026 {Motion 18c/72026}

SIGNED: .....

Responsible Officer

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