



Baw Baw Shire Council

Social Media Policy

2017-2020

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Introduction	3
Policy Purpose	3
Policy Benefits.....	3
Policy Scope	3
Defining Social Media.....	4
Policy Framework.....	4
Council Social Media Profiles.....	5
Branding	5
Content Disclaimer	5
Prohibited Content.....	6
Records of All Activity on Council Social Media	6
Personal Use of Social Media	7
Enforcement of this Policy.....	7
Baw Baw Shire Council Representatives.....	7
External Users	8
Roles and Responsibilities	8

Introduction

Local Government has a core responsibility to provide their constituents with easy access to consultation, information and other resident services.

As a high-reach direct-to-user communications channel, social media is fast becoming popular with many Council stakeholders. As such, it should be considered as a key element of community collaboration, engagement and interaction strategies and campaigns.

Policy Purpose

The intent of this policy is to provide understanding and guidance for the appropriate use of social media for the purpose of conducting Council business.

The rules it contains have been designed both to protect Baw Baw Shire Council, and Council employees, and to best serve our community.

Specifically, this policy:

- Sets rules for the establishing and branding Council social media profiles
- Informs appropriate use of social media for Council business
- Minimises miscommunication and/or communications that entail reputational risk
- Defines permissible staff conduct via personal social media profiles with reference to official Council matters
- Manages the inherent challenges presented by social media's fast paced, conversation-style communications and the community's expectation of immediate responsiveness.

Policy Benefits

Upon implementation of this policy, Council can expect the following benefits:

- Improved governance on the use of social media for Council business
- Effective and productive community engagement through social media
- Improved access to greater segments of the public who may otherwise be under represented through other engagement channels
- Improved communicational risk management.

Policy Scope

This policy applies to all social media communications made by Council staff who are authorised to make, or be construed to make, representations on behalf of Baw Baw Shire Council.

This policy *is not* intended to cover personal use of social media where:

- The author publishes information in their personal capacity and not on behalf of, or in association with Baw Baw Shire Council; and
- No reference is made to Baw Baw Shire Council, its Councillors, staff, policies and services, suppliers or other stakeholders or Council related issues.

This policy *is* intended to cover personal use of social media where:

- reference is made to council matters; and/or
- behaviour or content posted may bring Council into disrepute (see p. 7, *Personal Use of Social Media*); and/or
- behaviour may be in breach of the Council Employee Code of Conduct.

Defining Social Media

For the purposes of this policy, social media shall be defined as any digital space where people comment, contribute, create, forward, post, upload and share content and opinions. This may include:

- Social networks and microblogging sites (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, tumblr)
- Video and photo sharing sites (e.g. YouTube, Vimeo)
- Blogs (including corporate blogs, personal blogs or blogs hosted by traditional media publications)
- Online bulletin boards
- Citizen journalism and news sites
- Forums and discussion boards
- Instant messaging (IM) platforms
- Microblogging sites (e.g. Twitter)
- Wikis and editable online encyclopaedias (e.g. Wikipedia)
- Podcasts
- Video podcasts
- Any other apps, online platform or websites that grant users access to immediate publishing or conversation tools, including new technologies emerging from the digital environment.

It must be acknowledged that the platforms listed above will change and evolve, with new tools emerging all the time. This policy should be applied to any emergent platform that may be defined as *social media* by the criteria above. The absence of reference to a particular site or kind of social media activity does not limit the application of this policy.

Policy Framework

This policy is intended to support and align with other relevant Council policies and procedures, including the following:

- Baw Baw Shire Council Social Media Operational Guidelines
- Baw Baw Shire Council acceptable use policies for email, internet, digital equipment, electronic communications
- Baw Baw Shire Employee Code of Conduct
- Baw Baw Shire Council Communications Policy
- Baw Baw Shire Council Media Policy
- Baw Baw Shire Council Community Engagement Framework.

Council Social Media Profiles

Specific social media platforms evolve and appear faster than any one policy can account for separately. Over the life of this policy, it is likely that new platforms might emerge that Council may decide to employ for conducting Council business.

The creation of any new Council social media profile must be first approved by the Executive Leadership Team, and adhere to the following guidelines.

Branding

The profile must:

- Be clearly branded with official Council logos
- Feature a name that deviates as little as possible from 'Baw Baw Shire Council'
- Include basic identifying information in the 'about', 'bio' or similar section of the profile. For example:

Situated 100 kms south east of Melbourne, Baw Baw Shire Council lies in rural Gippsland and is famous for its spectacular rolling landscapes, historical towns and hamlets, and some of the richest farming land in the region. It covers 4,000 square kilometres and is home to over 45,000 people.

- Establish clear links to Council's other official communication channels: Where possible, the Council's social media profiles and content should include contact information and links back to other official Council websites to offer more expansive context, forms, information and other online services.

Content Disclaimer

Council social media profile information must make clear to users that only those posts *made by* Council represent Council's official views.

This should be done by ensuring that all Council social media displays a permanent disclaimer within their profile information section, or link to an official disclaimer on the Baw Baw Shire Council website. The disclaimer should convey the following:

This is the official <insert social media profile (e.g. 'Facebook page')> of Baw Baw Shire Council.

The contents of posts, replies and comments by users other than Baw Baw Shire Council do not represent the official views of Council.

Baw Baw Shire Council reserves the right to remove offensive content or content that violates Council's Social Media Policy or any associated policies. Council also reserves the right to block those users that post offensive content or content that violates Council policies.

Materials authorised or posted are subject to public disclosure.

For clarification, you can direct any correspondence to bawbaw@bawbawshire.vic.gov.au

Prohibited Content

Content that includes or links to the following types of content is not permitted under any circumstances:

- Material that would offend contemporary standards of taste and decency
- Abusive, profane or sexual language or imagery
- Discriminatory material aligned to age, colour, creed, disability, family status, gender, nationality, marital status, parental status, political opinion/affiliation, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, race or social origin, religious beliefs/activity, responsibilities, sex or sexual orientation
- Commercial solicitations or transactions
- The promotion of alcohol or gambling
- Content which is false or misleading
- Confidential information about the Council or third parties
- Copyright or ownership protected materials
- Illegal materials or materials designed to encourage law breaking
- Materials that could compromise Council, employee or system safety
- Materials which would breach applicable laws (defamation, privacy, trade practices, financial rules and regulations, fair use, trademarks)
- Material which would bring the Council or its stakeholders into disrepute
- Personal details or references to Councillors, Council staff or third parties, which may breach privacy laws
- Spam (i.e. the distribution of unsolicited bulk electronic messages)
- Statements which may be considered to be bullying or harassment.

Any user generated content (such as comments, replies or posts) that does not adhere to Council's content guidelines will be removed and the user blocked if necessary.

Records of All Activity on Council Social Media

As all social media activity is a matter of public record, it is Council's responsibility to ensure that all social media content disseminated by Council, as well as all user responses, are systematically recorded and documented for future reference.

Currently, Council uses the social media documentation tool Digi.Me to create daily .pdf reports of all social media activity from the preceding 24 hours. These are sorted by year and month and stored in the folder [Q:\Corporate Administration\Corp Communication - Online Communications\Social Media\Facebook & Twitter\Facebook & Twitter Posts](#)

Personal Use of Social Media

A defining feature of social media is its ability to blur the lines between professional and personal lives. This poses a unique challenge for any organisation and is a key reason why this social media policy sets out clear guidelines pertaining to both official social media activity (i.e. anything released as an official statement through Council's official profiles) and staff's personal activity (i.e. the behaviour and personal opinions of an employee via their own profiles/channels).

Baw Baw Shire Council staff must be careful to separate their personal opinions from professional ones. If a staff member is readily identifiable as a Council employee, or their views could be construed as representative of the Council, they should make it clear that the opinions they express are solely their own and do not represent the official position of any organisation.

Staff must not say or do anything via their personal social media profiles that could potentially damage the operations or reputation of the Council. This applies to both at work or non-working periods.

As a rule, staff should exercise extreme discretion when referring to any Council matters on social media. If the content discusses work or work-related topics, staff must not:

- Disclose confidential documents or details
- Make public the substance of internal discussions or decisions
- Publish content in exchange for reward of any kind.

If in doubt, leave it out!

Enforcement of this Policy

Baw Baw Shire Council Representatives

This policy will be published and promoted to all Council staff.

It is the responsibility of all Council staff to understand and comply with the provisions of this policy.

Breaching this policy may result in performance management, review or disciplinary action.

External Users

Baw Baw Shire Council reserves the right to remove, where possible, any user content that violates this policy or any associated policies.

Baw Baw Shire Council reserves the right to block users that violate this policy or any associated policies.

Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Council Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and comply with the provisions in this policy • Seek advice from the Communications unit if unsure about applying the provisions of this policy
Managers and Directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and comply with the provisions in this policy • Ensure staff and contractors are provided with a copy of the social media policy • Encourage training for staff using social media • Advise IT of approval to access social media for business purposes • Seek advice from the Communications unit if unsure about applying the provisions of this policy
IT unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate secure access to support delivery of Council business via social media
Communications unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and comply with the provisions in this policy • Create and disseminate Council content via social media • Advise and seek approval from the Executive Leadership Team to authorise use of social media tools for conducting Council business • Provide advice and assist with the development of communication plans using social media • Educate Councillors, staff and contractors about this policy and their responsibilities when using social media • Advise appropriate precautions e.g. disclaimers • Maintain a register of social media being used for conducting Council business including login details/registrations • Monitor and moderate all social media registered for conducting Council business.