



Social Media Policy

Council Policy

Renmark Paringa Council

Responsible Officer	Director Corporate and Community Services
Relevant Legislation	
Adopted	24 November 2015
Reviewed	June 2022
Next Review	June 2024

1. Purpose

Social media allows online communities with common interests to connect, share and consume information, thoughts and ideas.

Renmark Paringa 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.

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

The intent of this policy is to provide clear guidance on the appropriate use of social media platforms and tools in order to enable and encourage its use by Council, Elected Members, Council staff, volunteers and contractors for the purpose of conducting Council business.

The policy aims to:

- Promote effective and productive community engagement through social media.
- Provide guidance about the appropriate use of social media tools at Renmark Paringa Council.



- Reduce the likelihood of miscommunication or inappropriate communications.
- Help Renmark Paringa Council manage new challenges associated with social media such as speed and immediacy, record keeping, privacy and security.
- Provide clarity about roles and responsibilities in relation to use, approval and monitoring.
- Ensure Council has a Policy to enable it to take maximum benefit from these contemporary communication methods.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all Elected Members, staff, contractors, agents and volunteers of Renmark Paringa Council who purport to use social media on behalf of Renmark Paringa Council. This policy will also apply to agencies and individuals who provide services to Renmark Paringa Council and will be included in all relevant external supplier contracts.

The policy applies to all current and future social media tools and channels. That is, 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 (e.g. Twitter).
- Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook).
- Podcasts, video podcasts, video and photo sharing sites (e.g. Flickr, YouTube, Pinterest,).
- Online encyclopaedias (e.g. Wikipedia).
- Online collaboration platforms (e.g. Yammer, Wiki).
- 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 the 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 where representing Council; and
- personal use where reference is made to Elected Members, staff, policies and services, suppliers or other stakeholders or Council related issues.

Personal use of social media is not permitted during paid working hours. Certain members of staff i.e. the Communications Team have approval from the CEO to use social media for the purpose of representing Council to engage and

communicate with the community. Designated staff also may use social media to monitor community issues which are being promoted through social media.

3. Legislative and policy framework

Elected Members and staff of Renmark Paringa Council are expected to demonstrate standards of conduct and behaviour that are consistent with relevant legislation, regulations and policies. A list of relevant legislation which may be used as a guide is included in Appendix A.

This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies and procedures of Renmark Paringa Council. Policies and guideline provisions which must be adhered to in relation to the use of social media include the following:

- IT and Communications Policy
- Code of Conduct Employee Policy
- Code of Conduct Elected Members Policy
- Complaints Relating to Employee Code of Conduct and Behaviour Policy
- Renmark Paringa Council employment contracts
- Media Statements Policy
- Records Management Policy
- Renmark Paringa Council Public Consultation Policy
- Renmark Paringa Council ICT Strategy
- Renmark Paringa Council Privacy Policy
- Renmark Paringa Council Caretaker Policy

4. Policy Statement

Renmark Paringa Council encourages the appropriate and professional use of social media to aid the efficient and effective conduct of Council business.

Social media is recognised as an important channel, used in conjunction with traditional methods, to communicate, listen to, engage and collaborate with the community and enhance the delivery of services.

At all times, use of social media by Council members and staff should be done in a professional manner, in accordance with relevant policies and legislation, and consistent with the values of Renmark Paringa Councils Communication Plan.

4.1. Usage

Speak in a respectful tone and manner

- The Communications Team are the custodians of the various social media platforms and are aware of the appropriate means of communication.
- Be courteous, patient and respectful of others' opinions, including detractors.
- Use your own voice but be mindful of language and expression.
- Don't make statements or forward, share or upload content that is malicious, defamatory or may negatively impact the reputation of another.



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

If members of the Communications Team are unsure as to how to write a response to a query on social media, liaise with the Community Development Team Leader for guidance on how to respond to social media comments.

Stick to the facts

- Only comment about matters within your area of expertise.
- Be accurate, constructive, helpful and informative, and correct any errors as soon as practicable.
- Only publish content and statements that you know are true, clear and not likely to mislead or deceive.
- If you make an error, be up front and correct it quickly.

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

- Only publish content on Council's social media channels that is apolitical, in line with official Council positions and Renmark Paringa Council's values, and free from personal opinions, beliefs and political views.
- Council staff using private social media channels outside of work hours to comment about Council related matters must adhere to Council's Code of Conduct Employee Policy.
- Council works hard on developing and maintaining partnerships, collaborations and effective working relationships with other LGA's, businesses and agencies. Council staff are discouraged from making negative or disparaging comments about these groups.
- Elected Members should use social media in accordance with the Code of Conduct for Council Members. All Council member social media accounts should have a prominent statement that clearly identifies they are not speaking on behalf of Council. In expressing individual views, Elected members must do so in a way that does not undermine the community's trust or confidence in Council and maintains respectful relationship with fellow Elected members and staff.

Stay within your level of authorisation

- Only use social media channels in the manner for which you have been authorised and do not commit Council to actions or undertakings.
- Leave formal statements and announcements to the official spokespeople (Communications Team) and if you are unsure, check with your supervisor.
- Refer any media enquiry via social media or posts about potentially sensitive/political issues to the Community Development Team Leader, Director and/or the CEO who will then work with the Communications Team on how best to respond.



Be fair and transparent

- Be clear about your professional identity and any vested interests and refrain from covert, anonymous or deceitful representation including via a third party.
- Encourage open, honest and transparent engagement and feedback by the online community.
- Refrain from any behaviour which could be seen as biased, showing undue favour or in response to real or perceived compensation or reward.

Maintain confidentiality and respect the privacy and property of others

- Only discuss publicly available information and maintain the confidentiality of internal discussions, confidential decisions of Council, and personal or private information about Elected Members, employees or third parties.
- 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 materials do so as soon as practicable.
- 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.

Be responsible, accessible and responsive

- Appropriately monitor any social media sites created and ensure they can be easily edited, improved or removed.
- Specify the type of comments and feedback that will receive a response and clearly communicate a target response time. Refer to Attachment B for guidance on how to respond to social media comments.
- Make it easy for audiences to reach Council via other methods by publishing Council's phone number, generic email, and other social media contact methods. Ensure information on social media meets government web standards for accessibility and/or is available in another form where practical.
- Do not use social media when inebriated, irritated, under the influence of illegal drugs, upset or tired.
- Protect your personal privacy and guard against identity theft.

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:

- Abusive, profane or sexual language.



- 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.
- Illegal material 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, copyright, financial rules and regulations, fair use, trademarks).
- Confidential information about Council or third parties.
- Material that would offend contemporary standards of taste and decency.
- Material which would bring the Council into disrepute.
- Personal details or references to Elected Members, Council staff or third parties, which may be inconsistent with Council's Privacy Policy.
- Spam, meaning the distribution of unsolicited bulk electronic messages.
- Statements which may be considered to be bullying or harassment.

If you have any doubt about applying the provisions of this policy, check with the Community Development Team Leader 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.

4.2. Management

Approval

The establishment of new social media sites must be discussed with the Community Development Team Leader prior to being approved by the Executive. 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.

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.
- The Communications Team will maintain a centralised list of all Renmark Paringa Council's social media with appropriate access restrictions.

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 Information Records 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 municipality, its operations or reputation.

Evaluation and 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 throughs to Council website etc).

5. Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
CEO and Mayor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand and comply with the provisions in this policy.• Seek training and development for using social media.• Seek advice from the Community Development Team Leader if unsure about applying the provisions of this policy.
Elected Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seek advice/authorisation from the Chief Executive Officer or Director if CEO on using social media.• Seek approval for Council branding of social media.• Register social media account/tools/site with the Communications Team.• Understand and comply with the provisions in this policy.• Seek training and development for using social media.• Seek advice from the Community Development Team Leader if unsure about applying the provisions of this policy.



Staff and contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seek approval from your Manager for a business strategy incorporating social media.• Seek authorisation from the Chief Executive Officer or Director and advice from the Community Development Team Leader on using social media and developing a communications plan to support a business strategy.• Seek approval for Council branding of social media.• Register official social media account/tools/site with the Community Development Team Leader .• Seek training and development for using social media.• Understand and comply with the provisions in this policy.• Maintain records of email addresses, comments, 'friends', followers and printed copies or electronic 'screen grabs' when using externally hosted sites to the extent practicable.• Seek advice from the Chief Executive Officer, Director or Community Development Team Leader if unsure about applying the provisions of this policy.• Ensure contractors are provided with a copy of this policy.• Familiarise yourself with the End User Licence Agreements of any external social media tools being used.
Directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approve business strategies incorporating use of social media.• Ensure staff obtain authorisation from the Chief Executive Officer and consult with the Community Development Team Leader on their planned use of social media.• Ensure contractors are provided with a copy of the social media policy.• Ensure the demands of moderating and responding to user comments can be adequately resourced.• Offer training for staff using social media.• Ensure regular reviews and evaluations of social media channels are in line with business objectives and for the purpose of continuous improvement.
ICT Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facilitate secure access to support delivery of Council business via social media.• Regularly back up and archive internally hosted social media sites.



Communications Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Communications Team is managed by the Community Development Team Leader.• Facilitate the use of social media tools for conducting Council business.• Provide advice and assist with the development of communication plans using social media.• Approve the design and branding of social media.• Educate Elected Members, 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 records of the business case for using social media, its strategic imperative, the intended administrator, URL, login, password and audience.• Assist staff in retaining a record that explains the context or purpose of social media, and a sample of posts where it is impractical to retain large volumes of screen grabs.• Monitor social media accounts/tools/sites registered for conducting Council business.• Monitor social media for references to Renmark Paringa Council.• Regularly conduct qualitative and quantitative reviews and evaluations of social media channels and advise on best practice.• Seek advice from Chief Executive Officer or Directors where an issue is likely to be contentious or may create risk for Council.
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6. Adherence to 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.

Renmark Paringa 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 Elected Members and staff of Renmark Paringa Council.

Any staff found breaching this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, performance management and/or review. Serious breaches may result in suspension or termination of employment or association in accordance with Council policies. Any content that breaches the policy guidelines will be recorded and kept on personnel records.



For Elected Members, breaching this policy may result in a code of conduct complaint.

If Elected Members or staff becomes aware of any comments that breach these guidelines they should report them to the Communications Team at connect@renmarkparinga.sa.gov.au and include a link or reference to the offending material.

7. References/Related Documents

Appendix A – Relevant Legislation

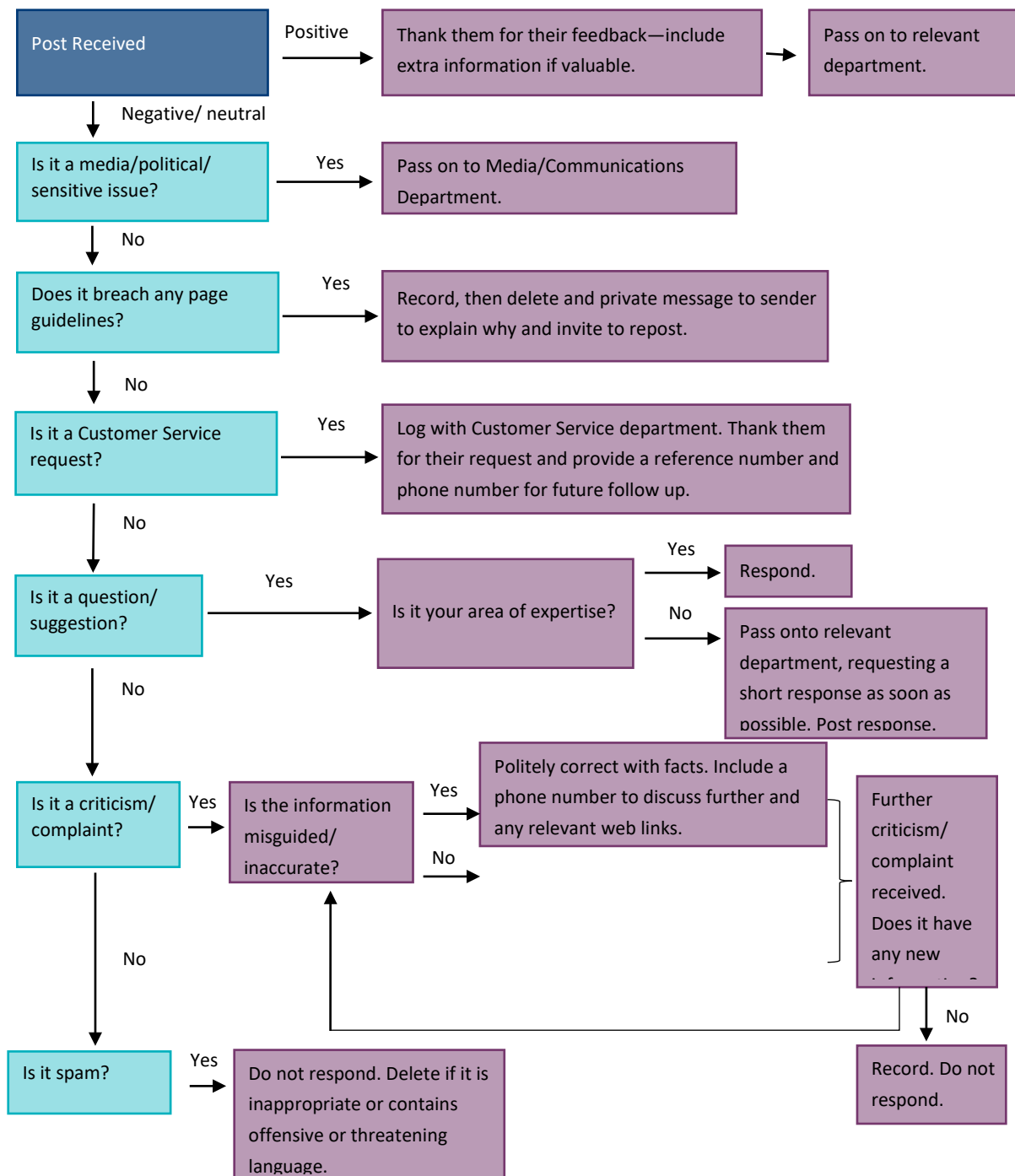
Elected Members and staff of Renmark Paringa Council are expected to demonstrate standards of conduct and behaviour that are consistent with relevant legislation, regulations and policies.

Relevant legislation includes but is not limited to, the following:

- Copyright Act 1968 (Cth)
- Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935 (SA)
- Defamation Act 2005 (SA)
- Fair Trading Act 1997 (SA)
- Fair Work Act 1994 (SA)
- Freedom of Information Act 1991 (SA)
- Local Government Act 1999 (SA)
- Local Government (Elections) Act 1999 (SA)
- Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (SA)
- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)
- Spam Act 2003 (Cth)
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- State Records Act 1997 (SA)
- Civil Liability Act 1936 (SA)

Appendix B – Response Guide

A guide for deciding which posts need a response and in what manner.



Appendix C – Council Member Social Media

Council Member social media use should comply with the Code of Conduct for Council Members as well as media/communications/spokesperson policies. The following guidelines apply to Council member social media in addition to those outlined in this Social Media Policy.

Accurate representation

- To provide clarity for the community between 'individual' views and the 'official' view of Council, a disclaimer statement must be displayed in accordance with the intended use of the social media channel. For example:
 - Personal use only – 'these are my personal, individual views'
 - Personal and professional use – 'the views expressed are my individual comments and opinions, not the official position of Council'
 - .
 - Council branding, including the Council logo, should only be on social media channels that are used purely for professional Council member reasons. In branding a channel, care must be taken to keep it distinct from 'official' Council channels.

Promotion and support

- Development, hosting, maintenance and monitoring of individual Council member social media is the responsibility of the individual councillor, however officers can provide guidance and advice if used for professional Council purposes.
- Individual Elected members can have social media channels included in their Council member contact details (for example, on Council website, newsletter, member stationery etc.) if these channels are only used for professional Council member purposes.

Record keeping

- Under section 99 of the Local Government Act 1999, the CEO has a legal responsibility to ensure that records are appropriately kept and maintained. This includes all Council member communication relating to Council business on social media
- While it is not necessary to preserve all online conversations, anything significant that may influence Council policy, relates to Council decisions, or where there may have been breaches of policies or laws (i.e. inappropriate comments that you delete) must be appropriately recorded and stored in line with Renmark Paringa Council Information Records Policy.

Caretaker provisions

- Elected members must ensure that Council resources are not used to create or distribute electoral material, or to advantage or disadvantage a candidate during the caretaker period. This includes the use of Council logos on individual Council member social media channels and posts by candidates on Council-owned social media channels. Refer to Renmark Paringa Council Caretaker Policy.

< For further information and advice about social media best practice, refer to the Local Government Association of South Australia's Social Media for Elected Members Guide' >

