

## Social Media

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Responsible Officer:	Director Corporate
Relevant Legislation:	<i>State Records Act 1997</i> <i>Local Government Act 1999</i> <i>Freedom of Information Act 1991</i> <i>SA Public Health Act 2011</i> <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</i>
Related Policies:	Media Policy Community Engagement (Public Consultation) Policy Records Management Policy <i>Local Government Act 1999 – Behavioural Standards for Council Members</i> Code of Conduct for Employees Code of Conduct for Volunteers Caretaker Policy

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Social media can be defined as electronic tools and platforms people use to connect, publish, converse, consume and share information. This medium can complement and enhance traditional communication, customer service and engagement methods used by Council, and further improve access to and delivery of key services.
- 1.2 Social media is becoming an increasingly important way in which Council engages with the community. Social media enables Council to:
  - 1.2.1 enhance existing communication and information circulation by extending reach;
  - 1.2.2 direct the community to Council information, engagement, events and images;

- 1.2.3 promote programs, activities and events;
  - 1.2.4 build and enhance relationships with the community and stakeholders; and
  - 1.2.5 provide the community with the opportunity to further engage and actively participate in discussions that are of importance, interest and concern to them.
- 1.3 This Policy aims to provide a guideline for the management of the City of Burnside corporate, or authorised, social media accounts.
  - 1.4 Engagement with the community through other means and promotional tools is covered under the Community Engagement (Public Consultation) Policy.

## 2. Strategic Plan Desired Outcomes

*Principles:* 2. Communication and Engagement

*Theme:* Spans across all Strategic Plan Themes

*Goals:* 1. A resilient, healthy and connected community

*Priorities:* 1.3 A sense of community

## 3. Our Approach

- 3.1 Enable effective and efficient Council business.
- 3.2 Provide convenient and flexible service delivery.
- 3.3 Remain compliant with all relevant legislation, standards and codes.
- 3.4 Provide a range of opportunities for the Burnside community to actively engage and communicate with Council.

## 4. Legislative Requirements and Corporate Policy Context

### 4.1 *State Records Act 1997*

The *State Records Act* does not apply to the personal social media accounts of Council Members, Council Staff or Volunteers.

There are no formal State Records guidelines specifically relating to the best practice management of records created or received in the social media context. However advice from State Records indicates that any information, images and footage distributed or received through Council's authorised social media accounts in the conduct of Council business are still considered official records and will be captured and maintained in accordance with the *State Records Act 1997* and General Disposal Schedule 40, as per all other official records held by Council.

### 4.2 *Local Government Act 1999*

Under section 58 of the *Local Government Act 1999*, the principal member, the Mayor, has the responsibility to act as the official spokesperson of the Council. The Mayor also has the power to delegate this responsibility to an approved

person such as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The CEO has existing authority to delegate this responsibility to a member of staff to fulfill this function. This is in line with Council's current Media Policy.

Under section 75E of the *Local Government Act 1999*, Behavioural Standards for Council Members are established. These Behavioural Standards form part of the conduct management framework for Council Members under the Act.

#### 4.3 *Media Policy*

Under Council's current Media Policy, the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) are the official spokespersons for Council when communicating to the media (traditionally recognised as the mainstream methods of print, television or radio). The CEO has existing authority under the Policy to delegate this responsibility to a member of staff to fulfill this function.

#### 4.4 *Freedom of Information Act 1991*

The *Freedom of Information Act* does not apply to the personal social media accounts of Council Members, Council Staff or Volunteers.

The *Freedom of Information Act 1991* gives legally enforceable right of access by members of public (subject to certain restrictions) to corporate records held by government agencies and Councils. Any communication submitted to Council, either electronically or in hard copy form, becomes a Council record and is required to be kept in accordance with the *State Records Act 1997* and Council policies.

#### 4.5 *Community Engagement (Public Consultation) Policy*

Community engagement uses a variety of promotional tools to raise the level of community awareness about an upcoming decision making process to encourage participation. If social media were to be used as a method to consult with the community, it would be in accordance with the guidelines established under this Policy.

#### 4.6 *Council Code of Conduct for Council Employees*

##### *Council Code of Conduct for Volunteers*

The Codes of Conduct require that Council Employees and Volunteers must comply with all relevant Council policies, codes and resolutions. Council staff also comply with an Employee Conduct Protocol.

#### 4.7 *SA Public Health Act 2011*

*Better Living, Better Health 2020-2025 Regional Public Health and Wellbeing Plan* addresses the requirements of the *SA Public Health Act 2011* for the Eastern Health Authority and its Constituent Councils, providing the strategic direction for improving community wellbeing and social connection.

#### 4.8 *Local Government Act 1999 – Behavioural Standards for Council Members*

Council Member management and use of their own council-related social media accounts is governed by the Behavioural Standards for Council Members.

#### 4.9 *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*

Under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, Council is required to provide information and services in a way that is inclusive and accessible.

## 5. Interpretation

- 5.1 For this Policy, social media will refer to electronic techniques or technologies established officially by the Council Administration that communicate directly to and with the community. This includes the Council's corporate website and any other authorised social media accounts.
- 5.2 Social media accounts established by Council Administration, and approved by the CEO or Director Corporate, to conduct Council-related business, are 'authorised social media accounts'.
- 5.3 Social media accounts opened by Council Members, Council staff and Volunteers not authorised by the CEO or Director Corporate, are 'personal social media accounts'.
- 5.4 Personal social media sites and the content contained within them that are set up by Council employees, current Council Members and Volunteers are covered by this policy in relation to comments on Council, council decisions, the Administration or on any information brought to Council in confidence.
- 5.5 Social media sites and the content contained within them that are set up by community members, local businesses or other broader social media providers (ie Wikipedia) are not covered within this Policy. However material sent by those sites to Council or by Council to those sites is covered by this Policy. Staff behaviour on social media sites is covered by the Employee Conduct Protocol. Volunteer behaviour on social media sites is covered by the *Code of Conduct for Volunteers*. Council Member behaviour on social media sites is covered by the *Behavioural Standards for Council Members*.

## 6. Policy

### Implementing New Social Media Applications

- 6.1 The establishment of new Council social media accounts must be approved by the Director Corporate.
- 6.2 Approval of new authorised social media accounts will involve consideration of the identified business objective of the account, the audience, the proposed use, alignment with Council's corporate branding and style guidelines and resourcing requirements.

### Access

- 6.3 Access to the Council's authorised social media platforms by Council staff, Volunteers and contractors that are engaged by the Council (including for content creation, responding to queries, monitoring, account maintenance and security), will be authorised and managed in accordance with Council guidelines.
- 6.4 Council Members will not be authorised to access or use the Council's authorised social media platforms to conduct Council-related business (this excludes the publication of information relating to the Council Members by Council staff, Volunteers or contractors that are engaged by the Council).

- 6.5 Personal social media accounts owned and managed by Council Members, Council staff and Volunteers should be created using a personal email address, not a City of Burnside email address, as corporate email addresses cease operation at the conclusion of a Council Member's term, or a Council staff members or Volunteer's employment.
- 6.6 Council staff, Volunteers or contractors will not support the personal social media accounts of named individuals (Council Members, Council staff and Volunteers), as these are personal accounts not managed by Council.

### **Managing Existing Social Media Applications**

- 6.7 The Council encourages appropriate and professional use of social media platforms to aid the efficient and effective conduct of Council business. Council staff, Volunteers and contractors engaged by the Council are expected to comply with the following principles when using Council **authorised accounts** at all times:
  - 6.7.1 all content should be accurate, relevant and timely;
  - 6.7.2 language and writing style should be appropriate and courteous;
  - 6.7.3 content should be accessible and understandable and promote a safe and inclusive environment in which to connect, share and consume information;
  - 6.7.4 content should encourage open, honest and transparent engagement and feedback from the 'online community';
  - 6.7.5 terms and conditions should be displayed in the 'information' section of the site with a disclaimer that while legitimate questions and complaints will be addressed, statements that are derogatory, insulting or otherwise unduly negative will be removed if they do not meet the standards of common courtesy;
  - 6.7.6 all content (both outgoing and incoming) must be appropriate and comply with City of Burnside's Record Management Policy and any other Council processes or policies; and
  - 6.7.7 information produced and displayed on social media sites by the City of Burnside will not be used to support candidates seeking election for state or local government, apart from encouraging resident participation in, or promoting, Local Government elections.

### **Closing Social Media Applications**

- 6.8 If an authorised social media site is no longer considered by the CEO to be a useful communication tool, is no longer popular with the community, is proving too expensive or time consuming to maintain, or any other appropriate reason, it can be suspended or closed. A notice of intention will be provided as a courtesy.

### **Commenting on Social Media Sites**

- 6.9 With electronic news sites and social media channels increasing in popularity, they are also becoming more popular for submitting feedback or comments online.

- 6.10 Where an item is about the Council, the CEO or delegated staff member may place a comment on behalf of the Council via social media provided that:
- 6.10.1 they do not disclose any City of Burnside information that is considered to be confidential or non-public in nature; and
  - 6.10.2 they do not knowingly communicate inaccurate or false information and all reasonable efforts should be made to provide only verifiable facts, not personal opinions.
- 6.11 The Council actively monitors social media for contributions or comments relating to the Council, its operation and its reputation. Any activity that may be deemed inappropriate by an employee/volunteer or Council Member that is or not in line with Employee Conduct Protocol/ Code of Conduct for Volunteers or Behavioural Standards for Council Members may result in a disciplinary or code of conduct process.

## **7. Complaints**

- 7.1 Any grievances in relation to this Policy or its application should be forwarded in writing to the Director Corporate, City of Burnside

## **8. Review and Authority**

- 8.1 This Policy will be reviewed every four years in accordance with Council's Policy and Procedure Framework.
- 8.2 Without changing the intent, the CEO or a Director may waive or vary the requirements of this policy as needed to meet operational requirements.

## **9. Availability**

- 9.1 The Policy is available to be downloaded, free of charge, from Council's website [www.burnside.sa.gov.au](http://www.burnside.sa.gov.au)
- 9.2 A copy may be purchased at a fee as set annually by Council.

## **10. Further information**

For further information about this policy please contact:

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Tusmore SA 5065  
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