

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

September 2021

PREPARED BY:

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SUTHERLANDSHIRE

1. PURPOSE

Sutherland Shire Council (Council) strives to engage with our community in an open and accountable manner through effective communication channels, and we recognise that social media plays an important role in this process. Effective use of social media provides numerous benefits to both Council and the wider community, including the opportunity to share information with community stakeholders on Council services, decisions, priorities and challenges, seek community feedback, understand varied points of view and build partnerships. It increases community understanding of Council's purpose and goals, improves transparency and builds trust.

This Policy outlines Council's approach to engaging with our community on Council's corporate social media to optimise effective engagement and manage risks. It provides the principles which guide our management of corporate social media, and articulates the roles and responsibilities of Council employees and elected representatives in utilising social media.

2. APPLICATION

This Policy applies to:

2.1 Council's Corporate Social Media

Council maintains a range of social media accounts that are aligned to best practice and responsive to our community's digital engagement needs. A list of current corporate social media accounts is included at Schedule 2.

2.2 Council Staff

All Council employees, contract workers, consultants and others who engage with the community and stakeholders on Council's corporate social media accounts

2.3 Councillors

All Councillors (*refer 4. Roles & Responsibilities*)

3. PRINCIPLES

3.1 Application of Principles

No one principle should be applied to the detriment of another. Principles must be collectively considered and applied to the extent that it is reasonable and practicable in the circumstances.

The Principles underpin our Social Media *Terms of Use* (*refer 3.5 Respectful*) articulated to the community to guide how we engage, moderate and manage corporate social media.

3.2 Encourage Participation

Sutherland Shire Council utilises social media to showcase how we're contributing and delivering for our community and encourage community participation and engagement.

We believe our community have a right to be informed and involved in decisions that affect them and we are genuine, responsive and transparent in seeking valuable input from the community.

We aim to assist and help resolve simple enquiries received through corporate social media, however not all matters can be resolved through this channel. We may refer community members to alternative contact options to ensure their enquiry is addressed appropriately.

3.3 Timely and Accurate

We provide accurate and timely news and information on Council's key services and facilities to our community. We use social media for public announcements, to provide updates, promote engagement opportunities and to inform the community of any emergencies or incidents that may affect them.

3.4 Inclusive and Accessible

We are inclusive and accessible to all stakeholder groups, incorporating all ages, abilities, genders and cultural backgrounds. We administer a range of social media accounts and create content to ensure that the broadest possible range of stakeholders have the opportunity to participate.

3.5 Respectful

We act with integrity and listen to all, operating in a transparent way that values what makes Sutherland Shire special. We encourage questions, feedback, open conversation and debate on social media, but we expect all participants to behave in a respectful manner. Each social media account is governed by its own Terms of Use, aligned to the platform's legal and governance frameworks.

Sutherland Shire Council reserves the right to moderate public comments, including the right to hide or delete comments that include the following *Terms of Use*:

1. False or misleading statements or imagery about individuals, communities or Council
2. Use of language or imagery that is obscene, sexist, racist, misleading or offensive
3. Unauthorised promotion of external businesses for commercial gain
4. Unlawful statements that could incite others to break the law
5. Threats to individuals or Council
6. Defamatory or harassing comments about Councillors, employees, volunteers or participants
7. Information that may compromise the safety or security of our community or Council
8. Confidential information or proprietary information
9. Breach of copyright or the privacy of others
10. Links to petitions

11. Repetitive or spam posts
12. Any other inappropriate comments as determined by Sutherland Shire Council

We take our legal obligations seriously and will moderate contributions to our pages if they are considered to contravene our legal requirements. Repeated violations may cause the author to be blocked from the social media account.

3.6 Transparent

We are open and transparent in our communication and provide opportunity for two-way conversation and participation. Information published to corporate social media by employees of Council must comply with the provisions of the [Code of Conduct](#), and must uphold confidentiality, privacy and copyright provisions.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 Responsible Officer

The Responsible Officer for this Policy is Manager Communication and Engagement.

4.2 Council Employees

i. Corporate Social Media

Designated Council employees are authorised to manage Council's corporate social media accounts and are responsible for planning, publishing and moderating content in line with the principles outlined in this Policy.

ii. Personal use of social media

Under Council's [Code of Conduct](#), all Council employees must adhere to the following obligations in regards to personal use of social media where the employee chooses to make reference to Sutherland Shire Council, its business units/services/operations and/or staff, customers, or business-related stakeholders. Members of staff of Council or contractors must not use social media to post comments, photos, sound recordings or other information that:

- compromises their capacity to perform their role in an unbiased manner
- has the capacity to damage Council's reputation or contains content about Council that may be misleading or deceptive
- divulges confidential Council information
- could be perceived to be an official comment on behalf of Council.

This Policy does not apply to personal use of social media when no reference or inference is made to Sutherland Shire Council or Council related issues.

4.3 Councillors

Councillors are the elected representatives of the community and engage in a range of ways to hear the views, concerns and aspirations of their constituents, including on social media.

Councillors may choose to use social media to communicate in their elected role. For any use of Facebook or other social platforms to communicate in their elected capacity:

- i. A clear distinction must be maintained between personal and Councillor related use.
- ii. It is strongly recommended that Councillors establish a dedicated page representing their elected role, separate to any personal accounts they might hold. The establishment of a separate profile best supports a clear distinction between personal and Council-related social media use, assists in the protection of individual privacy and reputation, and assists to reduce potential legal liability.
- iii. Councillors are responsible for maintaining their social media account/s consistent with the Principles outlined in this Policy, in alignment with the Code of Conduct for Councillors and in adherence with the requirements of social media platforms.

Councillors do not have access to, nor are they authorised to, publish content on Council's corporate social media accounts.

Technical support will be provided as required at the commencement of each term of Council, to assist elected representatives with establishing social media accounts.

4.4 Mayor

The Mayor of the day may choose to utilise social media to communicate in that capacity. Given the Mayor serves a role as an official spokesperson for Council (See Media & Public Comment Policy, section 2.1), it is recommended that the Mayor utilise a dedicated page representing the Mayoral role, separate to any personal accounts they might hold.

The Mayor of the day will be provided technical and communications support, if required, to deliver content on a Mayoral account. All engagement on Mayoral account/s (publishing, commenting, and moderating) must be consistent with the Principles outlined in this Policy and in alignment with the Code of Conduct for Councillors.

5. POLICY COMPLIANCE

The Social Media Policy will be reviewed and re-adopted by Council once every Council term or as required to ensure it remains relevant and current. If legislative requirements change, this Policy will be reviewed and updated accordingly.

6. RECORD KEEPING, CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

Council adheres to and complies with the NSW State Records Act 1998 and Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 through its Access to Information Policy and Privacy Management Plan. Any personal information collected by Sutherland Shire Council is handled in line with our [Privacy Statement](#).

Our [Privacy Management Plan](#) outlines Council's policies and practices that ensure compliance with the requirements of the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (PIPPA) and the Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002 (the HRIPA).

No confidential information or information that is private in nature will be transmitted or stored online as a result of the use of social media sites. Council employees must comply with legal obligations related to copyright. When working in an official capacity or when representing Council, employees must be assured that permission has been obtained before transferring any information to a social media site that may be considered private, for example, photographs of minors or information about ratepayers.

Further details around data collection and management are outlined at Schedule 1.

7. BREACHES OF POLICY

Breaches by of this Policy will be managed in accordance with normal disciplinary procedures, in line with Council's Codes of Conduct and normal disciplinary procedures.

Breaches of this Policy by other users of Council's social media will be managed in accordance with our *Terms of Use* and relevant legislation.

8. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- [Community Engagement Policy](#)
- [Privacy Statement](#)
- [Privacy Management Plan](#)
- [Code of Conduct for Council Staff](#)
- [Code of Conduct for Councillors](#)
- [Access to information Policy](#)
- [Unreasonable Customer Policy](#)

9. RELEVANT LEGISLATION, REGULATIONS AND GUIDELINES

- Local Government Act 1993 (NSW).
- State Records Act 1998 (NSW).
- Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW).
- Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW).

10. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Term	Meaning
Social Media	Website or application that enables a user to create, share and engage with content or participate in social networking. For the purpose of this policy it is an interactive digital website or application managed by Council to engage with our community.
Content Author, Administrator or	Council employee whose work duties include the use of or engagement with social media for work-related purposes.
Record	Letters, posts, comments, reports, documents, attachments, tapes, emails, video and audio recordings, graphics, slide presentations, online content and other forms of information, including computer-based information created or received.

End of Document

UNCONTROLLED COPY WHEN PRINTED - For up to date copy please refer to Sutherland Shire Council Intranet / Website			
Document Name: Social Media Policy		Policy Accountability Manager Communications & Engagement	
Version: 1.0	Approved by: Council	Minute No: 217	Date approved: 20/9/2021
Original: September 2021	Last Revision: N/A	Next Revision: March 2024	



SCHEDULE 1

ONLINE ADVERTISING AND ANALYTICS

Council makes use of online advertising and analytic services to better tailor our marketing and advertising content to improve the user experience; resulting in content that is relevant to our online audiences and local community.

This is done using Cookies, Pixels and Google Analytics. These services collect information about visitor internet usage or digital footprint including; the device used (mobile or desktop), web pages visited, websites or advertisements interacted with and how.

By viewing Council’s website or social media channels users consent to non-personal web traffic data being collected when viewing Council’s website or social media channels.

Council also utilises data collected by Google and Facebook. The data collected by these remarketing services does not allow Sutherland Shire Council to personally identify users of our websites or social media platforms.

View [Google’s Privacy Policy](#)

View [Facebook’s Data Policy](#)

Users can opt out of their non-personal information being collected by disabling or refusing cookies, disabling JavaScript, or using a third party opt-out service <http://www.aboutads.info/choices/> and selecting Google and Facebook.

End Document

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SCHEDULE 2

CURRENT CORPORATE SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

As at March 2021, the following corporate Sutherland Shire Council social media accounts are managed by employees of Sutherland Shire Council:

Account	URL
Sutherland Shire Council - Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/SutherlandShireCouncil/
Sutherland Shire Council - Twitter	https://twitter.com/SuthShireCncl
Sutherland Shire Council - Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/suthshirecncl
Sutherland Shire Council - LinkedIn	https://www.linkedin.com/company/sutherland-shire-council
Sutherland Shire Council - Youtube	https://www.youtube.com/SutherlandShireCncl
Entertainment Centre (SEC) - Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/SutherlandEntertainmentCentre
Entertainment Centre (SEC) - Youtube	https://www.youtube.com/user/SutherlandEntCentre
Visit the Shire (Tourism) - Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/visittheshire
Visit the Shire (Tourism) - Youtube	https://www.youtube.com/user/visittheshire
Visit the Shire (Tourism) - Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/visitsutherlandshire
Sutherland Shire Leisure Centres (SSLC) - Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/SutherlandShireLeisureCentres/
Menai Indoor Sports Centre (SSLC) - Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/MenaiIndoorSportsCentre
Sutherland Shire Libraries - Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/sutherlandshirelibraries
Sutherland Shire Libraries - Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/sutherlandshirelibraries/
Sutherland Shire Libraries - Twitter	http://twitter.com/suthlib
Sutherland Shire Lifeguards - Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/sutherlandshirelifeguards/
Sutherland Shire Council Animal Shelter - Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/SutherlandShireAnimalShelter
Sutherland Shire Council Animal Shelter - Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/sscanimalshelter/
Hazelhurst - Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/hazelhurstscentre/
Hazelhurst - Twitter	https://twitter.com/hazelhurst_art

SCHEDULE TO SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY



Account	URL
Hazelhurst - Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/hazelhurststartscentre
Bushcare Sutherland Shire - Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/sscbushcare/
Sutherland Shire Children's Services - Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/SSCChildrensServices
Shire Seniors - Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/shireseiors
Sutherland Shire Youth - Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/shireyouthpage
Shire Youth - Instagram	http://instagram.com/shireyouth
Greenhills Skatepark - Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/ShireGreenHillsSkatepark
Menai Skatepark - Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/skatemenai
Walk the Walls - Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/walkthewallsfestival
Walk the Walls - Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/walkthewallsfestival/
Beach to the Burbs - Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/beachtotheburbs
Sutherland Shire Greenweb - Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/Sutherland-Shire-Greenweb-206154752809630
Breakfast Torque - Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/BreakfastTorque
Shire Business - Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/shirebusiness

End Document

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