

# **Bass Coast Shire Council Social Media Policy 2020**

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## **Purpose**

The Bass Coast Shire Council Social Media Policy 2020 guides how Council uses social media to engage with our community. The Policy applies to employees, Councillors, contractors and volunteers who use social media on behalf of Council. It also applies to personal use of social media when referring to Council-related topics and/or people online.

## **Scope**

This Policy outlines the requirements for compliance with confidentiality, governance, legal, privacy and regulatory parameters when using social media to conduct Council business. This Policy applies to any digital space where people may comment, contribute, create, forward, post, upload and share content, it may include:

- Social networking sites and apps (eg Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn)
- Video and photo sharing apps (eg Instagram, YouTube, SnapChat, TikTok)
- Blogs
- Forums, discussion boards and groups
- Review platforms (eg TripAdvisor)
- Instant messaging (eg Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp)

## **Policy statement**

Social media provides a platform for increasing Council's engagement with the community. Benefits of social media include immediacy, convenience and the ability to reach a large cross section of people with relative ease. This Policy outlines the responsibilities of employees, Councillors, contractors and volunteers when using social media to minimise the risk to Council and to help ensure a high standard of customer service is maintained.

## **Policy guidelines**

Employees, Councillors, contractors and volunteers posting on social media should be mindful of Council's Code of Conduct and only post information that is not in breach of their responsibilities under the Code.

Furthermore, they are expected to adhere to the following:

### **DO:**

- Engage with people respectfully and ethically
- Remember that content uploaded to social media grants the social media platform (eg. Facebook) with a license to use anything that is posted

- Ensure that information posted is accurate and factual
- Ensure that information posted is in the community's interest
- Make it clear to all readers who you are representing and clearly separate personal from professional opinion
- Be aware that a disclaimer on social media posts will not, in itself, mean all content will necessarily be interpreted as personal use unrelated to your role at Council
- Notify Communications and Engagement Team and/or your manager if you become aware of any inappropriate use of social media

#### **DO NOT:**

- Make defamatory comments or posts that are malicious, misleading or untrue
- Disclose information which is confidential or could reasonably be perceived to be confidential in nature
- Use social media to discriminate, bully, harass, defame, victimise, abuse or threaten others
- Use social media to disparage Council activities, including performance management processes
- Damage the reputation of Council, including Councillors or employees
- Engage in excessive use of non-work related social media during work time
- Post anything which contravenes the intellectual property rights of any person or organisation
- Represent yourself as another employee or Councillor
- Post on behalf of Council without authorisation
- Give your social media account details to a third party. You are responsible and accountable for content posted to your social media accounts

#### **Reputation and risk**

Social media activity has risks for the organisation. Social media posts have the potential to be shared more widely than personal discussion. The nature of social media platforms means that comments can easily be forwarded to others, increasing the potential audience.

Considerable care should be used in using social networking sites and users should be aware that making comments or conducting conversations that relate to the organisation can affect the reputation of Council. Social media leaves an often-permanent record of statements and comments made by people. These can be read at any time in the future until they are removed and, given the nature of the internet, it can be difficult (if not impossible) to remove information.

#### **Policy breaches**

A breach of this Policy may result in disciplinary action, which may include the termination of employment.

## Approval

Adopted by Council at its meeting held on

Date 18 March 2020

Signed by the Mayor Brett Tessari

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brett Tessari', is written over a light blue rectangular stamp. The signature is cursive and includes a long horizontal stroke at the end.