

## POLICY NO LG05 USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

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|--------------------------------|---|
| <b>DEPARTMENT:</b>             | Governance  |
| <b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:</b>    | Human Resources Manager/Communications Officer  |
| <b>LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN:</b> | <p>Strategic Plan 2017-2027 Vision: Working as a TEAM with OPEN &amp; HONEST COMMUNICATION; we act with INTEGRITY whilst showing RESPECT and being POSITIVE and proactive in our actions</p> <p>Council's Role in Achieving the Vision: <b>Leadership/Ownership</b>; Be visionary and accountable leaders who advocate and represent the views of our community in a transparent way</p> <p><b>Great Communication</b>; Listen, consult and engage with the community and individuals.</p> <p>Be open, honest and proactive in our communication.</p> <p>Keep people informed about the things that matter to them.</p> |
| <b>STATUTORY AUTHORITY:</b>    | <p>Local Government Act 1993</p> <p>Local Government (General) Regulations 2005</p>   |
| <b>OBJECTIVE:</b>              | <p>This policy is designed to provide guidance on the responsible and effective use of social media platforms for personal and organisational purposes. It outlines Break O'Day Council's expectations, responsibilities, and guidelines to ensure that our presence on social media aligns with our organisational goals, values, and legal obligations.</p>   |
| <b>POLICY INFORMATION:</b>     | <p>Adopted 18 February 2013 – Minute No 02/13.15.5.60</p> <p>Amended 16 June 2014 – Minute No 06/14.15.3.179</p> <p>Amended 15 February 2016 – Minute No. 02/16.12.5.29</p> <p>Amended 20 May 2019 – Minute No. 05/19.16.5.120</p> <p>Amended 18 March 2024 – Minute No. 03/24.17.2.338</p>   |

## POLICY

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This policy refers to content that directly references or can be related to, Break O'Day Council as an organisation/employer. The nature of the online world means that anything posted or commented on social media may be traced back to the person and therefore the organisation with the perception that the content is endorsed by Council.

As an Organisation, Break O'Day Council uses social media as one method of communication to primarily:

1. Inform the community of any relevant activities, projects and information related to our area and community
2. Promote Council and community initiatives like events and engagement activities
3. Share emergency information in realtime.

Social media is a powerful tool for communication, information sharing, and community engagement in our interconnected world. Break O'Day Council elected members and staff have an important role in representing our values, enhancing openness, and encouraging positive interactions within the community as an individual and as an employee of the organisation.

Often community members will not differentiate between a personal post, expressing personal views and an employee expressing a formal position of Council. This basically means that when staff and elected members comment, share or post content on social media, there is a possibility that the community will view the post as a position of Council. This can expose the organisation and individuals to risks associated with; discrimination, bullying and harm to organisational reputation and brand.

There is no such thing as a 'private' social media site, regardless of your privacy settings. Because of the internet, social media posts can be seen by many people even if you think you have high privacy settings, all it takes is for one person to share your post or even screen shot your post. These reasons are also why deleting a post does not always mean it has been deleted completely or permanently.

Legally, posting on-line is no different from publishing in a newspaper. If an employee or elected member makes a comment on social media or shares a post, they are making a public comment.

## 2. DEFINITIONS

| WORD/TERM                   | DEFINITION  |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <b>Social Media</b>         | Any online platform where people can interact with each other. This includes commenting, sharing and creating your own posts on platforms such as but not limited to; Facebook, Instagram, Reddit, TikTok, Snapchat etc.  |
| <b>Personal/Private Use</b> | Any social media activity where you are interacting under your own personal/private account.  |
| <b>Organisational Use</b>   | Any social media activity where an employee or elected member is representing Break O'Day Council. This includes all Break O'Day Council social media accounts, accounts developed to represent an activity or program of Council as well as Elected Member Accounts. |
| <b>Employee</b>             | A paid employee or contractor representing Break O'Day Council  |
| <b>Elected Member</b>       | Councillors elected by the community to represent Break O'Day   |

## 3. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Clarify the distinction between personal/private and organisational use of social media.
- Establish guidelines for maintaining professionalism, confidentiality, and ensuring Break O'Day Council's values are adhered to in any online interactions
- Define the roles and responsibilities of staff and elected members in representing Break O'Day Council on social media.
- Ensure compliance with relevant laws, regulations, and ethical standards.
- Provide a framework for the use of social media as a tool for community engagement and information dissemination.

## 4. AUTHORISED SPOKESPEOPLE FOR BREAK O'DAY COUNCIL'S SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

The Executive Officer will oversee the use of Council's Social media platforms including:

- Approving other officers to be administrators
- Approving content to ensure it aligns with Council's values
- Hiding and removing comments and content from Council's Social Media platforms

- Blocking people from our page permanently
- Replying to commentary in an official capacity as Council

Organisational posts and content are made in accordance with our Communication Guide and Community Engagement Framework and are implemented (posted) by Break O'Day Council's communications team.

## 5. SCOPE

This policy applies to all Elected Members and Employees personal/private use of social media when comments, posts and sharing of posts may reflect on Council activities as well as Council's social media platforms.

## 6. POLICY STATEMENT

- 1) Council recognises that social media platforms have an important role to play in community engagement and genuine interactions between Council and the community.
- 2) Council has no interest in an elected member or employee's participation in social media when no mention of Break O'Day Council is made and/or there is no association with Break O'Day Council activities or other elected members or.
- 3) Elected members and employees must understand that the public may consider that they are representing Council at all times, even when using personal/private Social Media accounts or when an individual comments on other posts. This can reflect on Council as an organisation.
- 4) Employees are not permitted to use the Break O'Day Council Logo or their work email address in any social media forums.
- 5) Workplace grievances are not to be aired on social media sites, there are alternative grievance policies and procedures available.
- 6) Social Media posts should not disclose any information that is confidential or proprietary to Break O'Day Council or any third party associated with Break O'Day Council.
- 7) If an elected member or employee comments on any aspect of Break O'Day Council's business or operations they must clearly identify themselves as an elected member/employee member and include a disclaimer, for example "the views expressed here are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of Break O'Day Council".
- 8) Elected Members and employees must understand that sharing posts gives the impression that you support the content that you are sharing.
- 9) If an Elected Member or Employee shares or posts content related to Break O'Day Council that evokes discussion/contention, the person who posted the material is responsible for any comments and must ensure conversations remain respectful. Advice on how to deal with this instances can be given by the Executive Officer
- 10) Private use of social media is not permitted during work hours with the exception of staff required to monitor Council's associated Social Media channels. Staff may access Social Media during designated meal breaks.
- 11) Elected Members and Employees are encouraged to ensure they have social media privacy settings set to the highest level possible.
- 12) Elected Members and Employees are at all times personally responsible for material posted on their personal social media platforms.
- 13) Any posts that may be considered discriminatory, threatening, harassing or bullying or breaches Break O'Day Council policies and values, may be subject to disciplinary action
- 14) Councillors and Employees are expected to act within our organisation's values; Working as a TEAM with OPEN & HONEST COMMUNICATION; we act with INTEGRITY whilst showing RESPECT and being POSITIVE and proactive in our actions.

## 5. BREACHES OF POLICY

Employees and elected members must comply fully with the policy at all times.

If you are not sure if an activity complies, speak to your Manager, General Manager or Mayor. Non-compliance is a serious matter and appropriate action will be taken.

An Elected Member breaching this policy may be subject to a Code of Conduct complaint as per the *Local Government Act 1993*. Staff breaching this policy may be subject to disciplinary action as per the Staff and Councillor Codes of Conduct Policies (LG35 and LG03)

## **6. MONITORING AND REVIEW**

This Policy will be reviewed every three (3) years in line with the Council's Policy Framework or earlier in the event of major changes to legislation or related policies, procedures or if deemed necessary by the General Manager.

## **7. ASSOCIATED POLICIES**

- Anti-Discrimination and Harassment Policy
- Computer Use, Internet and Email Policy
- Confidentiality Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Induction Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct Policy
- Communications Guide
- Community Engagement Framework