

Social Media Policy

December 2024

Version: 2



City of
Newcastle

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Part A - Preliminary

1 Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this Policy is to:

- a) Identify the parameters for managing City of Newcastle (CN)'s use of social media.
- b) Guide Councillors, CN Staff and CN Officials on personal and professional use of social media sites.
- c) Support CN's use of social media as an essential communications channel and effective platform for engagement with the Newcastle community and more broadly.

2 Context

2.1 This Policy is developed as a City of Newcastle initiative consistent with the Local Government Act 1993 (NSW).

3 Scope

3.1 This Policy applies to:

- a) Councillors, CN Staff and CN officials in the use of online social media communications that they undertake in both a CN official and personal capacity.
- b) Any CN social media accounts, including corporate accounts and facility-based accounts.
- c) The use of social media during work time or outside of work, on CN devices or personal devices.

3.2 This Policy does not apply to personal use of social media when no reference or inference is made to issues related to CN and or users do not identify themselves as a Councillor, CN Staff or CN Official.

3.3 A breach of this Policy is a breach of CN's Code of Conduct.

4 Principles

4.1 CN is committed to the following principles:

- a) **Zero tolerance** – CN is committed to a zero tolerance approach towards bullying and harassment of Councillors, CN staff, CN Officials and users. Posts that contain abusive, demeaning, or inappropriate language or statements, including those that are discriminatory in nature, will be removed.
- b) **Accountability and transparency** – This Policy guides CN's use of social media as a means of promoting inclusiveness and transparency.
- c) **Openness** – Our social media platforms are places where anyone can share and discuss respectfully issues that are relevant to CN and the community we represent and serve.
- d) **Respect** – Our social media platforms are safe places. We will uphold and promote the behavioural standards contained in this Policy and our Code of Conduct when using our social media platforms and any other social media platform.
- e) **Alignment with CN Policies** – This Policy is consistent with CN's Media Policy in terms of official spokespeople and consistency of information and CN's Codes of Conduct which states that Councillors, CN Staff and CN Officials must not conduct themselves in a manner that is likely to bring CN into disrepute.

Part B - Policy Statement

5 CN's Social Media Channels

5.1 CN's corporate social media channels are including but not limited to:

- CN Facebook
- Visit Newcastle Facebook
- CN Instagram
- CN LinkedIn
- CN Twitter
- CN YouTube

5.2 CN also has several facilities based or project related channels where designated owners manage the publishing of content and the response to public commentary and queries on these pages including but not limited to:

- Newcastle Art Gallery Facebook
- Newcastle Museum Facebook
- Newcastle Libraries Facebook
- Civic Theatre Newcastle Facebook
- Blackbutt Reserve Facebook
- New Annual Facebook
- Newcastle Art Gallery Instagram
- Newcastle Museum Instagram
- Civic Theatre Newcastle Instagram
- New Annual Instagram

Part C - Roles and Responsibilities

POSITION	RESPONSIBILITY
Media Engagement Economy and Corporate Affairs	<p>Ensure a strategic and coordinated approach to CN's multiple social media channels and accounts by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Being a primary administrator for social media across CN, with facilities and areas responsible for content delivery. b) Leading the development and implementation of CN's social media strategy, including establishing tone, style and content pillars for the organisation at both a corporate and facility level. c) Leading and approve all advertising expenditure across all channels. d) Approving the opening, closing or modification of any CN account. e) Moderate comments on CN's Corporate Accounts, applying and enforcing CN's Social Media Community Guidelines as required. f) In the event of an emergency, manage crisis communications responsibilities as outlined in the City of Newcastle Crisis and Emergency Plan v1.5, section 3.5.

Customer Experience	Manage customer enquiries to CN's corporate accounts (Facebook) to meet CX objectives.
People and Culture	Manage recruitment content and inquiries on CN accounts (LinkedIn) to meet goals around talent acquisition and employer of choice advertising.
Facility Directors, Executive Managers, CN Staff	<p>Manage CN facility channels to support this Policy and CN's corporate communications objectives.</p> <p>Moderate comments on Facility or Program accounts, applying and enforcing CN's Social Media Community Guidelines as required.</p>
Responsibilities of Councillors and Employees	<p>Community expectations around social media channel moderation and interaction greatly differ between commercial and government entities in terms of the right to express criticism. The role of freedom of speech and thought is an important principle in administering and engaging social media as an employee and representative of CN, and likewise an integral component of CN's reputation.</p> <p>All users should be aware that social media activities and interactions (either public or personal) are public, permanently available, traceable and able to be reproduced elsewhere.</p> <p>They should therefore behave in a way that upholds the values of CN when posting or publishing content online in public social media communications that are consistent with the Code of Conduct and other established CN policies.</p> <p>All users, including Councillors and employees, must adhere to CN's Social Media Community Guidelines and can be blocked or deleted from CN's social media channels for breaching these rules.</p> <p>All users including Councillors and employees should not post content that constitutes contempt of court or breaches a court suppression order; or breaches CN confidentiality as outlined in the Code of Conduct.</p> <p>Councillors are encouraged to establish social media accounts with their Councillor profile to engage with the community on CN related matters.</p>
Moderating and Interacting with Audiences on Public Social Media Channels	<p>In responding to audience comments or queries, whether on public communications or on users' personal communications, Councillors, CN Staff or CN Officials must only ever respond to users in exchanges directly related to CN if they are delegated representatives of CN social media channels and are using an official profile to respond, unless they are a delegated spokesperson under the CN Media Policy.</p> <p>Councillors responding to users in contexts or exchanges directly related to CN must ensure their position as Councillor is clearly stated or known in the context of the communication, and that views and opinions expressed which are not in line with</p>

	<p>the positions and values of CN are not misconstrued by audiences as official positions and values of CN.</p> <p>Customer complaints made on social media must be submitted and processed according to the CN Customer Complaints Handling Policy and associated procedures.</p> <p>Councillors are obliged to moderate defamatory or threatening comments on their social media accounts, particularly as they pertain to other Councillors or CN Staff, in line with Part 3 of the Code of Conduct for Councillors Policy.</p> <p>CN Staff responsible for social media management across all channels and accounts are obliged to moderate defamatory or threatening comments on its social media accounts, noting the precedent for organisations to be held legally accountable for the impact of such content remaining publicly visible.</p>
<p>Conduct on Personal Social Media Communications</p>	<p>Councillors, CN Staff or CN Officials are not precluded from participating in community debate about an issue that affects them. However, it must be clearly stated and known that they are commenting in a private capacity, not as an official representative of CN. Employees should not make any comments or responses regarding CN where the information could only be acquired through employment with CN.</p>

Annexure A - Definition

CEO means Chief Executive Officer of the City of Newcastle and includes their delegate or authorised representative.

References to the Chief Executive Officer are references to the General Manager appointed under the *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW).

City of Newcastle (CN) means Newcastle City Council.

Council means the elected Council.

CN Staff means employees of CN (including full-time, part-time, fixed-term and casual) or Specific Talent Contractor engaged who is engaged under a CN position description.

CN Official means Advisory Committee member, other delegate of Council or consultants engaged by CN.

Councillor means a person elected to civic office as a member of the governing body including the Lord Mayor.

Social media refers to any website, application or platform that enables users to create and share content or to participate in social networking and interaction. They may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Social network platforms, including but not limited to: Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube.
- Comment boards on digital media sites, including but not limited to online iterations of newspapers. Digital interaction tools on intranet systems, including but not limited to comment boards, forums, etc.
- Phone, tablet, or software applications which facilitate public user commentary, reviews, or exchanges of information.

Public social media communications is any communications published by an individual in a setting engaged by multiple users, whether via personally attained social networks such as publishing content on a user's personal Facebook page (be it their own or a network member's page), or on public social media pages such as CN's Facebook page or a media outlet's page

Social media platforms mean an application or website through which users are able to create and share content and find and connect with other users.

Social media channels mean any and/or all forms of social media forum, to include, but not limited to Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube used in connection with the social media.

Unless stated otherwise, a reference to a section or clause is a reference to a section or clause of this Policy.

Annexure B - Policy Authorisations

This Policy Authorisation may be updated and amended by the CEO from time to time.

In accordance with section 378 of the *Local Government Act 1993*, the Chief Executive Officer delegates the following functions to the positions listed:

Title of Authorisation	Description of Authorisation	Position Number and Title
Opening and closing CN social media accounts	Authority to open or close CN social media accounts in accordance with CN's marketing goals.	P20377 Executive Manager Media Engagement Economy and Corporate Affairs
Deleting comments and banning social media users	Authority to delete comments and ban users that breach CN's Social Media Community Guidelines	P20856 Digital Lead
Social Media Coordinator	Authority to act as CN's Social Media Coordinator	P20856 Digital Lead

Document Control

Policy Title:	Social Media Policy
Audience:	City of Newcastle staff, elected council, community
Service Unit:	Media Engagement Economy and Corporate Affairs
Policy Owner:	Media Engagement Economy and Corporate Affairs
Policy Writer:	Digital Lead
Approved by:	Council
Date Approved:	10 December 2024
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Termination Date:	30 September 2030
Version:	Version 2
Required on Website:	Yes
Key Words:	Social media, Facebook, twitter, communications, channels, Instagram, YouTube

Related Document Information, Standards & References

Related Legislation:	This Policy supports CN's compliance with the following legislation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>State Records Act 1998</i> (NSW) - <i>Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998</i> (NSW) <i>Defamation Act 2005</i> (NSW)
Related Policies (Council & Internal):	CN's Media Policy CN's Cyber Security Policy City of Newcastle Crisis and Emergency Plan v1.5
Related Procedures, Guidelines, Forms, or documents:	Code of Conduct Social Media Community Guidelines Marketing & Engagement Strategy 2017 CN's Privacy Management Plan
Standards, Codes, or other references:	Nil

Relevant Newcastle 2040 Theme/s

Term / Abbreviation
Liveable Newcastle, Sustainable Newcastle, Creative Newcastle, Achieving Together

Version History

Version No - Date Approved - ECM
Version #1 - Approved on 23/08/2022; Version #2 - Approved on 10/12/2024