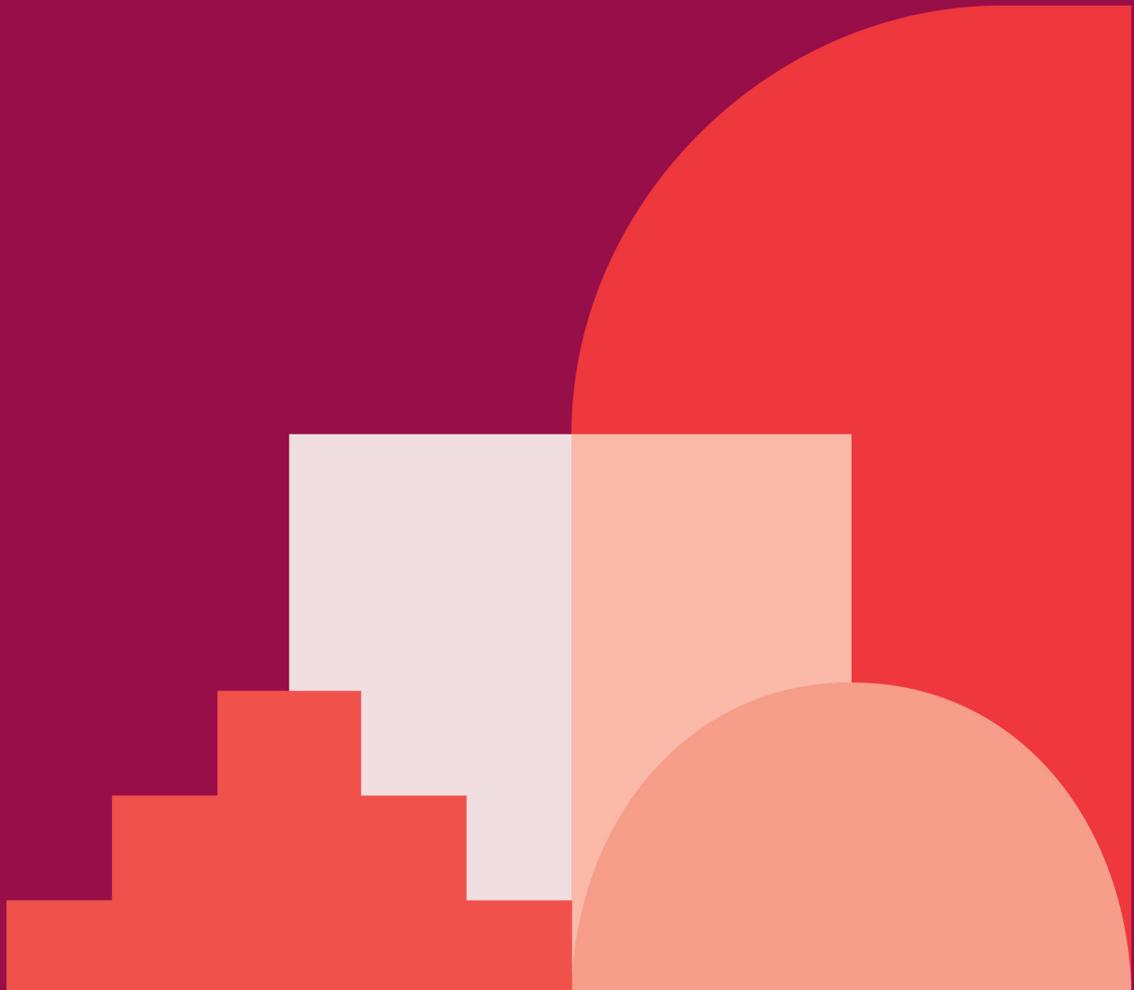


Social Media Policy for Councillors

V2



Title	Social Media Policy for Councillors
Summary	This policy informs Councillors of processes, guidelines and issues relating to the use of social media by Councillors.
Background	<p>Inner West Council recognises that social media is an essential communication, engagement, and customer service channel.</p> <p>This policy acknowledges that Councillors are elected representatives and as such they are required to represent and communicate with the community as part of a robust local democracy, including through public debate and online engagement.</p> <p>Social media enables dialogue between Councillors and the community, while also allowing Councillors to gain insight into community needs via public feedback.</p> <p>Clear and consistent guidelines are required to ensure the appropriate use of social media by Councillors. This policy enables Councillors to speak on social media while protecting the interests of Council and promoting compliance with the Model Code of Conduct.</p> <p>Council’s Model Code of Conduct provides that Council officials, including Councillors, must not conduct themselves in a manner that is likely to bring Council or holders of civic office into disrepute, and this obligation applies to the use of social media.</p> <p>The policy is consistent with existing policies, including the Model Code of Conduct, Media Policy, and policies on the acceptable use of information technology.</p>
Document Type	Policy
Relevant Strategic Plan Objective	Strategic Direction 5: Progressive responsive and effective civic leadership.
Legislative Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Government Act 1993 • Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988 NSW; • The Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 NSW;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 NSW; • Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 NSW; • Work Health and Safety Act 2011 NSW; • Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW 2015; • Australian Constitution; • Defamation Act 2005 NSW; • Copyright Act 1968 Cth; and • Copyright Amendment (Digital Agenda) Act 2000 Cth.
<p>Related Council Documents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media Policy; • Media Policy for Councillors; • Social Media Policy; • Inner West Council Crisis Communications Guidelines; • Public Interest Disclosures Policy; • Model Code of Conduct; • Procedures for the Administration of the Model Code of Conduct; • Code of Meeting Practice; and • Community Engagement Strategy.
<p>Version Control</p>	<p>See last page</p>



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1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to inform Inner West Councillors of their responsibilities in relation to the use of social media in an official or individual capacity. **Scope**

This policy applies to Inner West Councillors.

3 Definitions

In the Social Media for Councillors, the following terms have the following meanings:

Term	Meaning
Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook; • X (formerly Twitter); • Instagram; • Your Say Inner West; • YouTube; • LinkedIn; • Snapchat; • Council’s Intranet; • Newsletters (e.g. Substack); • Reddit • TikTok • Blogs; and • Podcasts.
Councillor	Inner West Council elected representative.

Social media facilitates the creation and sharing of information and ideas via virtual communities and online networks. It involves communication, collaboration, discussion, and debate. It also enables the development of social and professional networks, groups, followers, and contacts.

The Policy relates and applies to social media platforms, including but not limited to those listed in the definitions table above.

Council’s official social media platforms are administered by Council’s Communications team to ensure consistency of content, tone, and style. Councillors are responsible for the administration and moderation of their own social media accounts.

4 Roles and responsibilities of Councillors

Councillors shall conduct themselves in their use of social media in a way that upholds the values and reputation of Council, consistent with the Model Code of Conduct and other policies.

Councillors should be aware that any social media activity or interaction, either official or personal, is public, permanently available, traceable, and able to be reproduced elsewhere. Councillors are reminded that 'shares', 'likes' or 'retweets' may be viewed as an endorsement of the original post. Additionally, whether intended or not, posts by Councillors online in a private capacity may reflect on Council and their role as a Councillors.

Councillors must also be aware of posts by others to their social media pages and consider if such posts and any comments are offensive, or may incite hatred, violence, or criminal acts. Any posts or comments made to a Councillor's social media page or site should be monitored by the Councillor and removed if they do not meet the standard of socially acceptable behaviour or commentary.

Councillors may block users and remove comments at their discretion, having regard to the importance of respectful democratic discussion and debate.

5 Councillors use of social media

Councillors are responsible for the preparation, posting and management of their own content on their social media channels. Councillors may make personal comments on their social media platforms but must make clear that any views are their own opinions as an individual and not those of Council.

The following examples relate to, but are not limited to, what a Councillor must not do:

- Speak on Council's behalf;
- Commit Council to any action, pre-empt official Council announcements or post any confidential Council information;
- Direct staff to post content, in line with the Model Code of Conduct;
- Breach the privacy of other Council officials or those that deal with Council;
- Post content that is offensive, humiliating, threatening, or intimidating to other Council officials or those that deal with Council; or
- Post content about Council that may be misleading or deceptive.

Councillors must also ensure that their use of social media, and Council's computer resources and mobile devices, is consistent with the Model Code of Conduct.

The Mayor may issue material in line with official media releases issued on mayoral letterhead on the Mayor's separate mayoral social media platforms. The Mayor should also approve any posts by Council officials on official Council social media channels using the Mayor's image and/or quotes.

6 Guidelines for Councillors using social media

The following are examples of, but are not limited to, what Councillors should and should not do on social media.

Do ...

- Follow Council's social media channels to stay in touch with what's happening, and to like and share Council's posts.
- Remember everything you say and do is public, and you can be identified as a Councillor.
- Pause before you post – would you be comfortable with this information being shared with your family, friends, work colleagues, media and the broader community, and is the information likely to bring you or Council into disrepute?
- Be mindful of your general conduct obligations under the Model Code of Conduct, including the requirement not to damage Council's reputation.
- Be careful to communicate accurate information.
- Be courteous and respectful of fellow Councillors, other Council staff and members of the community, including respecting people's privacy.
- Report any violations of this policy to the General Manager and/or the Internal Ombudsman.

Do not ...

- Imply that you are speaking on behalf of Council.
- Disclose official, personal, or confidential information that is not publicly available (such as staff, personal information, legal advice, commercial-in-confidence and Model Code of Conduct complaints).
- Post material that is obscene, pornographic, defamatory, threatening, harassing or discriminatory to any individual, group or organisation or may lead to criminal penalty.

7 Breaches of this Policy

Breaches of this policy may result in an investigation of the alleged breach in line with relevant Council policies including the Model Code of Conduct.

Any alleged criminal offence or allegation of corrupt conduct will be referred to the relevant external agency.

Inappropriate behaviours may include, but are not limited to:

- Using social media to ridicule, vilify, harass, cyberbully, discriminate against or bring into disrepute the Council, or other Council officials, including Councillors or community members;
- Posting content that is deemed to be offensive, including obscene or sexually explicit language; and

- Using social media channels to post/provide confidential, personal or sensitive information relating to Council.

8 Privacy

There is no such thing as a ‘private’ social media site. Posting information online is a public activity and no different from publishing information in a newspaper. Councillors are advised to not post anything to social media sites that they would not be comfortable with if quoted in the media.

Everything posted or received on social media is public property. Once something is published online, control of it is lost forever and it cannot be withdrawn. Search engines can find posts years after publication, while archival systems save or cache information even if deleted.

Defamation online is subject to the same defamation laws as any other media.

Councillors are responsible for any information they release relating to Council, Councillors, or other Council officials. Claiming that comments or images are published on private pages is not a defence.

9 Administrative changes

From time-to-time circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this document. Where an update does not materially alter this document, such a change may be made including branding, Council Officer titles or department changes and legislative name or title changes which are considered minor in nature and not required to be formally endorsed.

10 Version Control – Policy History

This policy will be formally reviewed every three years from the date of adoption or as required.

Governance use only:

Document	Social Media Policy for Councillors	<i>Uncontrolled Copy When Printed</i>	
Custodian	Strategic and Corporate Communications Manager	Version #	Version 2
Approved By	Council	ECM Document #	33932140
Next Review Date	10 October 2026		

Amended by	Changes made	Date Adopted
Strategic and Corporate Communications	Amended Policy	10 October 2023
Clr Timothy Stephens	Amended Policy	9 May 2023

Corporate Strategy and Engagement	New Policy	28 August 2018
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