

## USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

### Purpose

1. The ACT Government recognises that employees will increasingly use social media to interact with each other and the ACT community for work-related and social purposes during and after working hours.
2. This Policy sets out high-level principles and supporting guidance to assist ACT Public Sector employees in the acceptable use of social media for work-related or social purposes during and after work hours.

### Application

3. This policy contains a set of whole-of-government instructions issued by the Head of Service under the Public Sector Management Act 1994 which binds all employees and officers engaged under that Act.

### Background

4. This Policy should be read in conjunction with the *ACT Public Sector Acceptable Workplace Use of Social Media Guidelines and Factsheets*, the *Whole-of-Government Acceptable Use of ICT Resources Policy* and directorate and agency-specific policies.

### What is Social Media?

5. Social Media are online services, tools and applications used for publishing, sharing and discussing information. They can include forums, blogs, wikis, mobile apps, social networking websites and any other websites that allow individual users to upload, comment on, and share content.
6. It is recommended that you look at the *ACT Government Social Media Policy video*.

### Principles

7. The Principles that underpin this Policy are to:
  - **Exercise good judgment** - you are responsible for what you write and should always exercise good judgment and common sense. Treat online comments the same way you would at a meeting, BBQ or a public forum. You should always be polite and never express a view that could be interpreted as offensive, discriminatory, defamatory or bullying in any form. Comments posted online may be available to a large audience and even when deleted may have been

forwarded to unknown recipients or other social media forums. Check the accuracy and sensitivity of what you are posting and, if you are in doubt, don't publish.

- **Be authentic** – Always clearly identify yourself and when appropriate your job title or role. This equally applies in work-related roles such as a board/committee member or union delegate. Remember, pseudonyms for personal use generally provoke mistrust and technological advances may ultimately lead to people being identified.
- **Respect copyrights, confidential & proprietary information** – If you are going to provide commentary or information via social media you will need to be very clear about attributing ownership of material. Also be aware of the Terms of Service of the social network channel being used to publish information and determine if any copyright or other appropriate use issues may arise. Never provide information that is confidential or proprietary in nature or use Government logos unless you have the appropriate approval. Any content posted to an ACT Government social network channel is subject to approval.
- **Respect privacy** – never make comments or upload pictures, video or audio online that could invade the privacy of a work colleague or third party without consent. Inappropriate remarks can hurt the reputation of a colleague or the ACT Government which in turn will hurt your reputation. Social media sites which are restricted to your 'friends' does not mean you can control what your friends do with the content posted. Remember, the law regarding privacy and defamation are the same online as they are offline.
- **Productivity matters** – Do not let personal use of social media during working hours undermine your effectiveness at work.

### **Personal Use of Social Media**

8. The principles that underpin this Policy also largely apply to an employee's personal use of social media whether at work or after working hours. As such:

- Personal use during working hours should not be excessive or interfere with your job.
- Do not make comments that could compromise your capacity to work in a professional, efficient or unbiased manner as an ACT Government employee.
- Do not mix your professional and personal views in ways likely to bring the ACT

Government into disrepute. This is particularly the case if you are considering making personal comment on issues that are associated with your employment in the ACT Government.

- It is important when commenting after working hours on personal or private social media sites that you do not give the impression that you are speaking in an official capacity representing the ACT Government unless you are expressly authorised to do so. Employees are not to post any content relating to an ACT Government initiative prior to the official announcement being made.
- Be respectful and use commonsense when commenting online.
- If you have a problem or concern with the ACT Government or your workplace, you should raise those issues through appropriate channels, e.g. your HR/corporate area or supervisor/manager.

### **Responsibilities and Consequences**

9. ACT Government employees have responsibilities in how they behave which are set out in the ACT Public Service Code of Conduct. The appropriate conduct expected of employees is set out at section 9 of the Public Sector Management Act 1994 - General Obligations of Public Employees. These responsibilities equally apply to the work-related or personal use of social media by ACT Public Sector employees at any time.
10. If an ACT Government employee is identified as inappropriately engaging or commenting via social media at work or after working hours this may lead to the commencement of counselling, underperformance or misconduct processes. It should be noted that in some cases an employee may risk the termination of their employment.

### **Legislative Reference**

11. The key principles of this policy are aligned with the following authorised sources:
  - *Public Sector Management Act 1994*

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Bronwen Overton-Clarke  
Commissioner for Public Administration  
on behalf of Kathy Leigh, Head of Service

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