

	<h1>District Council of Coober Pedy</h1>	<p>Issued: 16/06/15 Review: 19/06/2018</p> <p>Next Review: As Required</p>
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Policy Name: Use of Social Media by Councillors Guidelines

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## 1. PURPOSE

These guidelines are to assist councillors to:

- Use social media effectively as a tool to share information and engage their electorate in a two-way conversation.
- Comply with their obligations under the Local Government Act 1999, the Code of Conduct for Elected members and other relevant Council policies and procedures.

## 2. SCOPE

These guidelines apply to all councillors.

## 3. DEFINITIONS

**Social media** is a group of online applications such as social networking sites, forums, wikis, blogs, microblogs, video, photo and audio sharing sites that allow people to publish, share and discuss content. Examples include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and Flickr.

**Defamation** is the publication of material that is likely to lower a person in the estimation of others, or cause injury to a person's reputation by exposing them to hatred, contempt, or ridicule, and is without lawful excuse.

## 4. ACTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Below is a list of responsibilities for councillors when using social media. These responsibilities include and expand on those already existing within Council's Social media Policy, Code of Conduct for Elected Members and support the responsibilities and requirements of councillors as outlined in the Local Government Act 1999 and other relevant Council policies.

Councillors must:

- Respect the democratic process and publicly represent Council decisions when speaking on behalf of Council
- Only disclose and discuss publicly available information

- When communicating with the public or media, make it clear when they are expressing a personal opinion and when they are speaking on behalf of Council. The use of a generic disclaimer on the social media page will suffice.
- Ensure that all content published is accurate and not misleading.
- Be polite and respectful to all people they interact with
- Adhere to the Terms of Use of the relevant social media platform/website, as well as copyright, privacy, defamation, contempt of court, discrimination, harassment and any other applicable laws.

## **5. BENEFITS OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

Social media is free and accounts cost nothing. Social media allows councillors to:

- Have conversations with a range of people that they would never be able to physically meet and who do not traditionally seek out their local representatives.
- Find out what people are talking about locally, their concerns and interests.
- Find out about breaking news, the latest research or publication or the latest guidelines announcements from political parties.
- Make the electorate more aware of the work they do.
- Communicate immediately, pass on information and receive opinions in minutes.
- Promote their messages to the media instantly, wherever they are.
- Upload pictures and videos to show their role in local events - a picture tells a thousand words.
- Receive immediate feedback on ideas and modify proposals in line with local thinking.

## **6. DEFAMATION**

The new communication medium means that everyone is now a publisher and subject to the laws that were once the near exclusive preserve of journalists, editors and traditional publishers. High profile defamation cases have highlighted the pitfalls associated with the use of social media, and councillors are urged to take extreme caution when using such sites. Councillors should never post anything that could be considered defamatory or allow others to post potentially defamatory comments on their sites/pages/blogs. If such a situation occurs, the councillor should remove the post immediately and seek independent legal advice.

## **7. ENFORCEMENT**

The Council actively monitors the social media activities of its elected members.

If directed by Council, you must remove any social media content which the Council considers is in breach of this or its associated policies. Non-compliance may result in disciplinary action.

## **8. OTHER ASSOCIATED POLICIES**

- Local Government Act 1999
- Complaints Handling Procedure
- Code of Conduct for Elected Members 2013
- Social Media Policy