



**Central  
Tablelands  
Water**

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## **Social Media Policy**

## DOCUMENT CONTROL

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Reviewed by					
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## Objective

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This policy provides guidance to ensure that Central Tablelands Water's (CTW) employees and councillors use social media in an appropriate manner whether for official or personal use. The policy's aim is to establish a culture of openness and integrity for the use of online social media.

## Introduction

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Social media is a term commonly used to describe internet based discussion forums, in the form of social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, blogs, video and photo sharing sites such as Instagram and Youtube and forums and discussion boards.

As the use of social media continues to expand rapidly, this policy and guidelines will promote wider responsible use of these technologies now and into the future. This policy informs employees and councillors of their responsibilities when using social media in a personal capacity whether at work or for private use, and to manage the risks associated with CTW's use of these tools.

## Policy

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It is essential that employees and councillors understand that comments published or broadcast via social media platforms are public statements and must be made by an official representative in the same way that comments are made in any public forum or to the media. Whether using social media for official or private purposes, employees are reminded that comments will often be permanently available and able to be reproduced.

For the purposes of this policy, the definition of official and private use is as follows:

**Official use:** Using social media when acting as an official representative of CTW, where the employee or Councillor is authorised to comment

**Private use:** Using social media in a personal, private capacity.

### Official use of social media

Before engaging in social media outside of online Council spaces (for instance a Facebook site run by a local group or private resident) as a representative of Council, employees and councillors must be authorised to comment.

To be authorised to comment or to be an official spokesperson, employees and councillors must have the approval of the General Manager.

Official representatives must:

- disclose that they are an employee or councillor of CTW
- disclose and comment only on information classified as public domain information

- ensure that comments are accurate and not misleading
- comment only in their expertise and authority
- ensure that comments are respectful of the community with which they are interacting with online

Official representatives must not:

- post or respond to material that is offensive, defamatory, threatening, bullying, hateful, racist, infringes copyright or is otherwise unlawful
- use or disclose any confidential information
- comment or post any material that might otherwise cause damage to CTW's reputation or bring it into disrepute

### **Private use of social media**

This policy does not aim to discourage employees and councillors from using social media for personal expression or pursuing other online activities in their personal lives.

Employees and councillors should be aware of and understand the potential risks and damage to CTW that can arise, either directly or indirectly from their personal use of social media. Employees and councillors should comply with this policy to ensure that the risk is minimised.

Employees and councillors must:

- only disclose and discuss publicly available information
- ensure that they are aware of and understand responsibilities under CTW's code of conduct, which holds employees and councillors accountable for the consequences of their private actions where they may have a bearing on their standing as a public official
- always make sure that you are clear as to whether you are participating in an official or a personal capacity. Expressly state when an opinion is personal, proceed with care regardless of what capacity you are acting in.
- behave politely and respectfully

Employees and councillors must not:

- post or respond to material that is offensive, defamatory, threatening, bullying, hateful, racist, infringes copyright or is otherwise unlawful, is for personal gain or encourages others to break the law
- imply that they are authorised to speak as a representative of CTW, nor give the impression that the views expressed are those of CTW
- use their CTW email address or any CTW logo that may give the impression of official support or endorsement of their personal comment
- use or disclose any confidential information or personal information obtained in their capacity as an employee
- post material that is, or may be interpreted as, threatening, harassing bullying or discriminatory towards another employee

- comment or post any material that might otherwise cause damage to CTW's reputation or bring it into disrepute.

### Reasonable and unreasonable personal use

When accessing social media during work hours employees must use these resources 'reasonably', in a manner that does not interfere with work, and is not inappropriate or excessively accessed as per CTW's email and internet policy which states "The private use of I-Phones, Tablets and accessing social media such as 'Facebook' etc is restricted to tea breaks and lunch breaks and should not interfere with employees' duties during working hours".

### **Compliance**

Non-compliance with this policy may constitute a breach of CTW's Code of Conduct. This may result in disciplinary action which may include written warnings or dismissal from CTW's employment.

### Identifying and reporting inappropriate use

Where an employee, councillor or member of the public becomes aware of inappropriate or unlawful online content that relates to CTW, or content that may otherwise have been published in breach of this policy, the situation or circumstances should be reported immediately to the General Manager for resolution.

### **References**

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- Local Government Act 1993
- Local Government (General) Regulation 2005

### **Variation**

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Council reserves the right to review, vary or revoke this policy.