



**BYRON**  
**SHIRE**  
**COUNCIL**

# **Policy**

## **Communications and Social Media**

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## Information about this document

|                              |                                  |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Date Adopted by Council      | 21 November 2013                 |
| Resolution No                | 13-624                           |
| Document Owner               | General Manager                  |
| Document Development Officer | Media Communications Coordinator |
| Review Timeframe             | 4 years                          |
| Last Review Date             | 28 August 2025                   |
| Next Scheduled Review Date   | 28 August 2029                   |

## Document History

| Doc No.       | Date Amended     | Details/Comments e.g. Resolution No.                                         |
|---------------|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| #E2013/72429  |                  | Reported to Ordinary Meeting 21/11/13                                        |
| #E2013/77794  | 27 November 2013 | Adopted as per resolution 13-624 with a commencement date of 1 January 2014. |
| #E2019/14919  | 20 August 2020   | Draft updated policy for review by ET                                        |
| #E2019/14919/ | 26 November 2020 | Adopted per Res 20-671.                                                      |
| #E2025/55624  | 16 April 2025    | Draft updated policy for review by ET                                        |
| #E2025/55624  | 28 August 2025   | Adopted per Res 25/347                                                       |

## Further Document Information and Relationships

|                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Related Legislation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW)</li><li>• Public Interest Disclosures Act 2022 (NSW)</li><li>• Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW)</li><li>• Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 (NSW)</li><li>• Defamation Act 2005 (NSW)</li><li>• Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)</li><li>• Online Safety Act 2021 (Cth)</li></ul> |
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|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State Records Act 1998 (NSW)</li> <li>• Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Related Policies                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Complaint Handling Policy</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Code of Conduct Policies</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Communications and Social Media Policy 2020</a><br/>(superseded by this policy)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Councillor and Staff Interaction Policy 2022</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Data Breach Policy 2023</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Child Safe Policy 2025</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Model Social Media Policy for Local Councils in NSW</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Model Media Policy for Local Councils in NSW</a></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Related Standards, Procedures, Statements, documents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Byron Shire Council Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2022 to 2026 (internal document)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Byron Shire Community Engagement Strategy 2024 to 2028</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Council's Privacy Management Plan 2020</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Council's Customer Service Performance and Standards</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Managing Unreasonable Customer Conduct 2024</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 AA standards</a></li> <li>• Byron Shire Council Style Guide and Communications Toolkit (internal document)</li> <li>• Business Continuity Strategy (internal document)</li> <li>• Photography consent form (internal document)</li> </ul> |

Note: Any reference to legislation includes amended or replaced versions of the relevant Act. See website <http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/> for current Acts, Regulations and Environmental Planning Instruments.

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# 1 Introduction

Byron Shire Council (Council) recognises the important relationship it has with its community, and the need to communicate clearly about matters which are important or impact them.

Good communication with stakeholders and the elected Council builds partnerships, helps manage expectations and increases awareness about Council projects, operations and processes.

This policy is supported by Council's Community Engagement Strategy and Community Participation Plan.

## 2 Objective

This policy outlines how Council manages its communication activities to build and foster relationships with stakeholders. This includes but is not limited to media liaison, advertising, social media (Facebook and Instagram etc.), Council's website, and E-Newsletters.

Councillors, staff, and other officials of Byron Shire Council are committed to upholding and promoting communication that adheres to the following principles which is also consistent with our Community Engagement Strategy. We aim to produce communication that is:

- Inclusive and accessible.
- Genuine and meaningful.
- Respectful and supportive.
- Open and transparent.
- Accountable.

## 3 Corporate identity

It is important to present a consistent and uniform visual image that reflects Council's corporate identity, culture and values. This includes the correct use of Council's logo, corporate colours, fonts and layouts in all publications and communication materials, such as stationery, strategic documents, community newsletters, electronic newsletters, displays, banners etc. This information is found in the Council Style Guide.

Council is the sole owner of the Byron Shire Council corporate logo, and any logos created to identify a project, event, service or program of Council. For example, Byron Shire's 'Move to Reuse' logo.

The use of the logo by a third-party organisation must be approved by the Media and Communications Unit or be approved as part of a sponsorship agreement by Council.

All Council-owned signs should reflect the organisation's corporate identity. As the logo and style guide was updated since the last iteration of the Communications and Social Media Policy, the old logo may still appear on some signage. Old branding will be replaced with new branding at the end of life of signage to minimise waste.

## 4 Distribution of information

The Media and Communications team and other approved staff will distribute information to the media and other stakeholders about projects, issues, and important messages in a range of ways including but not limited to:

- Media releases.
- Council's website - [www.byron.nsw.gov.au](http://www.byron.nsw.gov.au)
- Social media including Facebook Instagram and other channels. The official channels are:
  - Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/byronshire.council>
  - Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/byronshirecouncil/>
  - Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/byronbinfluencer/>
  - Linked In - <https://au.linkedin.com/company/byron-shire-council>
  - YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/@ByronShireCouncil>
- Advertising – newspapers, radio, Facebook and other channels.
- Newsletters and E Newsletters.
- Direct communication with businesses, residents and stakeholder groups.

## 5 Media

Council aims to take a pro-active approach to media, ensuring media organisations are kept up-to-date on Council activities and projects via media releases and by answering information requests. Local media, including newspapers, radio, and television, and local media organisation's digital/social media channels, provide information to the community about Council and the organisation's staff will endeavour to respond to information requests promptly.

### 5.1 Spokespeople

The Byron Shire Mayor, General Manager and directors are the official spokespersons on all Council matters and will be available for comments/interviews.

Experienced staff may also be available for interviews with permission from their manager or director.

The Mayor and Councillors can respond to media enquiries but will not disclose confidential Council information.

### 5.2 Media enquiries

Media enquiries received by staff should be sent to the Media and Communications team who will respond in a timely manner.

Councillors can respond to media requests, in line with Council's Code of Conduct and the NSW Local Government Act.

### 5.3 Legal proceedings

Generally, Council staff, the Mayor and Councillors should not comment on Court matters involving Council. There may be exceptions to this, which should be cleared via the General Manager in consultation with Council's legal section.

### 5.4 Council meetings and business papers

Members of the media can attend any public Council meeting. Filming or recording of meetings is allowed in consultation with the Mayor and Councillors at the start of the meeting, except for confidential parts of the meeting.

Business papers and attachments can be downloaded from the Council's website. Video recordings of the Council meetings are also available on the website and live streamed on Council's Facebook page.

## 6 Social media

Council actively uses social media as part of a suite of communication tools to inform and engage with the community.

### 6.1 Account management

Council's official Facebook, Instagram and YouTube accounts are managed and maintained by the Media and Communications team. Council's LinkedIn page is managed by the People and Culture Team with assistance from Manager Corporate Services. The Byron Binfluencer Instagram page is run by the Resource Recovery Team.

All content shared on social media is guided by existing approved and/or publicly available content/information from other communication channels such as authorised media releases and statements, website content, and marketing collateral.

Content is often shared from official sources such as SES, BOM, and other organisations as required. See section 6.7 'Engagement with other social media users and platforms' in this policy for more information.

### 6.2 Account monitoring and moderation

Council's Media and Communications team is responsible for account monitoring and moderation of Council-owned social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram and YouTube). Council's LinkedIn page is managed by the People and Culture Team with assistance from Manager Corporate Services. The Byron Binfluencer Instagram page is managed by the Resource Recovery Team.

At times other approved staff moderate comments, for example, during live streaming of Council meetings.

Council's social media platforms are monitored during business hours, Monday to Friday.

Council will take reasonable steps to remove content posted to Council's platforms where Council reasonably believes the content could be unlawful, defamatory, discriminatory or

that can cause harm. The online community is encouraged to abide by section 6.6 of this policy 'Page rules for community conduct'.

Council does not have the power to moderate pages/accounts it does not own for example community pages. Where offensive content is posted on a platform Council does not own, Council's Media and Communication's team may request the owner or moderator of that platform remove the content in question.

Council makes all reasonable attempts to ensure the strongest profanity filters available are in place across our social media platforms.

### **6.3 Authorised users**

In addition to the Media and Communications team Council staff may seek approval to become editors or sub-authors across Council's social media platforms. This approval is given by the Media and Communications team and a Manager or Director.

All content posted by authorised users must be general in nature, provide knowledge or information that is publicly available and not considered controversial, confidential, or detrimental to the organisation.

All content must represent the views of the organisation and not personal views of staff members.

Training can be provided by the Media and Communications Unit.

### **6.4 Guidance for Council staff (outside of authorised users)**

Council employs many people who hold different values and views about matters of public interest. Council supports employees' fundamental right as citizens to participate in debate and other forms of civic life.

When employees express their views publicly, their views are their own, it is recommended that staff when engaging on social media note that their actions and comments are personal and don't speak for Council.

Staff still need to comply with their obligations as an employee of Council, in line with the Code of Conduct. If Council employees make any comment or take any actions on social media on public and/or personal platforms that may lead a reasonable person to conclude they cannot serve the organisation impartially and professionally, this may be reviewed by the People and Culture Team, on a case-by-case basis.

Council acknowledges the value of allowing staff to access social media platforms on work-related projects and issues as part of their job.

Council does not use its IT server capacity to block social media sites. However, staff must close social media browsers when not using the platform for operational purposes during work hours.

Staff should consider personal wellbeing when engaging on social media and if subjected to criticism or harassment that causes distress, they should notify People and Culture and Health and Injury Management staff immediately and submit an incident report.



Staff should be aware of the Managing Unreasonable Customer Conduct 2024.

## 6.5 Guidance for Councillors

Councillors may publish publicly available Council information to their social media channels. Councillors are not permitted to share confidential information relating to council operations that they may be privy to in their role as Councillor, in line with Council's Code of Conduct.

Where a Councillor hosts a social media channel in their role as elected representative, they must include a disclaimer to the following effect: "The views expressed, and comments made on this social media platform are my own and not that of the Council."

Councillors must ensure any content they share and post, or any comments they respond to are in line with Council's Code of Conduct. They should not name, identify or tag any Council staff member or private meeting participants during the course of completing their roles without their express permission.

Councillors cannot request that Council staff (with the exception of the Mayor's Executive Assistant) create content for, manage, or moderate any Councillor's social media accounts.

Councillors cannot request that Council staff share anything that is political in nature, or without a direct link to Council activity. Councillors must comply with the Councillor and Staff Interaction Policy 2022.

## 6.6 Page rules for community conduct

Council has clear expectations for people who interact on its social media channels. The rules are:

- Council's social media platforms are monitored during business hours.
- Council welcomes positive, open discussion and the sharing of comments, stories, photographs, videos and experiences from our online community across all platforms.
- Council takes a zero-tolerance approach to online abuse.
- Offensive or inappropriate posts/comments will be removed.
- Council reserves the right to remove, block or ban any person who posts, or continues to post material that staff consider offensive or that breaches its policies.

## 6.7 Engagement with other social media users and platforms

Council will avoid following or sharing content from individuals or commercial businesses unless there is a shared purpose/campaign, agreement, partnership, sponsorship/support, or Memorandum of Understanding in place.

Council owned social media platforms will generally follow/share content from sites/social channels such as:

- Council-related or funded services.
- NSW Government department pages.
- Other Local Government Areas, government agencies or regional groups such as the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation

- Peak body associations, regional and industry groups
- Reputable community pages/not for profit groups providing a community service to the Byron Shire that is deemed appropriate for content requirements at the time.
- Events and community activities sponsored/supported in-kind by Council.

When sharing content from outside sources, Council's Media and Communications team will make decisions based on the following:

- Is it in the best interests of our community to share this content? What will they gain from it?
- Is the content in line with the Council's values and community strategic plan?
- Does the content interfere with or enhance the current content schedule?

## 6.8 Establishment of other social media pages

If a team or department wishes to create a new social media channel, this request must be made in writing to the Media Communications Coordinator. The request will be reviewed, and advice provided to the relevant Director and General Manager for final approval.

This request must be supported by a business case that outlines the purpose of the channel, how it will be managed, and how it will be moderated.

## 7 Website

Council's website is its primary online communication tool, where people can complete transactions online such as making a payment or requesting a service. The website's image and content must reflect Council's corporate image and strategic objectives.

In order to comply with the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, the website platform is audited annually against [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\)](#) 2.1 AA standards by [Vision Australia](#) – Australia's peak body and industry leader for the provision of digital accessibility services.

Following these guidelines ensures that the content we produce and publish via our website is accessible to a wider range of people with disabilities, including those that live with vision and hearing impairments, learning disabilities, cognitive limitations, limited movement, speech disabilities, photosensitivity and combinations of these. Following these guidelines also makes our web content more usable to users in general, particularly those using mobile devices.

The information provided on the website is general information to the public. None of the information on Council's website is provided in response to an individual's specific circumstances.

## 8 Community engagement

Council recognises that a fundamental component of quality customer service and good governance is effective and proactive community engagement. For more information see Council's Community Engagement Strategy and Community Participation Plan.

## 9 Internal communication

Staff are Council's most valuable assets and coupled with Councillors have the potential to be the organisation's most effective public relations ambassadors.

Effective internal communication is vital in ensuring there is a broad understanding of the wide range of projects/work at play within the organisation at any given time.

In an effort for this to be achieved, Council provides a range of participatory opportunities to convey information and raise awareness including events, staff forums, staff reference groups, team meetings, and an internal newsletter produced by the People and Culture team.

Induction programs include information on communication procedures.

## 10 Communicating during an emergency

During emergencies, such as natural disasters or public health incidents, the Media and Communications Unit will be responsible for coordinating media releases and statements, web updates, social media posts etc. on behalf of the Council.

Councillors, Council staff and other Council officials must not provide comment or information to the media/on social media that is inconsistent with official advice issued by the Council and any other agency coordinating the emergency response.

Other staff may be rostered on or be on standby if it is a large-scale emergency expected to continue for several days/out of business hours to ensure regular communication is going out to inform stakeholders. This process is documented in Council's Business Continuity Strategy.

Training/guidance is provided to staff on the integrated management system and social media use during emergencies where relevant.

## 11 Customer service

The way in which Council receives, answers and responds to telephone calls, emails, letters, and comments/messages on social media, combined with face-to-face contact with customers has the greatest impact on how Council is perceived in the community.

Customer service is a responsibility for all staff, not just those who handle public enquiries, and it is vital that all employees generate timely, correct and effective customer-oriented responses with the resources they have available.

This policy supports [Council's Customer Service Performance and Standards](#). Concerns or complaints about the administration of Council's social media platforms can be made to Council in line with the Complaint Handling Policy. Anyone can report suspected wrongdoing in line with the Public Interest Disclosures Act 2022.

## 12 Children and youth

Council's Child Safe Policy outlines a commitment to being a child safe organisation and recognises that participation and empowerment is important in child safe organisations, and it helps keep children and young people safe.

We will engage children and their families on matters that are important to them and will provide relevant documents in child-friendly formats.

Staff in child-related roles (such as at Council's Sandhills Early Childhood Centre) uphold the highest commitment to child safe conduct and follow the National Model for taking images of children, including not taking photos of children without their and their guardian's consent, and only for documentation purposes and using Council-issued devices. Staff and visitors are not permitted to use their personal phones or devices in education spaces. Parents may take photos of their own children only and ensure the privacy of other children.

## 13 Consent and privacy

Photos/names that appear in Council's communication channels with people in them that are easily identifiable should receive written or verbal consent prior to publishing. A photography consent form is available on Council's intranet. For children under 18 a parent or guardian must sign the consent form also. This is line with Council's Child Safe Policy and the Online Safety Act 2021 (Cth). Sandhills Early Childhood Centre also has its own policy in place regarding photographs/video consent.

For larger Council events, where it may not be possible to get individual consent, Council staff can borrow a Filming and Photography Notice sign from the Media and Communications Unit, which asks individuals that do not want to be photographed to notify photographers/staff taking photos at events.

Councillors must also receive consent prior to publishing content.

Personal information (excepting names) will not be used to help protect people's privacy in line with The Privacy and Personal Information Act 1998, Council Privacy Management Plan 2020 and Data Breach Policy 2023.

## 14 Records management

Media releases, consent forms and other communication content with the exception of social media should be saved to Council's record management system by Council's Media and Communication Unit or project staff.

Council's social media posts are backed up by Archive Social. This includes original unedited posts, comments that have been hidden etc. Record management is in line with to with the State Records Act 1998 and the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009.

## 15 Accessibility

Consideration is given to Byron Shire Council Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2022 to 2026 in all of Council's communication. This is in line with the NSW Anti Discrimination Act 1977. For example, our website platform is audited annually against [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\)](#) 2.1 AA standards by [Vision Australia](#) – Australia's peak body and industry leader for the provision of digital accessibility services, and alt text descriptions are provided where possible.

Staff are regularly given accessibility training also.

## 16 Copyright

Council owns and/or licenses all content it publishes including but not limited to; brochures, information booklets, fact sheets, electronic newsletters, photos and images, reports, memos, emails, information published on the Council website, and audio and video footage produced and/or sourced by Council's business units, consultants and contractors.

Council supports the sharing of its information for the purposes of community engagement and education, research and as permitted under copyright legislation.

Content cannot be reproduced for commercial purposes without the permission of the General Manager.

## 17 Accuracy of information

Council tries to ensure the information published on or via our communication channels is accurate and up-to-date (except for archived material), however, we cannot guarantee the accuracy or reliability of all the information. We have no control over the accuracy or reliability on any information on a linked site that Council doesn't maintain.