



TWEED
SHIRE COUNCIL

Policy

Online and Social Media Policy

Version 1.0

Adopted by Council at its meeting on xxxx

Minute No: xxxx

Division:
Section:
File Reference:
Historical Reference:

General Manager
Communications and Marketing
N/A
N/A

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Introduction

This policy applies to Council officials as defined in Council's Code of Conduct and includes Councillors, Council staff, members of Council committees and delegates of Council.

This policy provides guidelines on Council's use of web and social media as communication tools and will evolve as new technologies and networking tools emerge.

Any official Tweed Shire Council presence on social media sites or services is an extension of Council's information networks and is governed by other Council policies including:

- Media Policy
- Community Engagement Strategy
- Code of Conduct
- Privacy Management Plan
- Use of Electronic Communications Devices Protocol
- Records Management Program

Local governments, like other organisations, face the challenge of incorporating web 2.0 technologies as communication tools and keeping up with changes in these technologies. Council's Communications and Marketing Unit actively monitors social media activities and trends that relate to Council operations.

Tweed Shire Council's Community Engagement Strategy identifies its website and social media tools as methods to rapidly and officially communicate directly with the community as part of Council's online communications.

Council's Community Engagement Strategy defines web 2.0 as technologies that include blogs, wikis, forums, social media and social networking sites, instant messaging and syndicating tools.

From day-to-day operations to times of emergency, websites and social media play a role in informing the broad Tweed community. These tools offer:

- Rapid sharing of information.
- A wide dissemination of information.
- Low-cost marketing and communication to build reputation and brand.
- Avenues to reach target audiences, such as young people.
- Increased traffic to Council's corporate website.

Corporate branding

The public will be able to identify all official Council websites and social media tools as they will be branded appropriately to ensure it is identified as an official Council site. This includes all sub-brands of Council including the Tweed River Art Gallery, Tweed Regional Aquatic Centres and Tweed Kenya Mentoring Program.

Websites

Definition: In this policy, the term website relates to the official website of Tweed Shire Council, www.tweed.nsw.gov.au, and any sub-domains that sit within that structure or under the direct control and management of Tweed Shire Council and its approved sub-brands, including the Tweed River Art Gallery, Tweed Regional Aquatic Centre and Tweed Kenya Mentoring Program websites. It also includes Council's Blink mobile web application m.tweed.nsw.gov.au.

The Tweed Shire Council website is the primary online communication tool and source of information. It is a Content Managed System and aims to be accessible, accurate and informative at all times. It aims to be compliant with the World Wide Web Consortium standards for accessibility.

The Community Directory and Calendar of Events on Council's website are exceptions to this rule. Data on these services is supplied by third parties for the benefit of the Tweed community and it is the responsibility of these groups to ensure their information is up to date.

Links to third parties

Tweed Shire Council websites will only link to authorised web pages of partnerships/organisations which work directly with Council. These links will be maintained by the relevant Content Manager.

Approval to link to Tweed Shire Council websites

Third parties wishing to link directly to Tweed Shire Council websites should seek permission from the Webmaster at Tweed Shire Council by emailing webmaster@tweed.nsw.gov.au.

Council's Information and Technology Unit are responsible for maintaining and registering all official Tweed Shire Council domain names.

Council is not responsible for any unauthorised comment on websites or social media sites that are not under the direct control or management of Tweed Shire Council.

Emergency Management

Tweed Shire Council has a low-bandwidth version of its website which will be enabled in the case of an emergency. The site is a replication of www.tweed.nsw.gov.au but is limited to essential data for emergency situations, to enable a high volume of users to access the site and minimise any crashing or failure of the communication tool in an emergency.

Tweed Shire Council will use its emergency website and social media tools as sources of immediate information and newsfeeds for the community in an emergency situation.

Social Media

Definition: In this policy, the term Social Media relates to official Tweed Shire Council social media sites and any of its sub-brands. These sites include, but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Bang the Table, LinkedIn, and other officially hosted and endorsed sites managed by Tweed Shire Council.

It does not include any sites that are not under the direct control and management of Tweed Shire Council or identified as an 'official social networking site of Tweed Shire Council'.

Account Management

The 'official' Tweed Shire Council social media site on any given platform must be created and maintained by Council's Communications and Marketing Unit. Council will only maintain one 'official site' on any given platform. The only exception is Council's online community engagement forums for appropriate Project Officer/Subject Matter Expert responses.

Appropriate uses for additional Social Media accounts outside of the 'official' one may be appropriate from time to time, such as for a specific campaign or topic or to suit a particular audience.

The primary Tweed Shire Council uses for social media sites include:

- Informing the community about newsworthy Council information and events.
- Information about careers at Council.
- Community engagement - informing or consulting with the community about particular projects or items on exhibition.
- Emergency information such as road closures and contact details for the SES.
- Alerts/status updates such as sports field closures or other changes to Council operations.

Content

Content on Council's social media sites/tools must be linked to Council business and based on the newsworthy principles of timeliness, significance, proximity, prominence and human interest. It must be factual, unbiased, timely, relevant to residents of the Tweed Shire, wide ranging, free of political influence and unhindered by group or individual pressure.

Where possible, content on Council's social media sites should:

- Also be available on the corporate website www.tweed.nsw.gov.au.
- Include links directing users back to the corporate website.
www.tweed.nsw.gov.au for in-depth information, documents, forms or online services necessary to conduct business with Tweed Shire Council.

Council's social media tools will only link to:

- Council's official websites.
- Creditable third-party websites and online material – documents, videos, audio files – which relate to relevant Council business and the topic of discussion.

Acceptable Use and Citizen Conduct

Council may participate in an official capacity on other social media sites.

If a 'conversation' is taking place on social media sites not hosted or managed by Tweed Shire Council, any response/comment will be made by authorised officers as defined in Council's Media Policy and will be made through the Communications and Marketing Unit. If a response, statement or clarification is required, it will be clearly defined that the response is from 'Tweed Shire Council' and an official spokesperson.

Users and visitors to Tweed Shire Council social media sites are advised that the intended purposes of the site is to serve as a mechanism for communication between Council and the public with the primary intent to inform the community. It's use is not for grandstanding or political campaigns or to engage in two-way disputes.

Tweed Shire Council social media site articles and comments or posts by third parties containing any of the following will be removed:

- Comments not topically related to the particular social medium article being commented upon.
- Is defamatory, abusive, discriminatory or unlawful.
- Infringes or threatens the privacy of others.
- Is considered spam or contains profane language or content.
- Is a personal comment made about Council staff or Councillors.
- Advertises, endorses or solicits commercial products or commerce.
- Breaches copyright.
- Discloses information which is confidential.
- Relates to legal matters involving Council.
- Is offensive, demeaning or bullying in nature.
- Impersonate other people, including other participants.
- Comments in support of or opposition to political campaigns.
- Is considered pornographic or contains links or content sexual in nature.
- Relates to religious, political or cultural beliefs.

Ongoing abuse or 'spamming' of Tweed Shire Council social media sites will result in the user/subscriber removed and permanently blocked from Council social media sites. Council reserves the right to remove/block any third party user or subscriber to its social media activities at any time without consultation.