

Policy

Communications

Includes: media, social media, websites, Tweed Link, branding and logo.
Version 1.0

Adopted by Council at its meeting on
Minute No:

Division:	Corporate Services
Section:	Communication and Customer Services
File Reference:	
Historical Reference:	Online and Social Media v1.0 Media Policy 1.0 Tweed Link Policy 1.0

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Communications Policy

Policy Objective

This Policy outlines how Council will manage its communication activities and will explain how Council:

1. liaises with the **media (traditional)**
2. manages its **social media** channels
3. provides **websites** and **online** environments
4. coordinates the **Tweed Link**
5. manages its **branding and logos.**

Council operational protocols should be referred to for direction on communications during critical incident and business continuity purposes and for employee personal use of social media.

This policy applies to Council officials defined in Council's Code of Conduct and includes Councillors, Council staff, members of Council committees and delegates of Council. All of Council's content and communication activities on media, social media, websites and the Tweed Link will adhere to the requirements of 'caretaker period' for Local Government elections.

Definitions

Media: All print, electronic and broadcast media (including local, metropolitan, specialist, community and industry print, radio, broadcast and web media) and publications.

Social Media: Council's presence on its official social media channels.

Websites: All online websites with domains registered and managed by Tweed Shire Council including independently hosted subscription sites.

Tweed Link: Council's weekly printed newspaper the Tweed Link.

Brand: Tweed Shire Council, community facility and destinations brands and visual representation.

Policy Background

In September 2017 this Communication Policy was created to incorporate a number of individual policies into one easy reference for all communication activities. It combines and updates the previous Policies: Media Policy V2.0, Online and Social Policy V1.0 and Tweed Link Policy V2.0.

All Tweed Shire Council communication channels are an extension of Council's information networks and is further governed by other policies including:

- Community Engagement Strategy
- Customer Service Policy
- Code of Conduct

- Privacy Management Plan and Records Management Act
- Use of Electronic Communications Devices Protocol

MEDIA

Media Liaison

All media enquiries regarding Tweed Shire Council should be forwarded to the Communications team in the first instance, particularly during critical incidents or business continuity matters. If they are not available, the enquiry should be directed to the relevant Director or the General Manager.

Media seeking comment from the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillors should contact them directly via their available communication methods listed www.tweed.nsw.gov.au/CouncilStructure/Councillors.aspx.

All media organisations are to be treated equally by staff and Councillors, without bias. Council is not responsible for the responses or lack of responses from individual Councillors. Complaints about this should be made according to the [Compliments and Complaints Handling Policy](#).

Online Newsroom and Distribution Service

Council media releases and image galleries are available on Council's Online Newsroom and via the associated subscription service. In addition to the general news, Council uses alerts and embargoed releases for registered media organisations.

All media releases and images distributed by Tweed Shire Council through its newsroom and subscription service remain the property of Tweed Shire Council unless copyright is specifically acknowledged to a third party copyright owner. Council's Social Media channels will also feature a wide range of regular news and information and organisations are encouraged to connect with Council on these channels.

Council Comments / Spokespeople

Wherever possible and practicable, Council will provide a suitable spokesperson for comment or interview in response to a media enquiry.

Council will not provide comment on matters where it is involved, or likely to be involved, in legal proceedings or matters that are subject to a police or other investigation.

Council Staff and Delegations

The Mayor and Councillors, General Manager, Directors and Communication Unit staff have the appropriate delegations to speak directly to the media. All other Council staff are able to speak with the media once delegated authority has been granted, and in conjunction with the Communications team.

Mayor and Councillors

The Mayor and Councillors are elected representatives of the community and are able to speak freely to the media to convey their personal opinion. The Mayor and Councillors should be mindful of their obligations under the Local Government Act. At times, Councillors personal opinion may be in conflict with a resolution of Council. In these instances, Councillors should clarify they are not speaking on behalf of Council and be clear that it is their own personal opinion in any public statements, interviews or social media posts. Also see [Social Media – Councillor Conduct](#).

Before making any public comments on matters where Council is involved in current legal proceedings, the Mayor and Councillors must seek advice from the General Manager, as public comment could have financial and legal implications for Council.

The Mayor and Councillors will not disclose Council information to the media that is not otherwise publicly available or has been provided in confidential reports or attachments. Examples of this would include conversations held between Mayor and Councillors and staff be it verbal, email, letters, memos, reports or in any workshops, conducted by Council and/or in conjunction with any government departments and/or any agencies and/or any community groups, as outlined in the [Model Code of Conduct](#).

Council Meetings and Business Paper

Media are welcome to attend any public Council meetings and along with the general public, will be required to leave during confidential sessions.

Media organisations can access and subscribe to receive Council Business Papers and Minutes online www.tweed.nsw.gov.au/CouncilMeetings.

Media organisations are encouraged to read the Code of Meeting Practice which outlines Council's position on use of electronic devices, filming, cameras and recording (including Facebook Live) in Council and Planning Committee Meetings. Media that breach these rules may be banned from attending meetings for a nominated period of time, at the direction of the Public Officer.

Media can update their social media pages during Council meetings and following decisions of Council, however are reminded that until the Minutes of the meeting are confirmed at the next Council meeting, votes and decisions can be rescinded and outcomes may change.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Council's social media channels aim to improve communication, engagement and customer experiences between Council and the public.

Council committed to the use of social media at its 2 February 2017 meeting, following a Notice of Motion from Councillor Reece Byrnes:

RESOLVED that Council extends its Communications/Media Policy to include social media, specifically creating a Tweed Shire Council official Facebook Page and Twitter Page.

Account Management

Administrators and Contributors

All 'official' Tweed Shire Council social media channels are managed and maintained by the Communication and Customer Services team with content provided by a range of staff, guest curators and subject matter experts.

This includes all other Council brands such as the Tweed Regional Gallery, Tweed Regional Museum, Tweed Regional Aquatic Centres and Tweed Kenya Mentoring Program, with the exception of Tweed Coast Holiday Parks.

In managing Council social media pages, we will:

- Actively listen, monitor and where necessary respond, to social media channels within our business hours and available resources.
- Where possible have automatic response acknowledgement for Messenger.
- Ensure information posted is timely and accurate and relevant to our community.
- Take a balanced approach to the number of daily updates/posts.
- Correct inaccurate or misinformation about Council business.
- Have a strong profanity filter on all of our sites and moderate comments as needed.
- Not engage in public debates, rather take these conversations offline and strive to provide a high level of customer service.

Naming and Branding

To ensure the Tweed community can trust connecting with Council and its affiliated sites on social channels, Council and its brands will:

- maintain one 'official TSC or facility site' on any given social platform
- clearly name accounts as Tweed Shire Council or the name of the brand/facility.
- feature a Tweed Shire Council or facility logo as the profile picture.
- be certified as 'official' where this feature is available on the social platform.

Following / Connecting

Our social media sites are designed for the community to connect with Tweed Shire Council. The act of Tweed Shire Council "liking" or "following" or "sharing information" from an organisation, business, group, individual person, location, app or event through social media platforms does not indicate that Tweed Shire Council endorses the products, views, activities or services relating to the "liked" or "followed" or "shared" entity, business or group.

As a general rule, Council sites will follow/subscribe/connect with:

- Council owned facilities and related or funded services.
- Other Local Government Authorities/Councils and their services, Government Agencies and Regional Collaborative Groups.
- Official Councillor (not political) pages of elected representatives of Tweed Shire Council and serving federal, state and local Politicians.
- Peak body associations, regional and industry groups.
- Reputable community pages/not for profit groups providing a community service to the Tweed community.
- Education and Health Services to the area.
- Events and community activities sponsored by Council.

It will avoid following individuals or commercial businesses, unless there is a commercial agreement, partnership, Memorandum of Understanding or shared purpose/campaign.

Community Conduct

By engaging with Council pages, users should be aware of their expectations for appropriate conduct and participate in accordance with the social channel Community Guidelines and Council's Terms of Use / page House Rules.

Council reserves the right to remove/block any user to its social media activities at any time and may report users who are not adhering to the site community guidelines, page House Rules, or this Policy.

Page House Rules

What to expect from us:

- The page is monitored during business hours 8.00am – 4.30pm Monday to Friday.
- Customer Service standards for social media are in line with our Customer Service Charter.
- Detailed enquiries and correspondence will not be dealt with on social media, please contact us directly on (02) 6670 2400 or at tsc@tweed.nsw.gov.au for formal responses.
- We will never ask you for private information via a public comment. If we need this information and you choose to communicate on social media, we will encourage you to provide it offline via private message us or contact us directly through our established and secure customer service channels.
- We will only respond to comments on our posts when there is a need to do so.
- We aim to respond to Private Messages as soon as possible, however within business hours only. Automated responses will assist in acknowledging the message.
- We take a zero tolerance approach to online abuse via any of our social media channels. They are an extension of our customer services and we will treat you with respect at all times, and expect the same in return.
- We will delete/hide any posts or comments that violate our Page House Rules.

- We will ban any person, business or group who repeatedly disregards our Page House Rules.
- For more information about our social media accounts see Communications Policy.

What we expect from you:

By engaging with Council on social media you agree to:

- Be an active and responsible community member.
- Not reveal any personal or sensitive information about yourself or others on this page, including naming of Council officers.
- Protect your personal privacy by not including email addresses, phone numbers or home addresses in public posts or comments. Please consider your privacy and that of others by only private messaging us with this information.
- Be respectful of others and their opinions.
- Not harass, abuse or threaten other visitors or site administrators.
- Not use obscene or offensive language or emoji.
- Not post defamatory or belittling comments about our community members including Council staff and Councillors.
- Not post comments repeatedly.
- Not post information which is factually inaccurate and may mislead others. Council will correct these where possible.
- Not post comments that are likely to offend others, particularly in reference to an individual's race, age, gender, sexuality, political leaning, religion or disability.
- Not promote anything that may constitute spam, such as commercial interests, solicitations, advertisements or endorsements of any non-government agency.

Post / Comment Removal

Tweed Shire Council will report/remove/hide any comments or posts (including text, emoji, video or images) by third parties containing any of the following:

- Comments not topically related to the particular article/post being commented on.
- 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 and derogatory 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 which support or oppose political campaigns.
- Is considered pornographic or contains links or content sexual in nature.
- Relates to religious, political or cultural beliefs.

Employee Conduct

Employee Use for official purposes - (speaking on behalf of Tweed Shire Council)

Council's Communication and Customer Services team generally manages and monitors the accounts and responses for social media, and is supported by a range of content and subject matter specialists across the organisation. These staff have the delegation, training of social media channels and knowledge of systems to manage the customer experience and Council's reputation online. At all times employees should be aware of their obligations under the Code of Conduct and should refer to staff protocol Employee Conduct on Social Media for more information.

Councillor Conduct

The elected representatives of Tweed Shire Council are encouraged to have their own individual social media channels as the community elected representatives. If they choose to do so, it is recommended that their pages:

- Be set up exclusively for the use of their civic duties as Councillor of Tweed Shire Council, and not use their personal/private accounts to conduct the business of Council.
- Be clearly set up as 'Councillor FirstName LastName' with no political party mention in the page name. If they hold a certain position such as Mayor or Deputy Mayor this should be clearly stated, and updated within 24 hours the position changes.
- The profile photo be a clearly identifiable image of the Councillor.
- Identified as 'Politician' or 'Public Figure' in the category description, where available.
- List their official 'Councillor' social pages as a way for community members to get in contact with them on the Councillor page of the Tweed Shire Council website.
- Be certified as 'official' where this feature is available on the social platform.
- Follow/connect with Council's official social channels and share Council's organisational activities related to their community.
- Tag Tweed Shire Council where appropriate to enable Council to collaborate and share their social activities.
- Not tag staff and their private social media accounts.
- The About sections should include a Councillor bio and their personal description, link back to any official Councillor contact pages on the Tweed Shire Council website and clearly state any political party affiliations.
- Where possible include a statement that "The opinions expressed on this page are my own opinions and do not represent the views or position of Tweed Shire Council."
- Ensure posts and content featured on their site are made in-line with Council's Code of Conduct and should not personally name, identify or tag any Council staff member or private meeting participants during their course of completing their roles without their express permission.
- Ensure they have permission to post photos, videos and images of people in their content and are aware of their obligations for copyright and intellectual property.

- Remove any images or posts requested by the General Manager that may contravene this Policy.

WEBSITES

The Tweed Shire Council website www.tweed.nsw.gov.au is the organisation's primary online communication tool and source of information. Council also has a dedicated Community Engagement website and other .com.au platforms as well as a range of stand-alone facility websites.

Naming and Branding

Council's websites will be clearly branded with Council's trademarked brands and imagery and where possible naming conventions of **name.tweed.nsw.gov.au** will be used. Council manages its domains and campaign requirements for all of its online and web properties in accordance with legislation and commercial domain ownership.

Accessibility

Council aims for its websites to be compliant with the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) standards for accessibility. Information about how our sites do this is available at www.tweed.nsw.gov.au/accessibility

Content

Council's website is a Content Managed System and aims to be accessible, accurate and informative at all times. Each Service of Council is responsible for the content it provides online to its customers and the Tweed community. The Community Directory and Calendar of Events are exceptions to this. 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 from Council websites

Tweed Shire Council websites should only link to credible and secure third party websites that it has an established relationships or partnerships with. Similar to the guidelines for *Following / Connecting on Social Media*, Council websites will generally avoid links to individuals or commercial businesses, unless there is a commercial agreement, partnership, Memorandum of Understanding or shared purpose/campaign. These links will be maintained by the relevant Service or Content Manager. Terms of Use info at www.tweed.nsw.gov.au/termsfuse

Service Outages

Council will aim to notify the community of any planned outages or maintenance a week in advance via a notice on the website.

Terms of Use

Council addresses a range of Privacy, Copyright, Security Information and other general Terms of Use info at www.tweed.nsw.gov.au/termsfuse

TWEED LINK

The Tweed Link is an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) registered publication, ISSN 1327-8630 produced by Tweed Shire Council. The Tweed Link:

- Has been published weekly since November 1998.
- Is produced 49 weeks of the year with a break over the Christmas/New Year period.
- Operates in a newsprint environment, similar to other commercial newspapers and relies on internal advertising as a revenue stream.
- Is factual, unbiased, timely, and relevant to residents of the Tweed Shire, wide ranging, free of political influence, unhindered by group or individual pressure.
- Is produced and edited by the Communications team.

Subscriptions

An electronic email subscription service is available to receive the Tweed Link direct to your inbox each week. Subscribe here: www.tweed.nsw.gov.au/subscribe

Editorial

Editorial priorities are determined by the Communications team and linked to Council business based on newsworthy principles: timing, significance, proximity, prominence and human interest.

The Tweed Link does not run individual photos of elected Councillors with the exception being the result of new, mayoral or by-elections to inform residents who their elected members are. Historically the Tweed Link promotes the business of Council, not individual Councillors.

Advertising

Tweed Shire Council does not take external advertising in the Tweed Link. Organisations should contact local newspapers for their advertising requirements.

On occasion external organisations including utility companies; proponents of a Development Application; Council's tourism provider; government agencies and authorities; and road closures for some external festivals and events may need to advertise in the Tweed Link for community related projects and business. Advertising of this nature is at the discretion of the Communications team and is charged at the rate specified in Council's Fees and Charges for Tweed Link advertising. Enquiries should be made to tweedlink@tweed.nsw.gov.au

Council provides incorporated resident, ratepayers or progress associations one free monthly meeting notification (total of 12 per year at a 3col x 1cm size, approx. 30 words) free of charge. This advertising is considered in-kind support from Council and is recorded in Council reports. It is the responsibility of these groups to provide Council with the required wording of these advertisements in electronic form to tweedlink@tweed.nsw.gov.au by the Tweed Link deadlines, which is available on www.tweed.nsw.gov.au/tweedlink.

BRANDING AND LOGOS

Tweed Shire Council's brand features a trademarked logo and graphic element, unifying our programs and services.

In addition to the Tweed Shire Council brand, sub-brands include:

1. Tweed Regional Aquatic Centres
2. Tweed Regional Gallery and Margaret Olley Art Centre
3. Tweed Regional Museum.

Tweed Shire Council is also owner of and partner with Council's tourism provider for tourism and destination brands related to the Tweed.



Council's Coat of Arms depicts is a shield surmounted by an armorial helmet topped with the seed pod of the 'Diploglottis Campbellii' commonly known as the small-leaved tamarind and a sprig of Blue Knob Orchid. It is supported on each side by Albert Lyrebirds which are indigenous to the Tweed Shire. The shield displays symbolic representations of the sea, Captain James Cook's ship the 'Endeavour' and Mount Warning or Wollumbin where the rising sun's rays first touch the Australian mainland. Below the shield is a ribbon bearing the Tweed Shire Council's motto... 'In Pursuit of Excellence'.

Information about Councils brand and coat of arms is available at www.tweed.nsw.gov.au/branding

Permission for Use and Recognition

The Tweed Shire Council and all associated brands cannot be used by third parties without Councils express and written permission. All approved use must be in accordance with the brands Visual Standards Manual and Signage Manuals. For permission to use Council's logo please contact the Communications Unit on (02) 6670 2400.

Related Legislation

Not Applicable.

Forms

Not Applicable.

Review Period

Review of this policy is ongoing and updates are undertaken as required.

Useful Links

Related Policies:

Also see Customer Service Policy and Community Engagement Strategy

