



# Official Use Social Media Guidelines

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## Purpose

The objective of this document is to provide a framework for the use of social media managed by the Department of Regional NSW for official purposes. It does not cover personal or non-official use. This document should also be read in conjunction with the Department of Regional NSW's Non-official Use Social Media Guidelines.

The Department of Regional NSW's Code of Ethics and Conduct (refer to Standards of Conduct – page 2 – and Professional Standards – page 3) provides employees with a framework for decisions, actions and appropriate behaviour. Everyone who works for the department must comply with the Code. It explains the professional standards of conduct and ethical principles employees are expected to adopt in the employment of their duties. These professional standards and ethical principles apply to all online activity undertaken by staff.

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## Guidelines Statement

The Department of Regional NSW will proactively engage in official social media activities where there is a clear strategic opportunity to enhance overall communication with the community or other stakeholders. The Department will also use social media to deploy messaging and information to the community that is time critical during an emergency response and recovery. This document helps capitalise on the opportunities to better engage with the community through social media, whilst ensuring risks to the department's reputation are minimised.

This document is designed to sit beneath the NSW Government's Social Media Policy and Guidelines, which encourages NSW Government agencies to make greater use of social media and provides broader guidance on social media use.

It complements existing laws such as the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*, *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*, *Government Sector Employment Act 2013* and *State Records Act 1998* as well as departmental policies, including the Department of Regional NSW Code of Ethics and Conduct.

It is important to note that an employee's normal obligations, outlined in the Code of Ethics and Conduct continue to apply to the use of social media as they do for other forms of media.

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## Definitions

Social media refers to sites, tools and platforms that provide users with infrastructure and resources to connect and communicate with each other and share and exchange content or information.

They include but are not limited to:

- social networking sites - e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Twitter, Snapchat
- video and photo sharing websites - e.g. YouTube
- forums and discussion boards - e.g. Google Groups
- blogs, including corporate blogs, personal blogs and blogs hosted by traditional media outlets
- online encyclopaedias – e.g. Wikipedia
- instant messaging software/applications e.g. Messenger, WhatsApp, Teams, Zoom
- any other websites that allow individual users or organisations to use simple self-publishing tools.

In this document, site administrator refers to the Department of Regional NSW employee charged with the use, maintenance and management of the social media site.

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## Scope

These guidelines cover all Department of Regional NSW social media sites or tools, inclusive of those that are public-facing and those that are for internal use only.

This document applies to all Department of Regional NSW employees, including independent contractors, labour hire employees and consultants actively engaged by the Department of Regional NSW.

The management of any existing official social media account must be revised to conform to these guidelines.

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## Our channels

### The Department of Regional NSW

- [Facebook](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [YouTube](#)

- TikTok (vanity account only visible during paid campaigns)

### Invest Regional NSW

- [Facebook](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)

### Local Land Services

- [Youtube](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- Twitter @llsnsw
- Instagram @nswlls
- Facebook
  - [Local Land Services NSW](#)
  - [Central West LLS](#)
  - [Central Tablelands LLS](#)
  - [Greater Sydney LLS](#)
  - [Hunter LLS](#)
  - [Murray LLS](#)
  - [North Coast LLS](#)
  - [North West LLS](#)
  - [Northern Tablelands LLS](#)
  - [Riverina LLS](#)
  - [South East LLS](#)
  - [Western LLS](#)

### Department of Primary Industries

#### Twitter

- [@nswdpi](#)
- [@NSWDPI\\_AgWater](#)
- [@NSWDPI\\_AGRONOMY](#)
- [@NSWDPI\\_Soils](#)
- [@NSWFoodAuth](#)
- [@NSWSharkSmart](#)

- [@TocalCollege](#)
- [@TrangieC](#)
- [@YoungFarmerBP](#)

#### Facebook

- [NSW DPI](#)
- [DPI Biosecurity](#)

- [DPI Dairy](#)
- [DPI Fisheries](#)
- [DPI Hunting](#)
- [NSW Food Authority](#)
- [NSW Rural Assistance Authority](#)
- [The GATE - Global Ag-Tech Ecosystem](#)
- [Total College](#)
- [Young Farmer Business Program](#)

## YouTube

- [NSW DPI Agriculture](#)
- [NSW DPI Biosecurity](#)
- [NSW DPI Fisheries](#)
- [NSW DPI Hunting](#)
- [NSW Food Authority](#)
- [Rural Women's Network](#)
- [The GATE - Global Ag-Tech Ecosystem](#)

- [Total College](#)

## Instagram

- [NSW DPI](#)
- [Total](#)
- [Young Farmers Business Program](#)
- [DPI Fisheries](#)
- [DPI Climate](#)
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## LinkedIn

- [NSW DPI](#)
- [The GATE - Global Ag-Tech Ecosystem](#)

## Wordpress

- [Rural Women's Network blog](#)

## Management of the Department of Regional NSW social media channels

Social media can help the department engage online communities and offer new ways of communicating with stakeholders. The department will aim to engage in social media where there is a clear strategic opportunity to enhance overall communication objectives.

Official use of social media refers to channels or tools which are owned or managed by the Department of Regional NSW for official communications activities.

The Office of Secretary's media, communications and engagement team provides advice and guidance across the department to ensure consistency and alignment with broader communications activities. However, it is the responsibility of each communications Director within the Department of Regional NSW and of the individual site administrators to understand and adhere to these guidelines.

## Approval for social media accounts

Employees wanting to start a new social media account should engage with their business unit's communications and/or digital team and should seek their business unit's appropriate executive approvals. In addition, the Office of the Secretary's social media team should be engaged via [socialmedia@regional.nsw.gov.au](mailto:socialmedia@regional.nsw.gov.au). New account strategies should be developed and approved in consultation with the Office of the Secretary's social media team. All approved social media accounts must be managed in accordance with the business rules detailed in this document. Account names and passwords must also be registered with the Office of the Secretary's social media team via [socialmedia@regional.nsw.gov.au](mailto:socialmedia@regional.nsw.gov.au) for legacy management and emergency use only in the event of unauthorised access or when account security is compromised.

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## Planning of official social media accounts

Before considering starting a new social media account, research and identify whether similar NSW Government accounts already exist. If they do, reach out to the team(s) who manage the accounts and discuss collaborating.

When planning a new social media account, an initial one-off new account strategy must be prepared and sent to the Office of the Secretary's social media team for review and discussion via [socialmedia@regional.nsw.gov.au](mailto:socialmedia@regional.nsw.gov.au). Please view the new account strategy on the [NSW Government social media guidelines webpage](#) for details of what the strategy should include.

Responsibility for managing the new account and ensuring ongoing adherence to the Department of Regional NSW social media guidelines lies with the business unit setting up the account.

The new account management plan should also be sent to the NSW Government social media team at [social@customerservice.nsw.gov.au](mailto:social@customerservice.nsw.gov.au) as an FYI.

See further information about [starting a new social media account](#).

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## Maintenance and management of official social media accounts

For each social media account, an approved site administrator will be required to:

- monitor site activity daily
  - only publish content materials as set out in an approved social media management plan
  - report to your group's communications team any areas of social media or contentious issues that may expose the Department of Regional NSW to reputational risk
  - ensure the security of log in and password details of the accounts and inform the Office of Secretary of any changes in relation to contingency plans for personnel movements
  - proactively export, maintain and archive social information that has a business value in line with the [NSW Government's 'Recordkeeping and archiving social media' policy](#). See [NSW Government Recordkeeping and archiving social media](#) for more information
  - handle any personal details obtained online in accordance with [Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998](#).
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## Branding

All NSW Government social media accounts are to use the NSW Government logo. All accounts must reference back to the NSW Government on the page's bio/about information. This is for all social media platforms.

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## Content guidelines for official social media accounts

All official content posted on a social media account must reflect the highest standards of accuracy and decency.

- All platforms must remain apolitical, it is important to never mention or feature a minister in an advertising campaign. If you post something organically that mentions or features a minister, you cannot boost it or advertise with it. Political parties must not be promoted in any paid or organic posts.
  - Content must be approved before it is published as detailed in the management plan.
  - Content must be sensitive to cultural needs and issues, take into consideration people from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, and be consistent with the requirements of the Department of Regional NSW's [Code of Ethics and Conduct](#).
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- Embargoes on Department of Regional NSW announcements must be observed to allow for official announcements to take place.
  - All content must be current, accurate and able to be substantiated. This may require the site administrator to confirm facts with subject matter experts in other branches.
  - Content must comply with relevant privacy and copyright laws.
  - Content shall adhere to the Terms of Use, cultural and behavioural norms of the social media platform being used.
  - Language and formatting must reflect approved Department of Regional NSW style and terminology. See the Department of Regional NSW [writing style guide](#) on the Department of Regional NSW intranet.
  - Social media platforms that encourage community engagement (such as Facebook) should allow users to contribute posts, add photos and share opinions on the proviso that, where possible, approved 'community behaviour guidelines' are clearly published on that site.
  - Content must not be posted that advertises a commercial product or service unless it is part of an approved communications plan. E.g. Buy Regional. Similarly, content must be politically impartial.
  - Content should be created in consideration of diverse audience types. For example, minority groups, people with disability, etc.
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## Moderation

The Department of Regional NSW wants everyone's experience on our social media channels to be positive. The Department reserves the right to ignore, block, hide or delete posts and users in accordance with our moderation guidelines.

The Department of Regional NSW aims for a balanced online dialogue. Whether content is pre-moderated or community moderated, the Department follows these three principles: the good, the bad, but not the ugly. If the content is positive or negative and in context to the conversation, then the site administrator approves the content, regardless of whether it's favourable or unfavourable to the Department. But if the content is ugly, offensive, denigrating and completely out of context, then the site administrator hides or deletes the content.

Inappropriate content includes:

- defamatory, abusive, harassing, or hateful statements
- users with names that include abusive or obscene words. Moderators can block the user outright or contact them and ask them to change their username. If they refuse, or they change it back, block them (sometimes it may be necessary to involve the social network in this action, although it should always be possible)
- disclosure of confidential information
- conduct encouraging unlawful activity, or which otherwise violates the law
- bullying, abuse
- obscene images, footage, logos or avatars - these must never make it onto your channel.

## Department of Regional NSW moderation steps

- The site administrator is responsible for monitoring all ads – paid and organic from 9am until 5pm, Monday to Friday. After hours and weekend monitoring to be determined by individual teams responsible for the account.
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- Any comments that fall under the inappropriate content category as per our guidelines (above) will be hidden and where warranted deleted immediately (after a screenshot is taken). If a comment is still getting traction after being hidden, a screenshot will be taken and it will be deleted.
- Any comments that ask a legitimate question about the message of the ad/post will be replied to with a response developed from publicly available information. If there is no information available publicly, a response will be written by the site administrator and approved by the relevant stakeholders.

### Dealing with unreasonable behaviour/contentious issues

Whether it is disrespectful behaviour, off topic conversations, negative commentary, or in more extreme examples, promoting hate based on race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or content advocating unsafe behaviour or promoting real or simulated violence, all social media pages at some point will be subjected to unreasonable behaviour. Department of Regional NSW social accounts could also come under scrutiny when dealing with a contentious issue. Behaviours on the social accounts around these issues should be addressed within the community guidelines and shared on the account's About Us section.

Having community guidelines that are easily understood and able to be referred to allows the moderator to engage with the audience to firstly, make them aware of the guidelines, and secondly, encourage them to operate/co-operate within the guidelines. Please also refer to the Department of Regional NSW Unreasonable Complainant Conduct Policy should a complaint be made via social media.

### Community Guidelines example:

*Members expect a place that is respectful, reliable, relevant and safe. We may hide or delete posts that moderators consider to be:*

- *abusive, offensive or unlawful - harassment or provoking other community members, swearing, derogatory language and expression of views that are racist, sexist, homophobic or sexually explicit are not acceptable. Defamatory comments or posts that violate laws regarding privacy will be removed.*
- *political in nature - this is a forum to discuss policies and initiatives, not political parties and personalities.*
- *disclosure of confidential information.*
- *conduct encouraging unlawful activity, or which otherwise violates the law.*
- *an infringement of intellectual property rights - respect and acknowledge original creators when sharing content.*
- *personal details - this page is a public page and we will remove any comments that include personal details such as email address or phone number. If we ask for any contact details, please provide this via direct message.*
- *a violation of Facebook's terms and conditions.*

*If you breach these guidelines, we may block your account or posts.*

*To create meaning and valuable discussion please stay on topic when commenting on posts.*

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## Record keeping

NSW Government-run social media accounts create state records every day, including:

- posts

- comments
- analytics generated by the platform (like Facebook and Twitter)
- analytics, case notes and responses from social media management platforms (like Hootsuite and Sprout Social).

There are different requirements for keeping records, depending on which of the criteria they meet. For details on what information you need to retain, record or dispose of please see [Recordkeeping and archiving social media](#).

In some cases, social media interactions may be evidence for legal or investigation purposes. Department of Regional NSW employees should implement a strategy for social media records management that is in line with the Department's record management procedures.

Keep the following content for a minimum of two calendar years:

- as defined in the [Code of Ethics and Conduct](#), content that serves an essential administrative, legal and historical purpose, includes electronic documents, digital image, video and audio recordings, correspondence, files, forms and notes.
- consent forms relating to Department of Regional NSW-led photography.

There is no need to keep the following content:

- contributions of short-term value such as general chat
- copy already placed on file or captured in an appropriate way within a recordkeeping system.

Further reading and guidance:

- [NSW Government Recordkeeping and archiving social media](#)
- [NSW State Records' strategies for managing social media information](#)

## Influencers

Employees must follow the guidelines below when hiring influencers for social media campaigns:

- Before hiring an influencer, do a thorough background check to ensure that they can represent your product/campaign/organisation professionally. When coming to a formal contractual agreement with an influencer, the contract should include (where applicable):
  - intellectual property rights:
    - ✓ image ownership
    - ✓ creation and usage
    - ✓ copy review
    - ✓ comment moderation
  - approval's process
  - brand safety and reputation
  - objectives and deliverables
  - remuneration.

If in doubt, employees should speak to the Department of Regional NSW legal team for advice.

Paid influencers must disclose that they are representing the brand or product by either mentioning it within copy and/or by adding a relevant hashtag. Reposting and attribution should be clearly disclosed within the post.



Influencers shouldn't talk about an experience with a product or service if they haven't tried it. The Department of Regional NSW must never use misleading or deceptive testimonials to mislead audiences.

Influencers are representative of the brand so they must follow brand guidelines and the Department of Regional NSW Code of Conduct while promoting the product/service - this includes professional behaviour online, no profanity and must be politically neutral.

Department of Regional NSW must continue to monitor influencers throughout the campaign and is responsible for their behaviour for as long as they represent the brand.

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## Partnerships

When partnering with another brand on social media, it is with the understanding that both the brand and Department of Regional NSW audiences have value that both can utilise to advance combined strategic goals. Before beginning the process of partnering, Department of Regional NSW will undertake background work to ensure the potential partner organisation is aligned strategically and culturally with Department values.

Employees must follow the below guidelines when partnering:

- ensure that all parties to the partnership are aligned with the campaign objective and have clear expectations for the campaign
- have clear responsibilities for content production and approval processes
- partners can mention and are encouraged to tag the Department but cannot use the logo unless they have been given written approval from the Office of the Secretary's social media team.

## Issues management

Social media platforms give rise to public comment and can expose contentious issues that have potential to escalate rapidly. When identified, the site administrator should:

- seek advice from the Office of Secretary social media team or your group's communications team regarding the level of risk presented by the issue before taking any action
- not remove contentious material (excluding material that is defamatory, obscene, abusive, racist, bullying, violent, sexist or threatening) without first discussing the content removal with Office of Secretary social media team or your group's communications team and legal team
- media enquiries generated by social media should be referred to [media@regional.nsw.gov.au](mailto:media@regional.nsw.gov.au) or your relevant group's media team.

If you believe that a person engaging with your account is a danger to themselves or others, contact the NSW Police by calling Triple Zero if the matter is urgent or Crimestoppers on 1800 333 000 if urgent assistance is not needed.

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## Accountabilities and non-compliance

If you are aware of a breach of these guidelines, please contact Office of Secretary's social media team on [socialmedia@regional.nsw.gov.au](mailto:socialmedia@regional.nsw.gov.au). Where other obligations are inconsistent with these guidelines, these inconsistencies should immediately be referred to Office of Secretary's social media team.

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## Related policies

- Department of Regional NSW [Code of Ethics and Conduct](#)
  - Department of Regional NSW [Acceptable Use Policy](#)
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- [Department of Regional NSW Unreasonable Complainant Conduct Policy](#)
  - [Department of Regional NSW Non-official Use Social Media Guidelines](#)
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## Other related documents

- [NSW State Records' strategies for managing social media information](#)
  - [NSW Government Recordkeeping and archiving social media](#)
  - [NSW Government Privacy Management Plan](#)
  - [NSW Government ICT Strategy 2012](#)
  - [M2012-10 Open Government](#)
  - [M2009-11 NSW Standard on Digital Recordkeeping](#)
  - [The Code of Ethics and Conduct for NSW government sector employees](#)
  - [Government Information \(Public Access\) Act 2009](#)
  - [Government Sector Employment Act 2013](#)
  - [Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998](#)
  - [Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002](#)
  - [State Records Act 1998](#)
  - [Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 No 133 - NSW Legislation](#)
  - [Privacy Act 1988](#)
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## Superseded documents

Nil.

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## Revision history

Version	Date	Notes	By
1.0	16 November 2022	Approved – ready for CPC endorsement	Executive Director, Office of the Secretary

## Contact

Office of Secretary social media team - [socialmedia@regional.nsw.gov.au](mailto:socialmedia@regional.nsw.gov.au)

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