Department of Regional NSW

Non-official Social Media Use Guidelines

Authorised by:	Executive Director, Office of the Secretary & Corporate Performance Committee	Authorised date:	22 November 2022
Issued by:	Corporate Affairs, Office of the Secretary	Effective date:	9 January 2023
Category:	Digital Communications	Review date:	22 November 2023

Contents

Purpose

These guidelines have been developed to provide department employees with standards of use as they engage in conversations or interactions using digital and social media for non-official or personal use.

Non-official use of social media is any use of social media where an employee's comments or profile could identify them directly or indirectly as a staff member of the Department of Regional NSW, and/or if they are making reference directly or indirectly to the Department of Regional NSW.

Employee use of social media as a private citizen

The Department of Regional NSW recognises that social media is a unique platform of communication that can overlap private and public spheres of life. Department of Regional NSW's Code of Ethics and Conduct allows employees to act in a private capacity to comment on public opinion or promote issues of public interest. However, employees should be aware that the use of social media, even in a personal capacity, may be governed by Department of Regional NSW's policies and authorisation protocols.

The Department of Regional NSW's Code of Ethics and Conduct provides employees with a framework for decisions, actions and appropriate behaviour. Everyone who works for the Department must comply with the guidance contained in the Code of Ethics and Conduct. 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 by employees.

Employees must not provide comment or information to journalists or media organisations on behalf of the Department of Regional NSW or about the Department of Regional NSW matters unless they have been authorised to do so as official spokespeople. This includes through social media.

Guidance for non-official use of social media

Interacting on social media is at the discretion of the Department of Regional NSW employees. It can create opportunities to champion the objectives of the Department of Regional NSW and be seen to be advocating for the department and/or its projects. However, it also has the potential to create reputational risks for the Department of Regional NSW. Anything published on social media (whether it be professional or personal) has the potential to be visible to anyone, including colleagues, stakeholders and the media. Social media activity reflects on the Department and employees are expected to abide by these guidelines on all personal social media accounts.

In such circumstances, the following guidance applies.

Employees should:

- adhere to the Terms of Use of the social media platform (see Appendix One below).
- adhere to the Department of Regional NSW's Code of Ethics and Conduct. Refer to Standards of Conduct, page 2, and Professional Standards, page 3, which says that:
  We must behave in a way that does not damage the reputation of the department or the NSW Public Service. This includes being well presented and courteous when interacting with the public and other organisations. We should effectively communicate the work the department is doing and how it aligns with the government's position. For this reason, it is important that:
    • only authorised employees comment publicly on the activities of the department, including having conversations with journalists or posting on social media
    • public speaking engagements are approved before commitments are given.
- adhere to privacy management principles under law – i.e., see the NSW Government's Privacy Management Plan. Refer also to the 'Other related document's' section enclosed in this document
- be polite and respectful in all areas of engagement
- only disclose and discuss accurate and publicly available information
- be careful when posting as a private citizen. Treat all interactions as if they are highly visible and demonstrate the highest level of ethical conduct
- avoid conflicts of interest (real or perceived)

- be clear that any personal perspective on a matter reflects their own view and does not cause any direct or indirect damage to the reputation of the Department of Regional NSW, its staff or associated organisations
- remember that no social media site is 'private', regardless of the privacy settings applied to an individual's account. This includes anonymous accounts through an alias or pseudonym
- ensure fellow staff provide their permission for any posts they are linked to and be mindful of the images or comments posted, by ensuring that the post reflects the highest level of decency

Employees should not:
- use their work contact details to register for a private social media account
- impersonate or imply to be another staff member
- publish content likely to bring NSW Government, the Department of Regional NSW or any other staff member into disrepute
- post material that can be interpreted as offensive, obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, bullying, discriminatory, hateful, racist, sexist, infringes copyright, constitutes a contempt of court, breaches a court suppression order, or is otherwise unlawful
- comment as an official representative of the Department of Regional NSW unless authorised
- imply that they are authorised to speak as a representative of the Department of Regional NSW or give the impression that their personal views are those of the Department of Regional NSW
- use any Department of Regional NSW or NSW Government logos, branding or insignia that may give the impression of official support or endorsement of personal comment
- publish or report on conversations or information deemed confidential or classified or that deals with internal matters
- publish or report on legislative, policy or regulatory changes in NSW Government that have not already been officially announced publicly.
- install or use TikTok on a government issued device. See Cyber Security NSW Directive – Protecting NSW Government Information on government-issued devices

This section also applies to:
- social media activities undertaken by staff anonymously
- staff members who contribute articles to social media as subject matter experts or members of a professional network. In such cases, employees must:
  - state that the views expressed are their own and not of the Department of Regional NSW
  - not use social media to make any NSW Government related announcements
  - not reveal any confidential information
  - not claim credit for work or ideas that are not their own.

Employees need to be aware that if their conduct has the potential to damage public trust in the Department of Regional NSW, even if it is in a private capacity, this could lead to action being taken for breach of the Code of Ethics and Conduct.

Reasonable and unreasonable use of the Department of Regional NSW resources

When accessing social media from the Department of Regional NSW resources or personal devices during work hours, employees must follow the Code of Ethics and Conduct and the Department of Regional NSW's Acceptable Use Policy, and pay particular attention to the 'Use of Cloud Services' section, as follows.

In accordance with the Cyber Security NSW Directive – Protecting NSW Government information on government-issued devices, TikTok should not be installed or used on any government-issued devices, except there is a legitimate business case. See the Cyber Security NSW Directive – Protecting NSW Government information on government-issued devices for further guidance.

Use of cloud services

Users are only permitted to use cloud computing services that are officially authorised under a licence arrangement. Access to cloud-based services must only be done via an enterprise user account or an account created for a specific business purpose that has been endorsed for use.

Users should not use official cloud-based services for personal use beyond what is considered acceptable as outlined in this document. Users should not use personal or unofficial cloud services to transact, transfer or store the department's information and records.

Reasonable use of the Department of Regional NSW resources includes, but is not limited to:

- resharing content from the Department of Regional NSW's accounts on a personal account and acknowledging the source of information

- social media interaction at certain work functions. For example, live Twitter updates may be encouraged at certain events

- using social media for short periods during work breaks or lunch breaks, or outside normal working hours.

Unreasonable use includes, but is not limited to:

- use of social media on a Department of Regional NSW device, unless for one of the reasons above

- posting or viewing material which could be considered inappropriate

- using the internet, intranet, mobile devices or other computer resources to provide comments to journalists, politicians and lobby groups other than in the course of official business

- encouraging or causing other staff members to use Department of Regional NSW resources in any manner listed above under unreasonable uses.

Reporting security incidents

All employees are responsible for reporting any actual, perceived, suspected or potential information security incidents as quickly as possible to CS Connect on 6363 7676.

Bullying, harassment and discrimination

All employees are expected to treat people with respect and dignity and must ensure their online behaviour does not constitute behaviours of bullying, harassment and / or discrimination. This may include comments employees make online, even on their own private social media platforms and out of office hours towards other people.

All employees must adhere to the Department of Regional NSW's Code of Ethics and Conduct which applies to both online social media activity, and in the physical workplace.

Accountabilities

Employees are personally responsible for the content they publish in a personal capacity on any social media platform. Employees are also personally responsible for any shares, likes, retweets, reblogs or any type of association with others' content on social media.

When in doubt, employees should seek guidance from their manager on how to comply with their obligations under this document.

Non-compliance with these guidelines

It is important for all Department of Regional NSW employees to remember that they are required to conduct themselves in an appropriate and professional manner and are required to comply with all department policies.

Any breach of the Department of Regional NSW's policies (including these guidelines) or the Code of Ethics and Conduct could result in disciplinary or managerial action against the employee found to be in breach.

If you are aware of a breach, contact your supervisor, or People team or the Governance team. Contact details can be found on the Department of Regional NSW intranet.

Where other obligations are inconsistent with these guidelines, these inconsistencies should be immediately referred to the Department of Regional NSW's Office of the Secretary's Media, Communications and Engagement branch on socialmedia@regional.nsw.gov.au.

Appendix One – Social Media sites Terms of Use

- LinkedIn
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter
- Youtube

Related policies

- Department of Regional NSW Code of Ethics and Conduct
- Department of Regional NSW Official Use Social Media Guidelines
- Department of Regional NSW Acceptable Use Policy

Other related documents

- Cyber Security NSW Directive – Protecting NSW Government Information on government-issued devices
- Department of Regional NSW Records Management Procedures (available on the Department of Regional NSW intranet)
- NSW State Records' strategies for managing social media information
- NSW Government Recordkeeping and archiving social media
- 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*
- *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*

Superseded documents

Nil.

Revision history

Version	Date	Notes	By
1.0	16 November 2022	Approved – ready for CPC endorsement	Executive Director, Office of the Secretary
1.1	4 May 2023	Updated to reference Cyber Security NSW Directive - Protecting NSW Government information on government-issued devices	

Contact

OSEC Digital and Design team socialmedia@regional.nsw.gov.au