



# DPC Social Media Policy

## Overview

Online communication and new media tools are important communication channels that provide an opportunity for the Victorian Government to engage directly with the Victorian public. These tools inform the public about services and programs and create a new opportunity to open up a two-way conversation with the public through consulting with the community on policy development.

The objective of this policy is to set parameters on the use of social media, whether as part of your professional responsibilities or in a personal capacity to limit the risk of damage to the department arising out of such use.

This policy was developed to sit under the Public Sector Standards Commissioner's Guidance for the Use of Social Media in the Victorian Public Sector.

It is essential that you understand that comments you make via social media platforms are as public as if you were making the same comments to the media or at a public forum.

The intention of this policy is to establish a culture of openness, trust and integrity in activities around Web 2.0.

The objectives of this policy are compatible with the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* and the Public Sector Standards Commissioner's Guidance for the Use of Social Media in the Victorian Public Sector.

The department also has produced a [video](#) to assist all staff in understanding their social media responsibilities as a public servant.

## Scope

This policy applies to all employees and contractors of the department.

## Statement of Policy

### Professional use of social media

#### Becoming authorised to comment

- You must be **authorised** to comment before engaging in social media as a representative of the department.
- You may not comment as a representative of the department unless you are **authorised** to do so.
- To become authorised to comment in an official capacity, you have been through a trial usage period on Yammer, gained approval from the Director, Strategic Communication and Protocol Branch.



## Rules of engagement

Once authorised to comment as a department representative, you must:

- disclose you are an employee/contractor of the department and use only your own identity or an approved official account or avatar
- disclose and comment only on information classified as public domain information
- ensure that all content published is accurate and not misleading and complies with all relevant departmental and WOVG policies
- ensure you are not the first to make an announcement unless specifically given permission to do so
- comment only on your area of expertise and authority
- ensure comments are respectful of the online community with which you are interacting
- adhere to the Terms of Use of the relevant social media platform/website, as well as copyright, privacy, defamation, contempt of court, discrimination, harassment and other applicable laws and departmental policies.

If you are authorised to comment as a department representative, you must not:

- post or respond to material that is 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
- use or disclose any confidential or secure information
- make any comment or post any material that might otherwise cause damage to the department's reputation or bring it into disrepute.

## Moderation of social media produced by the department

- The site owner must ensure a moderation policy is clear when inviting comments from the public on a department website or social media platform.
- All department website activity, including any social media, must be approved by the department's Website Management Taskforce.

## Personal use of social media

### Overview

The department recognises that you may wish to use social media in your personal life. This policy does not intend to discourage or unduly limit your personal expression or online activities.

However, you should recognise the potential for damage to be caused, directly or indirectly, to the department in certain circumstances via your personal use of social media when you can be identified as a Department of Premier and Cabinet employee. Accordingly, you should comply with this policy to ensure that the risk of such damage is minimised.

You are personally responsible for the content you publish in a personal capacity on any social media platform. When in doubt, you should seek guidance from the department on how to comply with the following obligations.



Where your comments or profile can identify you as a public servant,

You must:

- only disclose and discuss publicly available information
- ensure that all content published is accurate and not misleading and complies with all relevant departmental and WOVG policies
- expressly state on all postings — identifying you as a government employee — the stated views are your own and are not those of the department or the government
- be polite and respectful to all people with whom you interact
- adhere to the Terms of Use of the relevant social media platform/website, as well as copyright, privacy, defamation, contempt of court, discrimination, harassment and other applicable laws and departmental policies.

You must not:

- post material that is 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
- imply that you are authorised to speak as a representative of the department or the government, nor give the impression that the views you express are those of the department or the government
- use your department email address or any department or Victorian Government logos or insignia
- use the identity or likeness of another employee, contractor or other member of the department
- use or disclose any confidential information obtained in your capacity as an employee/contractor of the department
- imply you are authorised to speak on behalf of the department or give the impression that any views you express are those of the department
- use your department email address or any department or Victorian Government logos or insignia that may give the impression of official support or endorsement of your personal comment
- use or disclose any confidential information or personal information obtained in your capacity as an employee/contractor of the department
- post material that is or might be construed as threatening, harassing, bullying or discriminatory towards another employee/contractor of the department
- make any comment or post any material that might otherwise cause damage to the department's reputation or bring it into disrepute.

### **Reasonable/unreasonable personal use**

When accessing social media via the department's online platforms or work mobile devices, you must do so in accordance with the department's Acceptable Usage Policy, which requires you to reasonably use these resources in a manner that does not interfere with your work and is not inappropriate or excessive.



Examples of reasonable use include:

- re-tweeting content from the WOVG account on your own Twitter account
- accessing and posting comments on the department network within Yammer (microblog)
- participating in working groups on the VPS Hub (WOVG intranet)
- updating Facebook status and posting messages during a lunch break.

Unreasonable use:

- Departmental resources should not be used to access or post any material that is fraudulent, harassing, threatening, bullying, embarrassing, sexually explicit, profane, obscene, racist, sexist, intimidating, defamatory or otherwise inappropriate or unlawful.
- You should not use the department's internet, intranet, mobile devices or other computer resources to provide comments to journalists, politicians and lobby groups other than in the course of official duties.
- It is not acceptable to spend hours using social media that is not related to your work.

## Guidance for navigating legal issues

The following is offered as general guidance to assist you to comply with the obligations set out in this policy. When in doubt, seek further guidance from the department.

### Privacy, confidentiality and information security

- You should only use personal information obtained in the course of your employment/engagement with the department in a manner consistent with departmental policies such as the Information Security Policy and the Acceptable Usage Policy.
- You should not publish or report on conversations or information deemed confidential or classified or that deal with internal matters.
- For more information on posting material online (i.e., public domain), refer to the Acceptable Usage Policy.

### Copyright

- You should respect copyright laws and fair use of copyrighted material.
- You should attribute work to the original author/source wherever possible.

### Harassment and bullying

- The department's Workplace Bullying Prevention Policy applies online and in the physical workplace.
- Workplace bullying and harassment includes any bullying or harassing comments employees make online, even on their own private social networks or outside of office hours.
- Abusive, harassing, threatening or defaming postings are in breach of the department's Workplace Bullying Prevention Policy and may result in disciplinary action.
- All employees are expected to treat their colleagues with respect and dignity and must ensure their behaviour does not constitute bullying and/or harassment.

### Defamation

- You should refrain from publishing material that may cause injury to another person, organisation, association or company's reputation, and should seek further guidance if publication of such material is thought to be necessary.



### Offensive or obscene material

- Material may be offensive or obscene and may infringe relevant online classification laws if it is pornographic, sexually suggestive, harassing, hateful, racist, sexist, abusive or discriminatory.

### Contempt of court

- You should exercise care if referring to pending court proceedings to avoid publishing material that could prejudice those proceedings, in particular, material that will not be part of the evidence in those proceedings.
- You should make enquiries as to any applicable court suppression orders prior to commenting on any court proceeding, past or pending.

## Responsibilities

Everyone should be aware of their responsibilities under the Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees (VPS Code of Conduct). This policy is based on sections:

- 2.2 Remaining apolitical
- 3.2 Using powers at work
- 3.4 Official Information
- 3.5 Public comment
- 3.9 Public trust
- 5.3 Work resources
- 5.4 Open to scrutiny
- 6.1 Fair and objective treatment
- 6.2 Privacy and confidentiality
- 6.3 Maintaining confidentiality
- 6.4 Equity and diversity.

## Compliance

Depending on the circumstances, non-compliance with this policy may constitute a breach of employment or contractual obligations, misconduct (under the department's Misconduct Policy), sexual harassment, discrimination or some other contravention of the law.

Those who fail to comply with this policy may face disciplinary action. In serious cases, this includes termination of their employment or engagement.

### Identifying inappropriate use

If you notice inappropriate or unlawful content online relating to the department or content that may otherwise have been published in breach of this policy, you should report the circumstances to the Strategic Communication and Protocol Branch.

Privacy breaches can also be reported to the Legal Branch.



## Definitions

### Social Media

Content created by people using highly accessible and scalable publishing technologies. Social media is distinct from industrial media, such as newspapers, television, and film. Social media comprises relatively inexpensive and accessible tools that enable anyone (even private individuals) to publish or access information - industrial media generally require significant resources to publish information. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social\\_media](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_media))

Social Media may include but is not limited to:

- social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, Yammer)
- video and photo sharing websites (e.g., YouTube, Vimeo, Flickr, Instagram)
- blogs, including corporate blogs and personal blogs
- blogs hosted by media outlets (e.g., 'comments' or 'have your say' features)
- micro-blogging (e.g., Twitter)
- wikis and online collaborations (e.g., Wikipedia)
- forums, discussion boards and groups (e.g., Google groups, Whirlpool)
- vodcasting and podcasting
- online multiplayer gaming platforms (e.g., World of Warcraft, Second Life)
- instant messaging (including SMS)
- geo-spatial tagging (Foursquare)

## Attribution

This policy is based on the Victorian Department of Justice [social media policy](#).