



CATHOLIC DIOCESE
OF ROCKHAMPTON

Social Media Policy

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1. Purpose

To provide rules and direction on the acceptable and unacceptable use of social media by staff employed by the Catholic Diocese of Rockhampton ('Diocese').

2. Scope

This policy applies to all Workers of the Diocese. Workers include paid employees, clergy, religious, volunteers, contractors and students on work placements.

The use of social media in this Policy relates to both official engagement on behalf of the Diocese (where authorised) and also the use of personal social networking sites (such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram). The use of personal social networking can also include conduct outside of work hours, on personally owned ICT equipment.

3. Policy Statement

Online or offline, respect for human dignity is paramount. Behaviour online should reflect the standard of appropriate behaviour which is expected in all person-to-person interaction (Bishops Commission for Mission and Faith Formation: Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, 2011).

Behaviour and content published on social media networks must always observe other relevant Diocesan policies, in particular child protection protocols.

A clear distinction should be maintained between personal and professional communication in the social networking environment, particularly when making (or responding to) "friend" requests.

Those who engage in official Diocesan social networking activities must take great care to represent the teachings of the Catholic Church and the mission of the Diocese.

Appropriate human resources must be allocated to official social networking activities. This ensures successful moderation, as well as a vibrant and effective presence in the social networking world.

4. Principles

4.1. Monitoring

The Diocese's ICT and electronic communications are to be used primarily for business purposes. You are responsible for using them in an appropriate, professional and lawful manner. For more information, please see the *ICT Acceptable Use Policy*.

All content on the Diocese's ICT will be treated as business related and may be monitored. From time to time, the content and use of ICT may be examined by the Diocese or by a third party on the Diocese's behalf.

You should not expect that any content transmitted or stored on the Diocese's ICT will be private. This includes electronic communications which are sent to you or by you, both internal and external to the organisation. Even where content is later deleted, it can often be recalled.

Additionally, the Diocese reserves the right to view the public-facing social media profile of any Worker, including publicly accessible Facebook and Instagram pages, blogs, websites or Twitter feeds.

If the Diocese is made aware of content published by a Worker that violates this policy, and that content is visible to members of the public via social network relationships (ie. "friends"), the Diocese may wish to investigate this breach, even if the content is not completely open to the general public. Accordingly, care should be taken with both the content published to "friends", and also the selection of "friends" within your social network – particularly co-workers and those who may have a relationship with the organisation.

4.2. Official use of social media

Workers must not engage in online social media on behalf of the organisation unless they have been explicitly authorised by the Bishop.

Workers who have been authorised by the Bishop to use online social media as part of their duties must conduct themselves in accordance with the standards of behaviour as set out in the organisation's policies.

In particular, Workers engaging in social media on behalf of the Diocese must:

- Never damage, or potentially damage the Diocese's interests, good name, or reputation;
- Only publish photos or video of people once permission has been sought to use the images;
- Take care to moderate any comments from other users which are rude, or disrespectful; and
- Never violate any confidentiality of clients, parishioners or students.

4.3. Personal use of social media

When accessing online social media for personal use (either using Diocesan ICT resources or personal ICT equipment; outside of, or during, working hours), you should exercise all care and discretion to ensure the content that is contributed is both appropriate and private. This applies particularly to any interaction with other personnel of the Diocese outside of working hours. Conduct that is not appropriate in the workplace will also be inappropriate when using online social media.

4.4. Unacceptable Conduct

Conduct by a Worker is considered unacceptable and will not be tolerated by the Diocese where it:

- is likely to cause damage to the relationship between the Diocese and Worker;
- damages, or has the potential to damage the interests of the Diocese, its good name or reputation;
- is inconsistent with the values and teachings of the Catholic Church;
- is incompatible with your duty as a Worker;
- violates, or has the potential to violate, the confidentiality of clients or parishioners.

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

You are reminded that content published using online social media is not, or may not remain private, and may be publicly accessible now, or become so in the future. Please be aware that your conduct and the content you publish or share online, including comments, may be perceived in a different manner to that which you intended, and may cause hurt or embarrassment to others. Such conduct may come to the attention of the Diocese.

When accessing social media via the Diocesan Internet, intranet and extranet systems, you must do so in accordance with the *ICT Acceptable Use Policy*, which requires you to use these resources 'reasonably', in a manner that does not interfere with your work and is not inappropriate or excessive. It is not acceptable to spend hours using social media that is not related to your work.

Diocesan resources should never 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.

4.4.1. Clients and social media

Those Workers who are required to interact with clients as part of their work should not use private social media accounts to communicate with them. Official public pages are also not an appropriate forum for direct counselling. Where you access online social media for personal use, you must ensure you restrict access to clients. Care should always be taken to maintain the confidentiality of clients, either explicitly via published content and comments, or implicitly, via the mere presence of a relationship to that person.

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Whilst it is inappropriate to offer counselling via social media networks, if a person is in danger or at risk, social media can be used to pass on contact details and to urge the person to seek assistance. Good judgement and discretion are encouraged, and these incidents will be handled on a “case-by-case” basis.

4.5. General

The terms and recommended conduct described in this policy are not intended to be exhaustive, nor do they anticipate every possible use of the Diocese's ICT resources or instance of electronic communications. You should act with caution and consider the underlying principles intended by this policy. If you feel unsure of the appropriate action relating to use of social networking, you should speak to your Manager.

4.6. Breach of Policy

Breaching of this policy by a Worker can result in, but is not limited to, one or more of the following:

- Disciplinary action
- Dismissal
- Notification to an external agency
- Criminal charges

Contractors who engage in unacceptable behaviour may have their contract or engagement with the Diocese terminated or not renewed.

Breaches of this policy should be reported to an immediate supervisor / manager. Reports may then be escalated if necessary. All Workers are responsible for knowing and understanding the policy.

Management is responsible for making sure that all staff and supervisors understand that any breach of policy or complaints of inappropriate use of social media will be taken seriously and handled accordingly.

Depending on the circumstances, non-compliance with this policy may constitute a breach of employment or contractual obligations, or some other contravention of the law.

Those who fail to comply with this policy may face disciplinary action and, in serious cases, termination of their employment or engagement. Any publication on social media that identifies and defames, bullies or harasses a client, a co-worker or the Diocese can be used in disciplinary proceedings.

5. References

Bishops Commission for Mission and Faith Formation: Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference. (2011). *Social-Networking Protocol for the Catholic Church in Australia*.

National Committee for Professional Standards: A Committee of the Australian Catholic Bishops & the Leaders of Religious Institutes in Australia. (2011). *Integrity in the Service of the Church: A Resource Document of Principles and Standards for Lay Workers in the Catholic Church in Australia*. Alexandria.

6. Schedules

This policy must be read in conjunction with its subordinate schedules as provided in the table below.

7. Policy Information

Subordinate Schedules	
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Accountable Officer	Human Resource Manager
Policy Type	Executive Policy
Approved Date	31/05/2023
Effective Date	31/05/2023
Review Date	31/05/2026
Relevant Legislation	
Related Policies	Code of Conduct Policy ICT Acceptable Use Policy
Related Procedures	
Related forms, publications and websites	
Definitions	<p>ICT</p> <p>Information and Communications Technology</p> <p>Social Media</p> <p>Social media refers to the means of interactions among people in which they create, share, and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks.</p> <p>Social Media may include (although is not limited to):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Google+, Instagram, LinkedIn) • social bookmarking sites (e.g. Pinterest, Digg, Reddit) • video and photo sharing websites (e.g. Flickr, Youtube) • blogs, including corporate blogs and personal blogs • comment and discussion sections (e.g. 'Newcastle Herald, SMH comments', Disqus) • social micro-blogging (e.g. Twitter) • wikis and online collaborations (e.g. Wikipedia) • forums, discussion boards and groups (eg Google groups, Whirlpool) • vod and podcasting • online multiplayer gaming or social platforms (e.g. World of Warcraft, Second Life) <p>Worker</p> <p>A cleric, employee, contractor, volunteer, work experience participant or trainee of the Diocese, including those working in its Parishes</p>