Policy:

Communications and Social Media

2020

Information about this document

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#E2013/72429		Reported to Ordinary Meeting 21/11/13
#E2013/77794	27 November 2013	Adopted as per resolution 13-624 with a commencement date of 1 January 2014.
#E2019/14919	20 August 2020	Draft updated policy for review by ET
#E2019/14919/	26 November 2020	Adopted per Res 20-671.

Further Document Information and Relationships

Related Legislation	• Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 • Protected Disclosures Act 1994 • NSW Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 • NSW Anti Discrimination Act 1977 • NSW Defamation Act (2005)
Related Policies	• Complaints Management Policy DM1154370 • Code of Conduct Policy E2019/858 • Social Media Policy E2013/77680 (superseded by this policy) • Managing Unreasonable Customer Conduct 2020 E2020/53014

Related Standards, Procedures, Statements, documents	• Draft Byron Shire Council Social Media Procedures (superceded)* • Byron Shire Council Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2008-13 • Byron Shire Council Cultural Plan 2008-13 • Guidelines for the Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW • Practice Guide for Managing Unreasonable Online Behaviour V2 E2019/85185

Note: Any reference to Legislation will be updated in the Policy as required. See website *http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/* for current Acts, Regulations and Environmental Planning Instruments.

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1. Introduction

Byron Shire Council recognises the important relationship it has with its community, the need to communicate clearly about those matters which affect them and the need to consult in meaningful ways when decisions need to be informed by community input.

Consultation complements but does not replace the decision making role of Council but communication and meaningful consultation allow staff and Councillors to make informed, transparent and considered decisions.

Effective communication with stakeholders and the elected Council not only supports effective engagement, but builds partnerships, manages expectations, delivers customer service and increases awareness about Council operations and processes and regulatory compliance requirements.

2. Objective

This policy outlines how Council manages its communication activities and public image to build and foster relationships with stakeholders including media liaison, social media, website and corporate identity (branding and logos).

3. Corporate identity

Byron Shire Council's corporate image reflects the Council's culture, values and approach to Council business and it is important to present a consistent and uniform visual image. This includes the correct use of Council's logo, corporate colours, consistent fonts and layouts in all publications and promotional material including stationary, strategic documents, community newsletters, electronic newsletters, displays, banners etc.

Information on the font, style, logos etc. is found in the Byron Shire Council Style Guide (#E2013/68210).

Byron Shire Council is the sole owner of the Byron Shire corporate logo and a logo created to identify a project, event, service or program of Council. The use of the logo by a third party organisation must be approved by the General Manager or form part of a sponsorship agreement or community donation.

All signs in the Byron Shire should reflect the organisation's corporate image by way of logo, font, text and information.

4. Media

Byron Shire Council aims to take a pro-active approach to media, ensuring media organisations are kept up-to-date on Council activities and projects.   Local media, including newspapers, radio, television and digital/social media provide information to the community about Council and the organisation therefore will respond to information requests promptly.

4.1. Spokespeople

The Byron Shire Mayor, General Manager and Directors are the official spokespersons on all Council matters and will be available to comment/interview.

Experienced staff may also be available for interviews with permission from their Director.

The Mayor and Councillors can respond to media enquiries and comment on a wide range of matters mindful of Council's Code of Conduct and their obligations under the NSW Local Government Act. The Mayor and Councillors will not disclose Council information to the media that is not publicly available, or information that has been provided in confidential reports.

4.2. Media Inquiries

Media inquiries should be sent to the Media and Communications team and staff will coordinate the response in a timely manner.

4.3. Distribution of information and engagement

The Media and Communications team will distribute information about projects, issues, and important messages in a range of ways including:

• Media releases

• Social media including Facebook, Instagram

• Advertising – newspapers, radio, television, Facebook

• E News

• https://www.yoursaybyronshire.com.au/projects (online engagement)

• Website www.byron.nsw.gov.au

• Direct communication with stakeholder groups.

4.4. Legal proceedings

Council staff, the Mayor and Councillors will not make any public comments on matters where Council is involved, or potentially could be involved, in legal proceedings.

4.5. Council meetings and business papers

Members of the media can attend any public Council meeting. Filming or recording of meetings is allowed in consultation with the Mayor and Councillors at the start of the meeting.

Business papers and attachments can be downloaded from the Council's website. Audio and video recordings of the Council meetings are also available on the website.

5. Social media

Byron Shire Council actively uses social media as part of a suite of communication tools to inform and engage with the community.

5.1. Account management

Council's official social media accounts are managed and maintained by the Media and Communications team. All content shared on social media is guided by existing publically available content including but not limited to: authorised media releases and statements, website content and marketing collateral.

All new information provided via Council's social media platforms requires authorisation by the relevant Director and or the General Manager prior to publication.

5.2. Authorised users

In addition to the Media and Communications team staff may seek approval to become editors or sub-authors across Council's social media platforms. This approval is given by the Media and Communications team and a Director.

All content posted by authorised users must be general in nature, provide knowledge or information that is publically available and not considered controversial, confidential, or detrimental to the organisation.

5.3. Guidance for Council staff

Byron Shire Council acknowledges the value of allowing staff to act as voyeurs across our social media platforms.

Byron Shire Council does not use its IT server capacity to block social media sites. However, staff must close down social media browsers and remain logged out when not utilising the platform for operational purposes during work hours.

If Byron Shire Council staff choose to identify themselves as employees of Byron Shire Council on social media, it is recommended they provide a disclaimer on their personal profiles acknowledging their actions and comments are personal in nature and do not reflect the opinions of Byron Shire Council.

Staff are permitted to make general commentary and take general actions on Byron Shire Council's social media platforms and across other forums where Byron Shire Council-related content is placed.

In general, Byron Shire Council employees must not make any comment or take any actions on social media on both public and personal platforms that may lead a reasonable person to conclude they cannot serve the organisation impartially and professionally.

Staff should consider personal health when engaging on social media platforms. At times Council is subjected to criticism on its social media platforms and other public platforms. This may cause distress to staff members and the Business Partner, Health and Injury Management should be contacted immediately.

Staff should be aware of the Managing Unreasonable Customer Conduct 2020 policy (E2020/53014) and the Practice Guide Managing Unreasonable Online Behaviour V2 (E2019/85185).

5.4. Account monitoring and moderation

Byron Shire Council's Media and Communications team is responsible for account monitoring and moderation of Council-owned social media platforms. Council's social media platforms are monitored throughout business hours, Monday to Friday.

When content is posted that breaches laws relating to privacy, confidentiality, defamation and discrimination, it will be removed.

The online community is encouraged to abide by the Page Rules for Community Conduct below.

Council does not have the power to moderate platforms it does not own. Where offensive content is posted on a platform Council does not own, Council's Media and Communication's team will request the owner or moderator of that platform remove the content in question.

Byron Shire Council makes all reasonable attempts to ensure the strongest profanity filters available are installed across our social media platforms.

5.5. Page rules for community conduct

Byron Shire Council has clear expectations for people who interact on our social media channels. Our rules are:

•   Council's social media platforms are monitored during business hours.

•   Council welcomes positive, open discussion and the sharing of comments, stories, photographs, videos and experiences from our online community across all platforms.

•   Council takes a zero tolerance approach to online abuse.

•   Offensive or inappropriate posts will be removed.

•   Council reserves the right to remove, block or ban any person who posts, or continues to post any material that we consider offensive.

5.6. Engagement with other social media users and platforms

Byron Shire Council will avoid following or sharing content from individuals or commercial businesses unless there is a shared purpose/campaign, agreement, partnership or Memorandum of Understanding in place.

Council owned social media platforms will generally follow sites such as:

•   Council-related or funded services

•   NSW Government Department pages

•   Other LGAs, Councils Government agencies or regional groups such as the Northern Rivers Joint Organisation

•   Peak body associations, regional and industry groups

- Reputable community pages/not for profit groups providing a community service to the Byron Shire that is deemed appropriate for content requirements at the time.

- Events and community activities sponsored by Council.

When sharing content from outside sources, Council's Media and Communications team will make decisions based on the following:

- Is it in the best interests of our community to share this content? What will they gain it?

- Is the content in line with the Byron Shire Council's values and community strategic plan?

- Does the content interfere with or enhance our current content schedule?

5.7. Launch social media pages

If a team or department wishes to create a new social media channel, this request must be made in writing to the Media and Communications Coordinator. The request will be reviewed and advice provided to the relevant Director and General Manager for final approval.

6. Website

Council's website is a primary online communication tool for people transacting online with Byron Shire Council. Its image and content must reflect Council's corporate image and strategic objectives. All information should be relevant and accurate and compliant with World Wide Web accessibility standards.

7. Customer service

The way in which Council receives, answers and responds to telephone calls, emails and letters, combined with face-to-face contact with customers has the greatest impact on how Council is perceived in the community.

Customer service is an issue for the entire organisation, not just the staff who handle public enquiries, and it is vital that all employees generate timely, correct and effective customer-oriented responses to enhance the public reputation of the Council.

This policy supports the Byron Shire Council's *Customer Service Guarantee*.

8. Copyright

Byron Shire Council owns and/or licenses all content in Council-published documents (including brochures, information booklets, fact sheets and electronic newsletters, photos etc.), Council reports, memos, emails, Byron Shire Council website, audio and video footage produced and sourced by Council, business units, consultants and contractors.

Council supports the sharing of its information for the purposes of community engagement and education, research and as permitted under copyright legislation.

Content cannot be reproduced for commercial purposes without the permission of the General Manager.

9. Community engagement

Council recognises that a fundamental component of quality customer service and good governance is effective and proactive community engagement.   For more information see Council's Community Engagement Policy.

10. Internal engagement

Staff are Council's most valuable asset and coupled with Councillors have the potential to be the organisation's most effective public relations ambassadors. Effective internal communication is vital in ensuring there is a broad understanding of the wide range of issues at play within the organisation at any given time.

In an effort for this to be achieved, where possible Council will seek out creative and innovative opportunities to provide participatory opportunities through consultative staff forums, staff reference groups, and team meetings to act as an open pathway to convey information, report on recent projects, ask for advice and raise concerns. Induction programs will also include information on communication procedures.