national
museum
australia

Social media policy

POL-G-077

Version 1.7   29 March 2025

Contents

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Responsible officer	Public Affairs, Communications and Marketing
History	The Social media policy replaces the *Staff Circular in online social media*.
	The policy was formerly miscategorised as a 'C-type' policy (POL-C-057). The policy number was amended by the Executive Management Group at their meeting on 6 December 2022 to reflect its General Operational status (POL-G-077). – *EMG Secretariat*
Review date	April 2027
Related documents	Online content and participation policy
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1.   Title

Social media policy

2.   Introduction

The National Museum of Australia (the Museum) is a major cultural institution charged with researching, collecting, preserving and exhibiting historical material of the Australian nation. The Museum focuses on the three interrelated areas of First Nations history and culture, Australia's history and society since European settlement in 1788 and the interaction of people with the environment.

Established in 1980, the Museum is a publicly funded institution governed as a statutory authority in the Commonwealth Arts portfolio. The Museum's building on Acton Peninsula, Canberra opened in March 2001.

3.   Scope

This policy informs all staff of their responsibilities when using social media. The policy applies to ongoing employees, non-ongoing employees, and people engaged under a contract between the Museum and a recruitment agency.

As with other Australian Government agencies and cultural institutions, the National Museum of Australia embraces the use of social media as a way of connecting and engaging with audiences, promoting the Museum's activities and sharing the National Historical Collection online.

This policy covers social media platforms and websites that allow users to publicly post or respond to comments.

The Museum recognises that many staff use social media and public websites as a way of communicating, participating and contributing to online communities. This policy seeks to empower staff to participate confidently in social media conversations while protecting the interests and reputation of the Museum.

The term 'participation' includes posting content onto personal pages and handles as well as posting comments and reactions on social media pages and posts owned and run by other individuals and organisations.

3.1   Purpose

All staff are required to read, understand and adhere to this policy.

This policy is informed by the APS Values and Code of Conduct, including Section 6 'Employees as citizens' of the Australian Public Service Commission publication 'APS Values and Code of Conduct in practice' and the Australian Government's guidance on social media for government employees and agencies. Staff are encouraged to also read these documents.

3.2   Background

Social media broadly refers to online platforms that enable users to share content online and interact with others. Examples of social media platforms include but are not limited to:

- Social networking platforms such as Facebook, X, LinkedIn, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, Pinterest, YouTube, WeChat, Kakao, LINE, Threads, Flickr, Bluesky, Periscope, Vimeo and Discord.

- Public websites including corporate websites and blogs, personal blogs and those hosted by media outlets which include comments or 'your say' features.
- Public wikis and online collaborations, such as Wikipedia.
- Forums, discussion boards and groups, such as Reddit, Google+ and Whirlpool, as well as online review sites such as TripAdvisor, Yelp and Booking.com.
- Instant messaging platforms such as Facebook Messenger, WeChat, Kakao, LINE, WhatsApp and Snapchat.
- Geospatial tagging such as Foursquare, Geocaching and 'check in' features on social media platforms.

For information on the Museum's official social media channels, refer to the Communications policy (POL-G-078) which outlines the guidelines and protocols when using these platforms for official business, both in Australia and abroad.

4. Principles or guidelines

Staff are expected to exercise good judgment in relation to their social media activity and consider the context and the implications of their actions.

This policy aims to provide clarity to staff about how to conduct themselves in their social media activity. National Museum of Australia Council members must have regard to the Council members' Code of Conduct and principles on public commentary as outlined in the Council Charter.

The following principles apply to all Museum staff in their use of social media:

- Mandatory principles are described as actions that staff 'must' or 'must not' do. Where staff are expected to take something into account, the terms 'should' or 'recommended' are used.
- Social media activity can include posts, comments, 'likes', the sharing of content, following, favouriting, messaging and tagging. *(see definition below)*

Staff use social media in two capacities – official and unofficial.

For official use, refer to guidance in the Communications policy.

For unofficial use *(professional* and *personal)*, see guidance below.

4.1 Unofficial use of social media
Unofficial use of social media refers to any social media activity other than that undertaken using the Museum's branded accounts.

All APS employees are bound by the APS Values and Code of Conduct in their unofficial social media activity. The APS Values and Code of Conduct requirements include:

- behaving with respect and courtesy, and without harassment
- dealing appropriately with information, recognising that some information needs to remain confidential
- delivering services fairly, effectively, impartially and courteously to the Australian public
- being sensitive to the diversity of the Australian public
- taking reasonable steps to avoid conflicts of interest
- making proper use of Commonwealth resources
- upholding the APS Values and the integrity and good reputation of the APS
- not acting in a way that would call into question the APS employee's ability to be apolitical, impartial and professional in the performance of their duties.

Note that a breach of the Code of Conduct can result in sanctions ranging from a reprimand to termination of employment.

As public servants, it is **critical** we consider how our unofficial social media activity reflects on the Museum's and the APS' reputation and core business objectives. We **must** be aware that our unofficial social media activity can call into question our objectivity, integrity and ability to perform our duties as Museum staff and Australian public servants.

4.1.1 Professional use

'Professional' refers to staff establishing and maintaining social media accounts which are used to comment individually as an expert in their field, where that field relates to their employment at the Museum. LinkedIn and X are commonly used for this purpose. In using such accounts staff are not representing the Museum or the Government, nor speaking on their behalf. An example could be a curator posting about historical subjects of interest to them, or a learning officer authoring a blog on trends in museum education.

Staff maintaining professional social media accounts **must** declare their position at the Museum, for example:

- <name>, Senior Curator at the National Museum of Australia
- <name>, a member of the Education team at the National Museum of Australia
- <name>, I work at the National Museum of Australia.

Staff maintaining professional social media accounts **must** include a disclaimer or statement making it explicit that their views do not represent those of the Museum, even if they have not identified themselves as Museum staff. For example:

'Views expressed here are my own and do not reflect those of the National Museum of Australia'

'These are my own views and do not reflect those of my employer'

Staff members who maintain professional social media accounts **must** also comply with the requirements of paragraph 4.1.2 below (personal use) when using their professional accounts.

4.1.2 Personal use

'Personal' use refers to when we use social media accounts as a private citizen. Some examples of personal use include maintaining a Facebook account to keep in touch with friends and family, using a Pinterest account to collate images, or using X to follow news outlets.

We are all expected to behave at all times in a way that upholds the APS Values and the integrity and reputation of the Museum and the APS, including in our unofficial social media activity.

We are all **required to:**
- read, understand and adhere to this policy and the [APS Values and APS Code of Conduct](#)
- avoid any statement which may bring the Museum and/or the APS into disrepute
- assume that they can be identified as Museum staff despite using pseudonyms, posting anonymously or from private accounts and that their activity can be made public and therefore shared
- be respectful of other Museum staff and their work
- protect the privacy and personal information of Museum staff.

When engaging in personal social media activity each of us **must** be aware of the **risks** involved in discussing our work and political views. It is recommended that staff be aware of the FAQs included in the Australian Public Service Commission's Personal Behaviour on Social Media and Social media: Tips for employees.

Assessing the risks

In addition to this, staff should be aware of how to assess the intersection of personal behaviour and employment in the APS on social media. Assessing the risks should take into consideration three risk factors:
1. Seniority. The more senior you are, the more likely your comments are to influence public confidence in the APS.
2. Connection between the topic and your work. The closer the content of your post is to your area of work, the higher the risk of it affecting public confidence and trust in the APS and your agency.
3. Expression. The further the tone, language or expression of your comment falls outside the norms of acceptable social behaviour, the higher the risk of damage to public confidence in the integrity and professionalism of the APS.

When applying the risk assessment in practice, one of the underlying principles is your perceived capacity to be impartial.

The APSC has published guidance that outlines how we should consider our use of social media.

It is strongly recommended that staff familiarise themselves with Social media: Guidance for Australian Public Service Employees and Agencies.

We must not:
- make comments, share or 'like' content which could be perceived to be made on behalf of the Museum or the government, rather than an expression of a personal view.
- make comments so harsh or extreme in their criticism of the government, a Member of Parliament from any political party, or their respective policies, such that their capacity to work professionally, efficiently or impartially for the APS or the Museum is questioned (note: comments need not relate to the staff member's specific area of work).
- make comments which could be seen as compromising their capacity to fulfil their duties as a Museum or APS staff member in an unbiased manner.
- make comments or share or 'like' content that is strongly critical of the Museum's core business, policies and staff and could seriously disrupt the workplace.
- disclose sensitive or official information relating to the Museum or the APS that is not already in the public domain.

It is important that we consider the implications if our comments, shares or 'likes' are taken out of context, and the potential implications if this occurs.

5.   Definition of terms

Account: A profile or account on a social media platform.

Author: A person who creates content and publishes it on a social media platform.

Comment: A response to a post authored by another.

Content: Text, images, video, audio, infographics, documents and links to websites which are published by authors on social media platforms.

Official: The National Museum of Australia's accounts and the social media activity that is undertaken on behalf of the Museum.

Personal: Social media accounts, content and activity by Museum staff members, not authored on behalf of the Museum. Their main purpose is for staff members to engage in social media activity as a private citizen, for personal means.

Post: The act of authoring any content on social media.

Professional: Accounts which are established and maintained by Museum staff for the primary purpose of engaging in social media activity as an expert in their work-related field.

Staff: Ongoing employees, non-ongoing employees and people engaged under a contract between the Museum and a recruitment agency.

Share: The act of sharing content on social media.

Social media activity: Posting content; liking, following and subscribing to social media accounts; sharing, commenting on and marking content as a favourite; sending a private message to a user or account; tagging other users in posts; using geotagging to declare a user's location; interacting with others using social media platforms.

6. Definition of responsibilities

Social Media Manager: The Social Media Manager is responsible for delivering the overall strategy and daily organisation and management of the Museum's social media accounts. They source and post social media content on the Museum's official accounts, overseeing and managing all social media activity on these accounts. The Manager engages with social media communities on behalf of the Museum and works to protect and manage the Museum's reputation online.

Head of Public Affairs: The Head of Public Affairs oversees the Museum's media and social media operations, is accountable for official social media channels and collaborates with People and Culture to ensure the policy is understood and training is offered across the Museum. In the event of an issue arising as a result of unofficial staff use of social media, the Head of Public Affairs and the Head of People and Culture may be involved.

7. References

APS Values and Code of Conduct in practice and Employment Principles
Social media: Guidance for Australian Public Service Employees and Agencies

8. Implementation

8.1 Coverage
This policy applies to all Museum staff.

8.2   Other related policies, guidelines and principles

Social media: Tips for employees

Social Media Authoring Guidelines (internal)

Moderator Guidelines for Web and Social Media (internal)

National Museum of Australia Code of Conduct Guidelines and Procedures

Guidelines on preventing bullying and harrassment

Social media: Guidance for Australian Public Service Employees and Agencies

8.3   Exclusions

There are no exclusions to this policy.

8.4   Superseded policies

This policy supersedes:

Former policy/ies title	Version number	Version date	Executive Approval Date
Staff participation in online social media	2.0	23 May July 2013	1 July 2013
Social media policy	1.1	15 May 2016	15 December 2015
Social media policy	1.2	12 December 2016	20 December 2016
Social media policy	1.5	5 October 2022	6 December 2022

8.5   Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed at least every two years.