



Social Media Policy

This policy sets out the roles and responsibilities of all Attorney-General's Department (AGD) employees and contractors when using social media in an official capacity. It also sets out the responsibilities of individuals when using social media in a personal capacity at work, or in relation to work.

This document was developed to complement the responsibilities and obligations that staff have under the [APS Values and Code of Conduct](#). Staff should also refer to the Social Media Guidelines and the [Australian Public Service Commission Circular 2012/1: Revisions to the Commission's guidance on making public comment and participating online](#).

General principles

AGD recognises the value and opportunities in using social media in policy development, stakeholder engagement, brand enhancement and public communication. Social media are services and tools used for publishing, sharing and discussing information. They can include forums, blogs, wikis, social networking websites, and other online channels that allow individuals to upload and share content.

Making public comment online is becoming increasingly common for APS employees—in official, personal and professional capacities.

As an AGD employee, you must be aware that your responsibilities under the APS Code of Conduct and APS values apply when using social media. The same principles that apply to any kind of public comment also apply to social media.

It is important to be mindful of the speed and reach of online communication, as comments posted are available immediately to a wide audience and effectively last forever. Content may be sent to recipients who were never expected to see it, viewed out of context and continuously duplicated.

You are expected to maintain the same high standards of conduct and behaviour online as would be expected through any other communication channel.

When using social media in an official capacity, this includes:

- being apolitical, impartial and professional
- behaving with respect, courtesy, and without harassment
- managing information appropriately
- taking reasonable steps to avoid conflicts of interest
- using Australian Government resources appropriately.

Official use

Official use of social media includes posting to an official departmental social media site using AGD systems and personal devices, as well as participating as a departmental representative on a third party site.

When authorised to comment or use a social media platform on an official basis, you must:

- disclose you are an AGD employee/contractor when commenting on a non-AGD platform, unless you have been specifically authorised not to
- disclose and comment only on information that is public
- ensure that all content published is accurate and not misleading
- ensure you do not disclose inappropriate personal information relating to you or other people
- comment only on your area of expertise and/or authority
- ensure comments are respectful of the online community you are interacting with
- comply with the terms of use of the relevant social media platform
- comply with applicable laws and departmental policies including copyright, privacy, discrimination, freedom of information and AGD's Social Media Guidelines
- inform the relevant Assistant Secretary and Strategy and Delivery Division of any significant issues that could harm AGD's reputation as soon as you become aware of them.
- seek appropriate approvals of content before posting on official accounts.

You must be authorised by the First Assistant Secretary, Strategy and Delivery Division to create an official social media account. Social media accounts for AGS need to be authorised by the Australian Government Solicitor and also the First Assistant Secretary, Strategy and Delivery Division.

All authorised accounts must be registered on the department's Social Media Register, which is a list of current official accounts. The register, including relevant contacts, is available on the intranet.

All social media accounts must have an SES owner who will assign social media officers responsible for managing that account. The owner is responsible for ensuring that staff who use the authorised account are familiar with the social media policy and guidelines.

A social media management plan should be developed for authorised social media accounts.

Moderation

Social media moderation refers to the management of the community and content that is generated by users on a platform. It involves monitoring responses to content on the department's accounts and ensuring issues are escalated or actioned where required.

A moderation policy must be clearly set out when inviting public comments on a website or social media platform managed by AGD. A privacy statement is also required.

Moderation must not be seen as an opportunity to prevent comments being made publicly that differ to, or openly challenge, the official AGD position. Participants must feel comfortable that they can comment and offer alternative opinions, views and beliefs and that these will be dealt with respectfully.

Strategy and Delivery Division can provide advice on the suitable forms of moderation. The agreed moderation policy and processes should be built into a social media management plan.

Personal and professional use—making comment in an unofficial capacity

Outside the role of your APS employment, you may wish to make public comment in a professional or a private capacity.

If you choose to use social media as a private citizen, you should be aware that content published on social media sites is publicly available—even on personal accounts. You must ensure that your personal presence on a platform is not misconstrued as being representative of AGD and, accordingly, any comments you make could not be reasonably viewed as representative of AGD.

APS employees must still uphold the APS Values and Code of Conduct even when material is posted anonymously, through an alias or pseudonym. Bear in mind that, even if you do not identify yourself online as an APS employee or an AGD employee, you could still be recognised.

Access to social media through the AGD's (including AGS's) IT systems must be in accordance with the ICT Security Policy (and AGS IT Use Policy). This requires resources to be used in a reasonable manner that does not interfere with your work, and is not inappropriate or excessive.

Professional use of social media is based on your area of expertise and/or association with other practitioners in that field. It may be related to your employment as an AGD officer (eg maintaining a professional account on LinkedIn) and you should be aware that it can reflect on your employment at the department.

You must also make it clear when making public comment in that role that you are not representing AGD or the government. This includes formally blogging or hosting accounts on issues relevant to your area of professional expertise. You must not respond to information online as an AGD officer unless authorised to do so. If you find information online that you think the department should respond to, contact the Justice and Corporate Communication Section to arrange a response.

When APS employees are making public comment in an unofficial capacity, it is not appropriate for them to make comment that is, or could be perceived to be:

- being made on behalf of their agency or the government, rather than an expression of a personal view
- compromising the APS employee's capacity to fulfil their duties in an unbiased manner. This applies particularly where comment is made about policies and programmes of the employee's agency
- so harsh or extreme in its criticism of the government, a member of parliament from another political party, or their respective policies, that it raises questions about the APS employee's capacity to work professionally, efficiently or impartially. Such comment does not have to relate to the employee's area of work
- so strong in its criticism of an agency's administration that it could seriously disrupt the workplace APS employees are encouraged instead to resolve concerns by informal discussion with a manager or by using internal dispute resolution mechanisms, including the APS whistleblowing scheme if appropriate
- a gratuitous personal attack that might reasonably be perceived to be connected with their employment
- unreasonable criticism of an agency's clients and other stakeholders
- compromising public confidence in the agency or the APS.

At all times, APS employees must be mindful of the requirements set out in Public Service Regulation 2.1 concerning the disclosure of information.

Because of their position, senior APS employees in particular should carefully consider the impact of any comments they make. Senior Executive Service (SES) employees have a special responsibility under section 35 of the PS Act to promote the APS Values and compliance with the Code of Conduct, by personal example and other appropriate means within their own agencies. SES employees within each agency are also part of a collective leadership group that extends across the APS.

Personal privacy and security online

If you identify yourself as an employee of the Attorney-General's Department in a social media site, you should be aware that this information may be searchable, even by people who are not your 'friends' or 'followers' online. This may result in your personal activities being accessed and mistakenly perceived by others as being undertaken in an official capacity. This may constitute a breach of the department's policy.

You should familiarise yourself with the terms and conditions and privacy notices of the social media sites, and adjust your privacy settings accordingly. Do not rely solely on a site's security settings for a guarantee of privacy, as material posted in a relatively secure setting can still be copied and reproduced elsewhere. Comments posted on one site may also be used on others under the terms and conditions of many social media sites.

Breaches of this policy

Failure to comply with this policy or acting in a manner that is contrary to the APS Code of Conduct may constitute a breach of employment or contractual obligations.

Related policies and guidelines

All staff use of social media must also comply with the following policies:

- [AGD Information and Communications Technology Security Policy \(ICTSP\)](#)
- [AGD Network Conditions of Access](#)
- [AGD Recordkeeping Policy](#)
- [APS Code of Conduct](#)
- [Australian Public Service Commission Circular 2012/1: Revisions to the Commission's guidance on making public comment and participating online.](#)

Further guidance on social media processes and procedures can be found in the department's Social Media Guidelines.

Contact

For more information relating to social media in the department, contact the Justice and Corporate Communication team on 02 6141(s 22) or email (s 22) @ag.gov.au, or in AGS, the Client Services team on 02 (s 22) or email (s 22) @ags.gov.au.



Social Media Guidelines for official AGD accounts

This document outlines the processes and procedures for Attorney-General's Department official social media accounts. Social media engagement will be conducted primarily through the department's corporate accounts managed by Strategy and Delivery Division or in some circumstances, through accounts established by line areas.

The department's primary accounts are:

- Attorney-General's Department Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/attorneygeneralsdepartment>
- Attorney-General's Department Twitter @agdgovau: <https://twitter.com/agdgovau>
- Attorney-General's Department YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/user/AttorneyGeneralsAU>
- Attorney-General's Department Flickr: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/attorneygenerals/>
- Attorney-General's Department LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/company/attorney-generals>
- Australian Government Solicitor Twitter @AGSgovLawyers: <https://twitter.com/agsgovlawyers>
- Australian Government Solicitor YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/user/AGSGovernmentLawyers>
- Australian Government Solicitor LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/company/australian-government-solicitor>.

Staff should consider use of official accounts as part of communication, stakeholder engagement or policy development including:

- a one-off or occasional message, or as part of a broader strategy
- a need to leverage the department's existing branding and reputation
- work that significantly contributes to the department's corporate identity and reputation
- a requirement to immediately access established audiences
- a need to disseminate information urgently to a wide audience.

The Justice and Corporate Communication team maintains a list of approved departmental accounts in the Social Media Register, which is available on the intranet.

Engagement principles

The terms of use on social media accounts are critical to managing stakeholder expectations and the way which the department engages with audiences. It sets expectations about what type of information people can expect to find from an account and helps to ensure a comfortable environment for users to interact. Managers should act quickly to remove offensive, defamatory, bullying or other unacceptable comments on corporate accounts.

Examples of this include content that:

- is obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, discriminatory or hateful
- threatens any person or organisation
- is continuously off-topic or contains links to off-topic sites
- is repeated and duplicated by an individual or multiple people
- contains solicitations or advertisements for any political party
- encourages illegal activity.

AGD social media accounts are generally post-moderated. User comments should not be edited where valid criticism or an alternate point of view (eg political or ideological) is expressed.

If an account receives an enquiry relating to the department that would not ordinarily be handled on social media, the responsible officer will inform the user of an appropriate channel eg media enquiries, departmental complaints and feedback. If staff identify information on an account not owned by AGD that requires clarification or deletion, please contact the Justice and Corporate Communication team.

Content requirements

All departmental social media accounts should seek to have original, engaging, tailored content for their audiences wherever possible. The accounts are intended for genuine interaction with audiences, not a one-way channel to simply broadcast information, other than where AGS communicates with its clients, such as for AGS events and publications.

The department will be selective about what matters it responds to on social media accounts. Given public expectation and the speed with which information is shared on social media, the maximum response time by the department for a Facebook enquiry should be ideally within four hours during business hours.

Posts which require follow up activity will be forwarded to a nominated line area contact for advice/further action. Line areas may provide in advance standard responses or holding lines for anticipated enquiries and questions. Endorsement or support activity (eg Facebook and YouTube likes, Twitter retweets and favourites) will be considered in the context of how the department and broader Australian Government are represented. Officers will ensure there is no conflict of interest. Content on corporate accounts will be post-moderated.

Clearances

All new content on corporate social media accounts must be cleared by an Assistant Secretary (SES Band 1) unless other arrangements are made (see [Owner and officer responsibilities](#)). Reposted content—such as a message from an external organisation—requires approval by an Executive Level 2. Responses to comments on the AGD Twitter and Facebook page will be triaged, with indicative actions and approvals below:

- not urgent and can be answered with a link to existing website information—not sent for clearance
- urgent requiring a response—Executive Level 2
- urgent requiring a response to a topical issue—SES Band 1.

Line areas may provide in advance standard responses or holding lines for anticipated enquiries and questions. Any images provided to Strategy and Delivery Division by line areas for social media use must have consent or permission from the owner. Suggested approved content for the corporate social media accounts can be emailed to (s 22) [redacted] [@ag.gov.au](mailto:[redacted]@ag.gov.au) or, for AGS accounts, (s 22) [redacted] [@ags.gov.au](mailto:[redacted]@ags.gov.au). Urgent requests should be sent and followed up with a call to 02 6141 (s 22) [redacted] or, for AGS, 02 (s 22) [redacted].

Operational hours

Departmental accounts are generally managed and monitored during regular business hours Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 5.00pm.

Owner and officer responsibilities

SES owners of official departmental social media channels are responsible for:

- setting the clearance level and process for content on their account
- advising ministerial offices of issues relevant to them as a result of the account
- managing ongoing staff resourcing and related costs
- ensuring all applicable laws and departmental policies such as copyright, privacy, discrimination, freedom of information and AGD's Social Media Policy are met.

Authorised social media officers are responsible for the administration, management and monitoring of official accounts. Officers will:

- post, monitor and moderate content on social media accounts
- keep passwords safe and secure
- escalate issues where required
- arrange responses to content warranting further action on behalf of the department
- work with relevant areas to develop new content
- evaluate progress of social media accounts and provide reports to executive as needed.

Creating a new account

You must be authorised by the First Assistant Secretary, Strategy and Delivery Division to create an official social media account and, in AGS, also authorised by the Australian Government Solicitor. Some circumstances may warrant establishing a separate account from the department's existing suite of social media accounts. Examples include:

- needing to distinguish an audience from the department's general audiences
- you have a unique brand and identity that needs to be viewed independent of the department
- a specific ministerial or government decision relating to a dedicated account.

Short-term social media accounts are not generally encouraged. Areas should develop a detailed social media management plan and communications strategy prior to setting up an account. The plan should cover:

- objectives, target audiences and key stakeholders – what are the goals and who is involved
- resourcing and costs – includes initial set up, ongoing maintenance, equipment and training
- issues and risk management – security, IT, moderation, business challenges
- operational hours – includes contacts responsible for the account
- branding and persona – is there a unique logo or identity for the account that is consistent with other communication products eg websites and publications
- content management – includes clearances, processes for responses and content development
- recordkeeping – how and where will information be stored and archived
- account lifecycle – includes key milestones, start and end dates
- evaluation and reporting – what and how quantitative and qualitative data will be used.

Account closure

If a social media account needs to be deactivated or deleted, users should be advised of options for further engagement via the account. Deactivation or deletion of any corporate accounts will be discussed with the responsible SES owner. Non-active accounts will be removed from the department's Social Media Register.

Other considerations when deactivating and deleting accounts include:

- likelihood of needing to reactivate the account
- access to historical information by the department and external users
- information stored by other websites and search engines
- access to the username and/or linked email addresses by the department or other users.

Contact

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AGD social media content tips and hints

All areas in the department are encouraged to contribute content for the AGD social media accounts. This document provides guidance and suggestions about potential content.

If you are new to social media or are unsure about how it works, feel free to contact the Justice and Corporate Communication team to discuss.





If you have a suggestion for content, do not be concerned about exact wording or character limits in the first instance. We will work with you to adapt and finalise language to ensure it is appropriate for the platform before it's approved for use.

In addition to opportunities identified in the department's fortnightly media forecast calendar, social media may be a timely way to:

- make pre-event announcements eg workshops, forums, conferences, programmes
- share real-time event updates eg key messages, quotes, photos, videos from presenters
- promote post-event news eg thank participants, key outcomes/event results, follow up materials.

Images, videos, audio and infographics in most cases will assist to boost engagement and activity compared to plain text posts. We can provide stock images, if required.

At a glance

	<p>Facebook is the most popular social media platform amongst Australians. Users rely heavily on visuals to increase the visibility of their posts. The AGD Facebook page can be used to promote and share the activities undertaken by the department.</p>
	<p>YouTube provides a forum for people to discover, watch and share originally-created videos. AGD's YouTube channel includes a range of short videos that explain and promote policy concepts and work of the department. Links to YouTube can be shared on other social media platforms to increase the video's exposure.</p>
	<p>Twitter is a social networking platform that gives users 140 characters to quickly share photos, videos and links. Hashtags (#) help categorise tweets and assist with searches. Handles (@username) identify users, and are used by others as a way to send messages or to provide a link to the mentioned profile. AGD uses a URL shortener when linking to websites. The character limit includes spaces, and images will use 24 out of the 140 character limit.</p>
	<p>LinkedIn is a professional networking site with more than 400 million members, globally. The department's LinkedIn page is used to connect with and inform key stakeholders. The department's account could be useful for recruitment, as users tend to provide genuine personal details including experience and skills.</p>

Things to check

- Does your stakeholder organisation or individual have a Twitter handle or Facebook page that could be mentioned or highlighted in a tweet or message? Are we currently following them or are they on a list?
- Are the accounts genuine? Verified Facebook and Twitter accounts can be identified by a blue tick icon.
- Are there unique existing or new hashtags that could be leveraged in our social media messages?
- Do the hashtags clearly identify an event or subject?
- If posts are likely to generate enquiries that will require responses, are pre-prepared answers available?
- If the event or announcement is shared with other organisations, have you identified a lead organisation to maximise timing and effectiveness?
- Could social media posts be made about attendee registrations, featured speakers or event highlights?
- Are there ministerial considerations or other stakeholder sensitivities prior to posting?
- Can any reminder or follow-up social media posts be scheduled in advance?
- Have you advised your communication account manager to assist with monitoring topical issues?

Did you know?

- Even though a Facebook post appears to have a small number of 'likes', the actual number of people reached is usually much higher.
- Metrics such as reach, clicks, likes, comments and shares can be provided for AGD generated posts.
- We can schedule tweets and Facebook page posts for publishing to the minute using Sprout Social, up to six months in advance.

Next Month



Applications for the Safer Streets Programme second funding round close in one week at 2pm AEDT on 17 February 2016
<http://bit.ly/1QrbOr2>

AGD AU Wed, Feb 10, 2016 3:05 pm by Social Media

Contact

For more information contact the Justice and Corporate Communication team 02 6141 (s 22) or email

(s 22) [@ag.gov.au](mailto:(s 22)@ag.gov.au)

AGD Attorney-General's Department added 4 new photos. 23 November 2015 · 🌐

Well done to all the winners of the 2015 Resilient Australia Awards! The awards recognise and promote initiatives which strengthen community disaster resilience across the nation, making our communities safer, stronger, more resilient and better prepared to manage emergencies. <https://t.co/ZXLAnV03qj>

1,394 people reached Boost Post

👍 Like 💬 Comment

(s 22) and 2 others like this.

3 shares

AGD Write a comment... 📷 😊