



Australian Government
Productivity Commission

Our reference: BS:KC

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27 April 2016

Mr James Smith
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Dear Mr Smith

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

I write in reply to your email request, received 18 April 2016, under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* seeking:

- '1. Current social media policy of the department, which covers departmental use and/or private use by employees in an individual capacity.*
- 2. Any current guidance material which is available for employees to make informed decisions about their private social media use'.*

I advise the Productivity Commission has in its possession one document which falls within the scope of your request. A copy of the document, which is released in full, is attached.

The advice was issued to Productivity Commission staff in response to guidance, *Circular 2012/1 REVISIONS TO THE COMMISSION'S GUIDANCE ON MAKING PUBLIC COMMENT AND PARTICIPATING ONLINE*, issued by the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) to Heads of Australian Public Service Departments and Agencies and Heads of Corporate Services. APSC Circular 2012/1 is publicly available from the APSC website <http://www.apsc.gov.au/publications-and-media/archive/circulars-archive/circular-20121>.

Yours sincerely

Brian Scammell

Assistant Commissioner-Corporate Services

FOI Decision maker (in accordance with s23(1) of the Act)

Staff Circular No. 06/2011 -12
Wednesday 14 March 2012

STAFF MAKING PUBLIC COMMENT ONLINE

The Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) has recently issued the attached revised guidance on public servants making public comment and participating online. I encourage you to read these guidelines, which should be followed by all staff. They will be included with other Commission policies on PCnet.

Commenting in an official capacity

Should there be a requirement for Commission employees to comment online in an official capacity, this should be managed in the first instance through the relevant Branch Manager.

Commenting in an unofficial capacity

The APSC's guidance in relation to maintaining 'the ability to fulfil current and potential duties in an apolitical, impartial and professional manner' is particularly relevant to the Commission. Commenting online has the potential to influence the perceived independence of the Commission, and therefore the effectiveness of its contribution. Staff should therefore not associate themselves with the Commission when making any online comment in an unofficial capacity, whether professional or private.

Furthermore, the APSC notes that 'anyone who posts material online should make an assumption that at some point their identity and the nature of their employment will be revealed'. You should therefore avoid making online comment on topics that are currently, or have recently been, the subject of Commission inquiries or research.

You should also avoid commenting on matters that may conceivably be the subject of imminent commissioned inquiries or studies. As the Commission has a relatively wide remit, should there be any doubt regarding potential subject matters, you should first discuss any potential future conflict of interest with your Branch Manager.

Finally, as you would be aware, Commission resources are not to be used for commenting online in an unofficial capacity, consistent with our broader ICT usage policies.

Michael Kirby

Head of Office