



safe work australia

Social Media Policy and Guidelines

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Supporting documents

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Social Media Guidelines – Communications and Publishing	D13/2272
Social Media – Reporting an Incident	D13/19700
Safe Work Australia Information and Records Management Policy	D12/311
Safe Work Australia Information Technology Security Policy	D13/5989
Safe Work Australia Protective Security Policy	D13/4701

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Social Media Policy

1. Purpose

This policy establishes a framework for the official, personal and acceptable use of social media. It has been developed to inform agency staff about using social media in an official and personal capacity, their responsibilities and obligations under the Australian Public Service (APS) Values and APS Code of Conduct.

Social media are online services and tools used for publishing, sharing and discussing information. They can include forums, blogs, wikis, social networking site and websites allowing individual users to easily upload and share content.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- all Safe Work Australia staff including non-ongoing staff, and
- all consultants and service providers engaged by Safe Work Australia.

3. Principles for using social media

Safe Work Australia recognises the value of using social media to build more meaningful relationships with the community, other agencies and our Members.

Making public comment online is becoming increasingly common for APS staff in professional and personal capacities. Staff can make public comment on blogs, social networking sites, micro-blogging sites, forum sites and online news sites.

Agency staff must be aware that the APS Values and APS Code of Conduct apply when using social media.

These principles apply to the online environment as with any other kind of public comment. There are considerations that apply to online participation including:

- the speed and reach of online communication means comments posted online are available immediately to a wide audience, and
- material online lasts forever, can be replicated endlessly and can be sent to recipients who were never expected to see it or who view it out of context.

4. Legislation and references important to social media

- [Safe Work Australia Social Media Guidelines Communications and Publishing](#)
- [Safe Work Australia Information Technology Security Policy](#)
- [Safe Work Australia Protective Security Policy](#)
- [Safe Work Australia Information and Records Management Policy](#)
- [The Department's Information Technology Security Policy](#)
- [The Departments Social Media Policy](#)
- [The Department's Social Media Intranet Page](#)
- [APS Values](#)
- [APS Code of Conduct](#)
- [APSC Circular 2012/1](#)

- [APSC Circular 2013/10](#)
- [Engage: Getting on with Government 2.0 report](#)
- [Archives Act \(1983\)](#)
- [Freedom of Information Act \(1982\)](#)
- [Privacy Act \(1988\)](#)
- [Crimes Act \(1914\)](#)

5. Review

This policy is to be reviewed every two years or earlier if required.

For more information about the social media policy or the related guidelines contact: [Safe Work Australia IT Services](#)

Social Media Guidelines

1. Safe Work Australia's use of social media

Safe Work Australia's Communication and Publishing Section manages the official social media and social networking accounts/pages. There are specific staff within the Communication and Publishing Section who are responsible for engaging with the public in an official capacity online.

Staff from other branches may be asked to assist the Communication and Publishing Section with this work. When engaging online on behalf of Safe Work Australia you must ensure:

- you inform and request the Communication and Publishing Section of any comment you want posted online
- you do not disclose personal information on social media sites. Note - if you email a member of the public directly to resolve an issue outside of the social media site, you must use a group email address, and
- you respect copyright, privacy, financial disclosure and other applicable laws when publishing on social media platforms.

Staff responding to social media comments on behalf of Safe Work Australia should refer to the related guideline: [Social media guidelines - Communications and Publishing](#).

1.1 Bringing issues to Safe Work Australia's attention

If you find information online that Safe Work Australia should respond to or seek to have removed, complete a [Social Media Incident Report Form](#) and submit to the Director, Communications and Publishing Section for appropriate action within two business days.

All Social Media Incident Report forms once actioned must be provided to [Safe Work Australia's Security Team](#) to review and investigate if required.

1.2 Representing Safe Work Australia

When representing Safe Work Australia online you must:

- disclose you are a staff member of Safe Work Australia and be clear about your role and responsibilities
- ensure you adhere to the apolitical nature of the APS. The role of APS staff in referring to government policy is to help to explain it, or to provide information about its implementation - rather than to promote or 'market' a policy or initiative
- undertake training when requested to do so
- be aware of the terms and conditions of use governing the website upon which you upload or contribute material. These terms and conditions may determine the intellectual property rights and access to content uploaded to a particular website, and

- act within the principles of the APS Values and Code of Conduct.

1.3 Capturing official posts as records

Safe Work Australia staff engaging with the public through social media sites for official work purposes must capture a copy of the post as a record in Safetydocs.

Staff responding to a comment on social media must capture the entire conversation as a record in Safetydocs.

2. Personal use of social media

Safe Work Australia supports staff who choose to use social media in their capacity as private citizens. Agency staff participating in discussions not directly related to their work but which draws on their expertise in a field would be considered as being in a personal capacity. However staff should be aware content published on social media sites on their personal accounts may be publicly available. You must ensure:

- your behaviour still adheres to the APS Values and Code of Conduct outside of work hours
- you must not make obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, discriminatory or hateful comments to or about your work or another person or entity, and
- your comments are not or could be perceived to be:
 - made on behalf of Safe Work Australia or the Australian Government, rather than an expression of a personal view
 - so harsh or extreme in your criticism of the Australian Government, a member of parliament from another political party, or their respective policies, that they raise questions about your capacity to work professionally, efficiently or impartially as an APS staff member (such comments would not have to relate to the Agency's staff member's area of work)
 - compromising your capacity to fulfill your duties as an APS staff member in an unbiased manner. This applies particularly where comment is made about policies and services of Safe Work Australia
 - so strong in your criticism of Safe Work Australia's administration that it could seriously disrupt the workplace. APS staff members 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 connected with your employment
 - unreasonable criticism of Safe Work Australia's clients and member organisations
 - compromising public confidence in Safe Work Australia or the APS, or
 - revealing information about Safe Work Australia that isn't publicly available.

If you are unsure about any of these matters, you can also consult with the Communications and Publishing Section prior to posting comments.

2.1 Discussing Safe Work Australia and its work

Agency staff should not involve themselves in online discussions in a personal capacity about Safe Work Australia and its work.

2.2 Making personal comments in social media

When considering making personal comments you must consider the following questions:

- Could the comments reasonably be expected to cause Safe Work Australia's Members or clients, including members of Parliament—whether members of the Government, the Opposition, independents, or other parties—to lose confidence in the staff member's ability to work in an impartial and professional manner?
- Would comments of this kind, without proper justification, be likely to lower or undermine the reputation of Safe Work Australia or the APS as a whole?
- Are these comments in line with how the community in general expects the public service to operate and behave?
- Are these comments lawful? For example, do they comply with anti-discrimination legislation and laws relating to defamation?
- Would you be comfortable if your manager read your comments?

3. Acceptable use of social media

Access to and use of social media via Safe Work Australia's IT systems are for:

- official purposes including representing Safe Work Australia online, or engaging in professional development forums or activities - prior authorisation for this purpose is required through the relevant approval process, and
- unofficial reasonable use, consistent with this policy and Safe Work Australia's Protective Security Policy and IT Security Policy.

Except where specifically authorised Safe Work Australia employees and contractors must not develop or provide content for social media that:

- attempts to speak, or could be interpreted as speaking on behalf of Safe Work Australia or the Australian Government
- commits Safe Work Australia or the Australian Government to any action or initiative
- relates to controversial, sensitive, political or confidential matters
- could be interpreted as infringing on the apolitical position of the APS, or
- could bring Safe Work Australia or the APS into disrepute.

3.1 Respecting online etiquette

To respect online etiquette you must:

- adhere to the terms of use, and seek to conform to the cultural and behavioral norms of the social media platform being used
- be respectful of individuals and communities you interact with
- be polite and respectful of others' opinions even in times of heated discussion and debate, and
- ensure you do not post material that is obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, discriminatory or hateful to another person or entity.

4. Privacy and security online

If you identify yourself as an employee of Safe Work Australia in a social media site whether for official or personal use, you must be aware this information is searchable, even by people who are not your 'friends' or 'followers'.

Staff must agree to the terms and conditions and privacy notices of the social media sites they use and adjust their settings according to their own needs. Staff must not rely on a site's security settings for a guarantee of privacy, as material posted in relatively secure settings can still be copied and reproduced elsewhere.

Comments posted on one site can also be used on others under the terms and conditions of many social media sites.

APS staff members must uphold the APS Values and Code of Conduct even when material is posted anonymously, or using an 'alias' or pseudonym. They must bear in mind even if they do not identify themselves online as an APS staff member or a staff member of Safe Work Australia, they could nonetheless be recognised.

Social media websites are public forums. Irrespective of the forum, anyone who posts material online should make an assumption at some point their identity and the nature of their employment will be revealed.

Inappropriate public comment on such sites could put staff members at risk of breaching the APS Code of Conduct. If staff members have concerns they should seek advice from the People and Performance Section.

5. Breaches of this policy

As a member of the APS the behavior of staff, both in and out of the workplace, must be in line with the APS Values and Code of Conduct.

It is important to understand failure to adhere to the APS Values and Code of Conduct can result in a range of sanctions including reprimands, reduction in classification and termination of employment.

Examples of failure to adhere to the Code of Conduct in a social media setting include a Safe Work Australia staff member:

- tweets or puts on Facebook derogatory comments about Safe Work Australia's staff, Members or services from their personal Social Media account, or
- discloses non-publicly available information about policies or services.

The role of the Communications and Publishing Section is to monitor social media. Where necessary and appropriate, the People and Performance Section may be alerted to comments posted by staff on social media sites that may breach this policy.

Staff in breach of this policy will be contacted to discuss their online behaviour online. Where appropriate, a person's manager may also be contacted.

In situations where a staff member's online behaviour potentially breaches the APS Values or Code of Conduct, the issue will be referred to the People and Performance Section and the Agency Security Advisor (ASA) for investigation and action.

6. Providing information in social media

Safe Work Australia has [guidelines](#) relating to the clearance of materials for public release that must be adhered to. If you require clarification you should consult with the Communications and Publishing Section.

When providing information on behalf of Safe Work Australia you must:

- disclose only publicly available information or other information you are authorised to release
- only offer information, support or comment on topics that fall within your area of responsibility
- provide a direct link to information where it is available on the internet, so if changes are made to the content/rules, people continue to access the most current information, and
- ensure any content you publish is factually accurate and complies with privacy guidelines.

7. APS Code of Conduct obligations

Safe Work Australia staff must at all times adhere to the APS Values and Code of Conduct. APS staff members are required to act honestly, professionally, with respect and courtesy in connection with APS employment.