



**ACT**  
Government

# Social Media Guidelines for Official Use

Office of Industrial Relations and  
Workforce Safety

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate (CMTEDD)

**Policy Number: 01/2024**

**Issued: February 2024**

# Contents

Social Media Guidelines for Official Use.....	1
Contents .....	2
Social Media Guidelines for Official Use.....	3
Purpose.....	3
Introduction.....	3
What is Social Media? .....	3
Application.....	4
Key Legislative Provisions .....	4
Supported collaboration tools.....	4
Procedure .....	4
Setting up new accounts .....	4
Using ACT Government accounts .....	5
Closing Accounts.....	5
Record Keeping.....	5
Accessibility .....	6
Intellectual Property Management .....	7
Responsibilities.....	7
Consultation .....	8
References .....	8
Further Information.....	9
Review .....	9
Approval Authority .....	9

# Social Media Guidelines for Official Use

## Purpose

1. These guidelines provide advice for ACT Public Service (ACTPS) employees and ACT Public Sector members ('**Public Employees**')<sup>1</sup> on how to navigate official social media use, including procedural guidance and best practice principles.

## Introduction

2. Public employees are encouraged to consider the [ACTPS Values](#) and the need to maintain the apolitical nature of the service.
3. The ACT Government recognises that social media is a fundamental part of how public employees interact with each other, our stakeholders and the wider ACT community about government policies and programmes and the roles and functions of public sector agencies.
4. When used appropriately, social media can support meaningful connection, foster trust, positively influence behaviour and build communities.
5. Being a member of the ACTPS or ACT Public Sector means that the way a public employee uses social media not only reflects on the individual, but it also has the potential to impact the reputation of the Service.
6. When engaging in social media, public employees must:
  - a. know and reflect on the standard of conduct laid out by the [ACTPS Values](#) and [ACTPS Code of Conduct](#);
  - b. ensure social media activity that could have a connection to their work is in accordance with the [ACTPS Values](#) and [ACTPS Code of Conduct](#); and
  - c. ensure that a conflict of interest with their official role does not arise.

## What is Social Media?

7. **Social Media** is online services, tools and applications used for publishing, sharing and discussing information. This can include but is not limited to SMS, email, online collaboration tools, comments sections, wikis, mobile apps, social networking websites and any other technology that allows individual users to upload, comment on, like and share content.
8. **Official use** of social media includes use of any of the above technologies for work purposes as well as communication carried out from one of the ACT Government's official social media channels for government-related business, or when commenting from a public employee's private account as an ACT Government representative.

---

<sup>1</sup> Public employee(s) means an officer, temporary employee, casual employee, public sector member, senior executive member, board and committee members and contractors or consultants exercising a function of a public sector entity.

## Application

9. These guidelines have been developed for whole-of-government use and are issued by the Head of Service under section 17(2)(a) of the [Public Sector Management Act 1994](#) (PSM Act). The guidelines bind all staff engaged under the PSM Act and all public sector employers within the meaning of section 152(1)(a) of the PSM Act.
10. These guidelines are intended to have a broad application and apply to any person who is part of the ACTPS and ACT Public Sector.
11. To remove doubt, these guidelines apply to all public employees as defined in the [Legislation Act 2001](#).
12. For the purpose of these guidelines, **public employee(s)** means an officer, temporary employee, casual employee, public sector member, senior executive member, board and committee members and contractors or consultants exercising a function of a public sector entity.
13. For guidance on the prohibited and permitted uses of ACT Government owned software and hardware please see the [Acceptable Use of Information and communications technology \(ICT\) Resources Policy](#) ('the Acceptable Use Policy').

## Key Legislative Provisions

14. Public employees are bound by the [ACTPS Code of Conduct](#), [ACTPS Values and Signature Behaviours](#) and the [Respect, Equity and Diversity \(RED\) Framework](#).
15. The PSM Act includes a principle at Division 2.1 (Public sector standards) that in any activity that has a connection work, a public employee must act in accordance with the public sector values of respect, integrity, collaboration and innovation.
16. As per section 151 of the PSM Act, these guidelines are not intended to impact the exercise of independent statutory functions.
17. These guidelines are to be considered in line with, and not infringe upon, the workplace rights afforded to all ACTPS employees under relevant acts and instruments such as the *Fair Work Act 2009*. Any ambiguity arising from the interpretation of these guidelines should be resolved on a reading which broadly construes these rights.

## Supported collaboration tools

18. Where possible, public employees should use ACT Government-supported online collaboration tools or platforms, such as CISCO Webex Teams and Microsoft Teams to collaborate on any official work.

## Procedure

### Setting up new accounts

19. Directorates and agencies must contact the Whole of Government (WhoG) Communications and Engagement team at Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate (CMTEDD) for guidance on how to establish new social media channels (CMTEDD.Comms@act.gov.au). New accounts must not be established without approval through this process.

## Using ACT Government accounts

20. When publishing content online via social media channels, directorates and agencies should identify the account as an official government social media account.
21. Directorates and agencies can do this by:
  - a. using official [ACT Government or directorate and agency branding](#);
  - b. linking their official directorate and agency websites to their social media account;
  - c. using customised disclaimer messages or terms of use hosted on their official website;
  - d. linking to the ACT Government [Social Media Community Guidelines](#) from their social media account.
22. Where authorised to present or speak in an official capacity, public employees, must:
  - a. represent the ACT Government professionally and ensure content they publish is correct and consistent with any relevant policies and standards;
  - b. follow protocols in relation to who is authorised to respond to media inquiries or political enquiries received via social media;
  - c. seek clearance from their manager before posting anything online that could be seen as being an official statement or commitment to some course of action by their directorate/agency or the ACT Government;
  - d. never publish information that should not be made public and always seek permission to publish content not already in the public domain. Section 9(d)(i) of the PSM Act and section 153 of the *Crimes Act 1900* state that it is an offence for public servants to publish or communicate any information gained through their job without lawful authority to do so, with a maximum penalty of up to 2 years imprisonment;
  - e. never provide personal information about individuals to third-parties without their consent. The email address of colleagues or stakeholders and other identifiable information must be treated with discretion and care;
  - f. seek advice from the appropriate area within ACT Government when responding to a question that falls outside their expertise.

## Closing Accounts

23. Where a directorate or agency wants to close a social media account, they should advise the reasons for closure and options for further communication or engagement via an announcement on the account.
24. [CMTEDD.Comms@act.gov.au](mailto:CMTEDD.Comms@act.gov.au) should be contacted for any further advice in relation to closing accounts.

## Record Keeping

25. Section 14 (Agencies to make and keep records) of the [Territory Records Act 2002](#) states that a directorate or agency must make and keep full and accurate records of its activities.
26. Any records are classified as government information, and every person has an enforceable right to such information under section 7 (Right of access to government information) of the [Freedom of Information Act 2016](#).

27. A record of directorate or agency activities can be in written, electronic or any other form. It could also be a record that was created or received by the directorate or agency.
28. Recordkeeping requirements apply to the official use of social media in the same way as other government activities. Social media engagement often generates information that must be appropriately managed as official Territory records.
29. Some projects or initiatives may require more detailed recordkeeping controls depending on the risks or visibility of the initiatives. When planning to use social media or online collaboration tools, consideration should be given to what records need to be kept, and how these records will be managed as part of the directorate and agency broader recordkeeping framework.
30. Information about the records that may need to be captured include:
  - a. the date of discussion or business activity;
  - b. details of the creators and other stakeholders involved;
  - c. key discussion points;
  - d. details of instructions or advice provided; and
  - e. any approvals decisions and recommendations made.
31. To enable proper recordkeeping practices, directorates and agencies should develop a social media and online collaboration tool recordkeeping strategy, with input from the business areas and records management team before commencing use of a social media account. The social media recordkeeping strategy should:
  - a. **Assign responsibility for monitoring the social media channel in an official capacity** together with procedures that help ensure records are appropriately captured and managed.
  - b. **Identify risks associated with the engagement:** This will help identify whether a high or low intensity recordkeeping approach is appropriate and inform monitoring procedures.
  - c. **Appraise the value of the records being created:** Informed by the above risk assessment, this will identify whether a high or low intensity recordkeeping approach is appropriate by understanding for how long the records need to be kept accessible.
  - d. **Identify the most appropriate recordkeeping approach** to ensure it reflects the identified engagement risks and value of the records created and complies with the requirements of the [Territory Records Act 2002](#).
32. For more detailed information on the regulation of recordkeeping, please refer to the standards and guidelines found on the [ACT Territory Records Office website](#) and the [Digital Records Guidelines](#) for further details.

## Accessibility

33. The ACT Government has legal requirements that inform the accessibility of all government digital communications, including social media. For example:
  - a. The [Disability Discrimination Act 1992](#) requires directorates and agencies to ensure that people with disability have the same access to information and services as others in the community.
  - b. The ACT Government is required to meet AA Standards in the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines version 2.0 (WCAG 2.0), the international standard for web accessibility. A guide on accessible documents can be found here: [Creating Accessible Word Document](#)
34. To ensure the ACTPS and ACT Public Sector remains an inclusive and accessible public service, social media accounts should be made available in accessible formats wherever possible.

35. In some cases, content creators need to craft content in order to make it accessible, such as:
  - a. adding captions to videos before uploading them;
  - b. adding descriptions for images to include in any closed captions;
  - c. adding alternate text to images that creates audio when hovered over;
  - d. capitalising all words used in a hashtag to make it easier to read.
36. Even if all ACT Government social media accounts are highly accessible, some members of the community will not be able to access these accounts due to:
  - a. lack of access to technology and technical support;
  - b. low digital literacy;
  - c. no reliable internet connection.
37. It is important to ensure that any content on official ACTPS and ACT Public Sector social media accounts is also available in accessible formats on other ACT Government information channels.

## **Intellectual Property Management**

38. The term 'intellectual property' covers various legal rights to protect the result of original and creative work.
39. When using social media for official work purposes, it is possible public employees inadvertently infringe on intellectual property by:
  - a. re-tweeting or sharing content to their directorate and agency social media channels without acknowledgement of the original author;
  - b. posting photos to their directorate and agency's Facebook page without consent from participants and/or photographer;
  - c. posting ACT Government content on social media sites whose terms of service do not comply with government policies.
40. To avoid intellectual property infringement, public employees should:
  - a. produce original content specifically for social media sites;
  - b. be mindful of the potential conflict between the site's terms of use and the intellectual property requirements if choosing to post government content on social media sites;
  - c. not post or share third party information without the permission or licence to do so.

## **Responsibilities**

41. When using social media for official use in any capacity, public employees should:
  - a. ensure their conduct is in accordance ACTPS Values and the Code of Conduct;
  - b. ensure there is no conflict of interest with their official role;
  - c. avoid expressing or supporting political views where a link to their employment may arise;
  - d. maintain the integrity and impartiality of the ACT Public Service and broader ACT Public Sector;
  - e. not engage or comment inappropriately including, but not limited to:
    - i. using offensive language or making disrespectful comments about a colleague or member of the public;
    - ii. making comments regarding cultural sensitivities;
    - iii. arrange activities to undermine the integrity and reputation of the service.
  - f. report any conduct on social media by public employees that is inconsistent with the ACTPS Values;

- i. to their manager or directorate reporting mechanism;
    - ii. to the extent that the conduct falls outside the norms of acceptable social behaviour report incidents to administrators/moderators of the relevant platform.
  - g. when in doubt, contact your manager or the WhoG Communications and Engagement team, Communications & Engagement Division.
42. In addition to the above responsibilities above, when using social media for official purposes, public employees should:
- a. identify they are an ACTPS employee or ACT Public Sector member publishing content in an official capacity;
  - b. adhere to any additional social media procedures that their directorate or agency has put in place;
  - c. follow the Procedure outlined in these Guidelines when Setting Up, Using, and Closing ACT Government Social Media accounts. This includes seeking appropriate approval before establishing accounts and seeking authorisation before acting on behalf of the Government.
  - d. keep full and accurate records of their activities on ACT Government social media accounts in accordance with the requirements of their directorate or agency and the *Territory Records Act*;
  - e. ensure content posted on behalf of the ACT Government is in an accessible format;
  - f. ensure content posted on behalf of the ACT Government does not infringe on intellectual property.
43. If an issue arises with respect to personal or official social media use, public employees are entitled to procedural fairness.
44. Public employees should consider the importance of communicating in a manner that is consistent with the ACTPS Values during any process to resolve the issue.

## Consultation

45. This guideline was developed in consultation with OIRWS, ACTPS People Forum, the Communications and Engagement Division CMTEDD, the Territory Records Office CMTEDD and unions.

## References

46. The key principles of this guidance are aligned with the following authorised sources:
- a. [Public Sector Management Act 1994](#)
  - b. [Public Sector Management Standards 2016](#)
  - c. [Public Sector Management Standards 2006 \(repealed\)](#)
  - d. [Fair Work Act 2009](#)
  - e. [ACTPS Conflict of Interest](#)
  - f. [ACTPS Code of Conduct](#)
  - g. [ACTPS Enterprise Agreements](#)
  - h. [Territory Records Act 2002](#)
  - i. [Freedom of Information Act 2016](#)
  - j. [Standards for Records, Information and Data](#)
  - k. [Acceptable Use of ICT Resources Policy](#)



- l. Directorate and agency-specific Information Privacy Policies and Notes
- m. [Social media: Guidance for Australian Public Service Employees and Agencies](#)

## Further Information

1. For further information on these guidelines, please contact OIRWS at [eba@act.gov.au](mailto:eba@act.gov.au).
2. For queries relating to the content or structure of a social media post, contact the WhoG Communications and Engagement team, Communications & Engagement Division CMTEDD at [CMTEDD.Comms@act.gov.au](mailto:CMTEDD.Comms@act.gov.au).
3. For queries relating to suspicious approaches via personal or ACT Government social media accounts, please contact JACS Security and Emergency Management Division at [JACSEMD@act.gov.au](mailto:JACSEMD@act.gov.au).

## Review

These guidelines are due for review 3 years from the last issued or reviewed date, or earlier where there are changes that affect the operation of these guidelines.

Item	Details
Document name:	Social Media Guidelines for Official Use
Policy Number:	01/2024
Prepared by:	Assistant Director, Office of Industrial Relations and Public Sector Employment
Feedback to:	<a href="mailto:Eba@act.gov.au">Eba@act.gov.au</a>
Issue Date:	February 2024
Next Review Date:	February 2027

## Approval Authority

Geoffrey Rutledge  
Deputy Director General  
Office of Industrial Relations & Workforce Strategy  
Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate  
On behalf of the Head of Service  
8 February 2024