



**uniting
church**

in Australia,
Synod of NSW & ACT

Social Media Guidelines

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1. Policy Statement

This policy provides standards for staff, Ministers and Volunteers within the Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of New South Wales and the ACT ('the Synod') engaging in communications using public facing social media channels.

2. Definitions

- Social media:** an umbrella term that defines the various activities that use technology, primarily internet, web and mobile based tools, for social interaction and content creation and sharing. In the interests of simplicity, this social media policy is focused on those social media activities that are used for discussions and information sharing such as social networks, blogs, wikis, and forums.
- Social media platform:** software or technology that enables users to build, integrate or facilitate community, social interaction and user-generated content. Examples include blogs, wikis, forums/discussion boards, social networks, social bookmarking, and video and photo sharing websites
- Social media channel:** a presence on a social media platform. Examples include a Facebook page, a wiki page, a YouTube channel or a Twitter account

3. Scope

All official social media accounts are managed by the Synod Communications and Marketing Team, Uniting Resources.

It applies to the use of social media in the following capacities:

- Creating a social media presence as an official representative of the Synod
- Adding content to official, public facing Synod social media channels
- Making reference to Synod within a private capacity on a social media channel

This policy does not apply to Uniting Church staff in their personal use of social media where the staff member, Minister or Volunteer makes no reference to the Synod, its services and people.

Social media is an umbrella term that describes a range of activities and technologies that promote discussion, conversation and sharing of information, primarily over the internet. This includes, but is not limited to, blogs, wikis, discussion forums, discussion boards, podcasts, video and photo sharing, social networks and micro blogs.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Media Protocols and Telling Our Story Guidelines issued by the Synod Communications and Marketing Team, Uniting Resources.

4. Policy

1. Principles of Conduct

All staff, Ministers and Volunteers using social media must exercise and adopt a risk minimisation approach given that all the content posted on social media immediately becomes:

- a. Public information and freely available to those who can access it
- b. Information that can be used as source material by journalists and other interested parties
- c. Information that can be used in legal matters
- d. Information that may breach the Privacy Act.

2. Official presence of social media

An official social media presence has:

- a. To be approved by the Synod Communications and Marketing Team, Uniting Resources.
- b. To meet a demonstrated need for the Synod
- c. To be part of a communication strategy
- d. Comply with the Media Policy and Telling Our Story Guidelines, including requirements for branding and content
- e. To be registered within the Synod Communications and Marketing Team, Uniting Resources
- f. Comply with our Privacy Policy.

3. Official use of social media

Staff, Ministers and Volunteers using social media platforms must:

- a. Have a prior approval from the Communications & Marketing Team, Uniting Resources to act as a social media user
- b. Use an official social media account / profile
- c. Not mix personal and official comments
- d. Exercise sound judgment and common sense and behave online in accordance with associated Synod Policies and Procedures

4. Private use of social media

Staff, Ministers and Volunteers participating in social media in a private capacity must:

- a. Not allow the use of social media to undermine their effectiveness at work
- b. Use a private social media account established with a private email address. Staff must not use a Synod social media account for private use of social media.
- c. Not disclose any confidential information obtained through work. This includes information relating to employment, email addresses, contact lists, work duties or photographs of Synod activities or staff, Ministers and Volunteers.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities for establishing an official social media presence are as follows.

Synod Communications & Marketing Team, Uniting Resources:

- Prepares and maintains social media strategy including procedures, templates and disclaimers
- Maintains a register of official social media accounts and channels
- Provides content and frameworks
- Outlines relevant engaging content
- Maintains internal process to ensure quality and efficiency and currency of content
- Ensures that our social media strategy is maintained and monitored.

Activity or Function	Delegated Officer
Approve Social Media Platform for official use	Communications and Marketing Team, Uniting Resources
Approve the establishment of a public facing social media channel and/or account and/or profile that will speak with the voice of the Synod	Communications and Marketing Team, Uniting Resources
Approval to act as a social media user for official purposes	Communications and Marketing Team, Uniting Resources
Approval of a content framework as a source for social media	Communications and Marketing Team, Uniting Resources

6. Ethical standards and related policies

Staff, Ministers and Volunteers need to follow the same behavioural standards online as they would through print or personal interaction. The same laws, professional expectations, and guidelines for interacting with members, families, donors, media, and other stakeholders also apply online. Staff, Ministers and Volunteers are liable for anything they post to social media sites whether in a professional capacity or through a personal post and may be held accountable.

To assist you in making the correct choices, this policy should be read in conjunction with the policies below:

- Media Protocols
- Staff Procedures and Policies
- Privacy Policy
- Telling Our Story Guidelines

7. Posting Guidelines

Before posting anything in either a personal or professional capacity, stop and ask yourself the following questions:

Do I really want the world to see this?

There's no such thing as a private social media site. The web is viral – comments can be forwarded worldwide in seconds. Archival systems save information even if you delete a post. If you've posted something you wish you hadn't, it's already too late to change it!

Is this information accurate?

Make sure you have all the facts before you post to avoid posting incorrect information about you or the organisation. If you make an error, be the first to correct it – quickly.

Should I be responding to this post?

Let the subject matter experts respond to negative posts. From time-to-time you may come across negative posts about our organisation or the spheres in which we operate. Avoid the temptation to react yourself – instead please pass the information to the Synod Communications and Marketing Team, Uniting Resources, who will determine the responsible spokesperson to address such comments.