

# Social Media – Personal Use

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Sometimes our official duties and responsibilities as State Servants can come into conflict with the way we use social media. We all have the right as citizens to use social media to interact with the world around us and express our views, but we also have responsibilities when presenting as State Servants not to act in a manner that could damage the integrity or reputation of the Service or which is political in nature.

Finding the right balance can be challenging, particularly for high profile and the more senior positions where it is difficult to separate your work persona from your private one. The purpose of this guide is to protect you by helping you to form a view about what's appropriate, and what crosses the line.

Social media refers to various online tools that enable users to contribute content and share information and resources. It includes blogs, wikis, discussion forums and social networking sites. Social media is different to traditional media channels as it allows for two-way communication between the owners of the content and their audience.

Social media messages often make use of multimedia such as text, audio, video and images.

### **What happens to the information I post on social media?**

The information you share online may be permanently recorded. Even when you deactivate your account, the information you shared may remain in archived or old versions of websites, or in comments you've made on other people's pages.

You don't always have control over who sees or accesses the personal information you share on social media, even when using the most restrictive privacy settings.

### **It is my personal social media account - why is DPAC concerned about what I am posting?**

All State Service employees have responsibilities under the principles of the *State Service Act 2000* and the State Service Code of Conduct that can apply when using social media, either professionally or personally.

You are accountable for your actions, inside or outside of work particularly actions that may negatively impact the Department or State Service. If you make comments about your job, workmates, customers, managers or DPAC those comments must not harm the Department's or the State Service's integrity or reputation.

You should not assume that just because you have not identified yourself as a State Service employee that this won't become known to those reading your posts. You should make every effort to indicate that your contribution is made as a private individual and not as a representative of your employer.

A post on Facebook, as an example, that contains negative comments about your work colleagues may be in breach of the State Service Code of Conduct, which may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

## **What about political views, am I free to express mine on social media?**

DPAC employees have the same right to freedom of expression as other members of the community. However, common sense should be used when commenting, sharing or liking social media content. If making comment on government or government policy, remember the State Service Principles require that *'the State Service is apolitical, performing its functions in an impartial, ethical and professional manner'*.

For example, posting criticism of the Tasmanian Government on Facebook might compromise your appearance of being apolitical, impartial and professional.

## **Can I comment on Government policy?**

As above, State Service employees have the right to express their opinions and participate in the political process but must do so without harming the Department's or the State Service's integrity or reputation or appearing to favor a political party.

It is the role of State Service employees to implement the policies of the government of the day so making public comments that oppose the policies you may be involved in implementing undermines the confidence of the community in your ability to implement those policies.

## **Can I access social media at work for work purposes, for example, looking up the Facebook page of an organisation I'm working with?**

Yes. If you are administering a page on behalf of the Department, see DPAC's Social Media Policy – Professional Use.

## **What if I get a friend request from a supplier or another body I deal with professionally through work?**

Please refer to the [DPAC Managing Conflicts of Interest Policy](#) which details reasonable steps to avoid any conflict of interest in connection with your employment in the State Service.

## **Can I like or follow politicians or political parties?**

Agency staff have the same rights as other members of the community to engage in the political process, except where these activities impact adversely on their ability to perform their official duties to the standard required under the *State Service Act 2000*.

'Liking' or 'following' a political party does not create a conflict of interest, but engaging in public debate on political issues relevant to your official duties would likely do so. Refer to the [DPAC Managing Conflicts of Interest Policy](#) for more information on commenting publicly.

## Can I access social media at work for personal use?

Employees who are unsure whether their use of internet falls within the boundaries of acceptable use should discuss the matter with their manager. For more information, please see the [DPAC Electronic Communication Usage Policy](#)

## What are some examples of failing to adhere to the Code of Conduct on social media?

- Making derogatory and obscene posts about a colleague, manager or workplace on Facebook.
- Tweeting comments or memes inciting or promoting violence against women.
- Disclosing non-publicly available information in a public forum, for example about delays in evaluating a tender process.
- Using Instagram to post inappropriate photos from a work Christmas function.

## What are some good rules of thumb to apply?

When considering making personal comments, employees should reflect on the following questions:

- Could my comments cause DPAC clients or other stakeholders to lose confidence in my ability to work in an impartial and professional manner?
- Are my comments consistent with how the community expects a State Service employee to operate and behave?
- Are my comments consistent with the DPAC values?
- Could my comments undermine the reputation of DPAC?
- Would I be comfortable if my manager read my comments?
- Am I disclosing any agency material that I'm not specifically authorised to disclose?
- Are my comments lawful? For example, do they comply with anti-discrimination legislation?
- Have I made it clear to others that my contribution is as a private individual and not as a representative of DPAC?
- Are my comments consistent with DPAC's zero-tolerance stance on violence against women?
- Am I using government-owned infrastructure? Do I have permission to use it in this way (this includes the use of your government email address)?



## Who do I contact if I have more questions?

If you have any further questions or require further clarification in regards to Social Media - Personal Use, you can speak to your Manager, or alternatively contact [hr@dpac.tas.gov.au](mailto:hr@dpac.tas.gov.au).