



SOCIAL MEDIA

Approved by: Diocesan Council

13 July 2017

1 POLICY STATEMENT

The Diocese recognises that the development of social media has provided significant opportunities for evangelisation and spreading of the Church's message. The use of social media allows groups to share information, build friendships and promote activities.

As with all forms of communication and personal interaction, there are healthy and positive ways of using these forms of media, however, there is also potential for inappropriate and offensive posts, abuse, bullying, on-line exploitation and grooming.

All communications sent digitally (email, social networking sites, notes or posts) are not confidential and may be shared or reposted to others. Therefore, the recommendations outlined in this Policy will protect Church workers from inappropriate use and enable them to apply healthy boundaries to online and social media, communications and relationships.

The Diocese recognises that online social media platforms and blogs can be an important part of personal and religious expression. Church workers must recognise that anything published on a public website is no different to a statement made in a newspaper, or on television or in a public forum.

Church workers are responsible for ensuring that their contributions to social media are consistent with this policy. Any information that could cause embarrassment to the Church should not be included on a website or blog.

Church workers should ensure that the networking activities comply with the fundamental declarations of faith of the Anglican Church of Australia. Commentaries on social networking sites that are rude, offensive, vulgar or that could be interpreted as bullying should be removed immediately.

Where it is necessary for church workers to access a Church website, email address or other password protected site, the Church worker must, when directed, make that password available to their line Manager. Where a minor has access to a Church website, email address or password protected site, the same access must be given to the minor's parent or guardian on request. Persons who hold passwords to password protected sites are responsible for monitoring those sites and ensuring that they are compliant with this policy.

2 PURPOSE

The Diocese understands that the use of social media to spread the Church's message must only be undertaken to the extent that it promotes the Christian in faith in communion with others.



Accordingly, the overarching principle in all uses of social media must be that of human dignity, and care must be taken by Church workers to ensure that the innate dignity of each person is upheld.

Church workers must carefully consider their contributions to social media. Noting that the instantaneous, reactive and broad reaching nature of the environment of social media. This can lead to ill thought-out statements that may be hurtful, offensive or libellous.

Church workers should also be mindful of the permanence of electronic communication.

This policy may be varied by the Diocese from time to time.

3 SCOPE

This policy shall apply to all Church workers, Formation Students, Volunteers and Parishioners in the Diocese.

4 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The use of social media by Church workers, particularly those identified as representing the Diocese, should always demonstrate a Christ-Centred love for others and a respect for human dignity.

Church workers should always be considerate of boundaries and ensure they are observed, particularly in communications with young people and with use of social media in a youth ministry setting. Those involved in work with young people should be particularly aware of the child protection policies, both of the Diocese and of state legislation. Those who engage in use of social media as part of their Church ministry should do so in the name of evangelisation to build appropriate relationships that can encourage and foster growth in faith and a growing in relationship with Christ.

The sharing of information on social media platforms should be of appropriate materials for faith formation. Social media platforms can be ideal for promotion of Church events or activities and for sharing worship resources in a wide range of formats.

The fundamental declarations of faith of the Anglican Church of Australia should be consistently upheld in the use of social media. Clear distinctions should be maintained between personal and professional communication in the social networking environment.

5 RADIO, TELEVISION AND PRINTED MEDIA

The Diocese encourages contact with the media to promote Parish Activities or communicate Good News Stories.

The Archbishop, Chair of the Trustees and the Diocesan Secretary are the only Diocesan appointed media spokespeople.

Church workers are not permitted to engage with the Media about any Diocesan matters unless permission has been given by the Archbishop or the Diocesan Secretary;



Further information can be found in Policy 49 – Diocesan Council Communications.

6 CONTENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA CONTRIBUTIONS

When a Church worker is contributing to social media it is not appropriate to make a public comment that is, or could be perceived to be damaging to the Church and its Mission.

Church workers must not make any unlawful or inappropriate contributions to social Media.

When posting photographs or videos, permission must always be obtained from those who appear in them, before they are posted or tagged. It may not always be clear to people in the circumstances that they are being photographed for material to be placed on a social networking page. Such materials must always be appropriate and Church Workers must avoid sharing embarrassing or offensive videos or photos.

Individuals privacy must always be a priority. Care must be taken to protect people, particularly youth, from having their personal information such as phone numbers and email addresses, displayed on a social networking site.

7 GUIDELINES SPECIFIC TO CHILDREN AND SOCIAL NETWORKING

All Church workers engaged in ministry with children must consider the content and nature of any post that will be read by or visible to children.

Any material on any site (whether affiliated with the Diocese or not) that raises suspicion that a child has been or will be abused, neglected, groomed or exploited must be immediately reported to the Police or Director of Professional Standards.

Church workers should not request to “friend” or accept a “friend” request from a child. If a “friend” request is received from an unrelated child, the parents or guardian should be advised.

Photos published should not include name or contact information for any person under the age of 18.

Church workers should not initiate video chats with unrelated children.

All Parishes must obtain a Media Release form from parents or guardians of children who will, or may, participate in activities that may be photographed or videoed for distribution.

8 CONSEQUENCES

The Archbishop, the Diocesan Secretary or their delegate may at any time direct a church worker to remove content, that is inconsistent with this policy, from personal website or social media platform.

The Archbishop, the Diocesan Secretary or their delegate takes breaches of this Media policy very seriously. Failure to comply with this policy may, at the discretion of the Diocesan leadership, result in disciplinary action up to and including, where applicable, termination of employment, suspension or revoking of a licence and may be referred to the Director of Professional Standards as potential misconduct.



9 THE CHURCH'S OWN SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

9.1 Anonymous contributions to social media

The Diocese believes in accountability, honesty and transparency. Church workers should not use the cloak of anonymity to make inappropriate, embarrassing, offensive or misleading remarks on social media. Church workers should also be mindful of their privacy and the privacy of the Church, its Church workers and parishioners when contributing to social media. The Diocese reserves the right to direct a Church worker to remove anonymous content from a social media platform at any time.

9.2 Recommendations for Publishing Videos / Content Online / Pictures

Participants in a video chat or blog should consider what will be shown in the video such as their surroundings, their clothing, state of dress.

Parish representatives must inform parishioners when they are being videotaped.

Any Parish that distributes videos of its worship services or activities on the web or via other broadcast media should indicate (via an announcement or service sheet) that the service will be broadcast.