



12 August 2021

s9(2)(a)

Ref: OIA-2021/22-0023

Dear s9(2)(a)

Official Information Act request relating to social media policy

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) request received on 21 July 2021. You requested:

1. *“Could you please advise (and supply a copy of if applicable) if the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) has an employee and or department social media policy?”*
2. *“Could you also please advise if any other government departments and or agencies also have the same (and supply copies, or links to if public facing).”*

I am releasing to you a copy of DPMC’s and the National Emergency Management Agency’s (a departmental agency hosted by DPMC) social media policy. DPMC also has a Social Media Transparency Statement on our website (see link: dpmc.govt.nz/media).

Regarding the second part of your request, the Public Service Commission (PSC) sets guidelines for official and personal use of social media by public servants. These guidelines are available on the PSC website at the following link: www.publicservice.govt.nz/resources/social-media-guidance.

Please note that DPMC does not hold records of other agencies social media policies. I suggest that if you would like copies of other central government agencies social media policies you should get in touch with those agencies directly.

You have the right to ask the Ombudsman to investigate and review my decision under section 28(3) of the Act.

This response will be published on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet’s website during our regular publication cycle. Typically, information is released monthly, or as otherwise determined. Your personal information including name and contact details will be removed for publication.

Yours sincerely

s9(2)(a)

Clare Ward
Executive Director
Strategy, Governance and Engagement



Social Media Policy

Version	1.2	Contact	Catherine Delore, Director Strategic Communications and Engagement
Status	Draft <input type="checkbox"/> Final <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Approved by	Clare Ward
Date for review	1/07/2022	iManage	4280517

Name	Role	Signature	Date
Clare Ward	Executive Director Strategy, Governance and Engagement Group	s9(2)(a)	3/08/2020

Objective

To ensure all staff are aware of what they must take into consideration – including the [Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's Code of Conduct](#) and the [State Services Commission's Code of Conduct](#) and other relevant policies and advice in use of social media.

Principles

Principles we apply in relation to our social media policy include:

- Recognising the right of staff to use social media both in a business, where authorised, and personal capacity
- Ensuring all use in a work capacity is appropriate and by authorised users of social media accounts
- Maintaining the appropriate balance between use of social media and meeting all obligations in relation to employment by DPMC.

Applies to

This policy applies to ALL of those working at DPMC and the National Emergency Management Agency, including permanent, seconded, contracted, and temporary staff, regardless of position or seniority.

Related policies, guidance and information

[Media policy](#)

[Code of Conduct](#)

[SSC Understanding the SSC Code of Conduct](#)

[SSC Guidance for State services official use of social media](#)

[SSC political neutrality guidance](#)

[Privacy Act 1993](#)

Policy detail

Social media is a part of daily life for vast numbers of people across New Zealand and the rest of the world. In January 2020, there were an estimated 3.80 billion media users globally, an increase of 321 million in 12 months.

Staff at DPMC must be mindful when using social media, both in a work and private capacity.

What is social media?

When we talk about social media we are referring to (but not limited to) the following:

- Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn,)
- Video and photo sharing websites (e.g. Youtube, Instagram, Pinterest)
- Blogs and vlogs, including corporate and personal Micro-blogging (e.g. Twitter)
- Forums, discussion boards and groups (e.g. Google groups, Reddit, Whirlpool)
- Wikis (e.g. Wikipedia)
- Podcasting
- Instant messaging (e.g. Messenger, WhatsApp)

Establishment and management of social media channels

Approval for any new social media channels or to extend the use of existing social media channels in DPMC is required from the Director of Strategic Communications and Engagement and the relevant Executive Leadership Team member for the business unit. In the case of NEMA, approval is required from NEMA's Chief Executive and its Communications Manager.

Communications staff will maintain a register of social media channels within DPMC and can provide advice on the design and management of social media channels.

All social media channels must have a business owner who is responsible for ensuring content is posted regularly and that it is monitored, including for inappropriate content.

All social media channels must comply with DPMC's visual identity guidelines to ensure consistency, alignment with our digital strategy and easy identification as an official channel.

Use of social media in the workplace

Authority to use social media at work

Approval is needed for social media interaction on behalf of DPMC and can only be authorised by the business owner of the channel.

For example, in your role, you may need to post emergency management messaging on Twitter or update the Governor General's Facebook. It is important that access to social media accounts is restricted to those authorised, and that these users comply with all social media policy guidelines.

Social Media Apps on Work Devices

We recognise some staff require social media apps for legitimate business purposes, as described above, or may wish to use them for professional networking, e.g. LinkedIn.

Any use of social media apps on work devices must adhere to the guidance set out in this policy and activity must maintain political neutrality.

Guidelines for use of social media

All staff should exercise caution when considering making comment on social media in relation to any political matters. DPMC and its staff must remain politically neutral. If you are ever in any doubt, seek advice from your manager first.

You must not:

- reveal advice given to Ministers
- post information that is confidential, restricted or misleading
- disclose personal information that breaches any individual's right to respect and privacy
- purport to express a DPMC view when giving a personal view, or
- criticise Ministerial policy.

It is important to remember:

- A false or disguised user name does not guarantee anonymity and does not exempt you from your obligations as a public servant
- No-one can control further distribution of the communications - you create a record which can be republished by others
- Careful judgement must be exercised in moderating and responding to posts
- Posts and responses to comments must reflect DPMC's official views
- All official communications should be objective and respectful
- State servants are required to support an environment free of discrimination, harassment and bullying, both online and in person.

Endorsements

Be mindful of the tags/hashtags or links that you use in posts on DPMC's social media accounts. The apolitical nature of DPMC and the work we do means we cannot endorse – or appear to be endorsing - commercial enterprises such as specific businesses or brands.

Care must always be taken in all interactions with other social media accounts including how they might be perceived. Following, liking or reposting content from another account or linking to content online may be perceived as an endorsement. Such interactions should be where there is a clear business purpose for doing so that is linked to DPMC roles and functions.

Examples of what is okay

- Retweeting a Civil Defence/NEMA tweet on public safety
- Following the Governor-General's Facebook page
- Tweeting to promote particular content on a DPMC site or related site eg: Ōtākaro

Examples of what is not okay

- Liking, retweeting or commenting on party political posts
- Blogging or posting about your role, work or colleagues
- Liking news stories or other public content or making comment that could call into question your political neutrality

Remember, if you are ever in doubt about what might be acceptable, **stop and seek further advice**.

Responding to, deleting and moderating comments

Replying to comments can be an effective way of communicating information, but must be done in a respectful, neutral and factual manner. Not all comments will require a response. Where comments are offensive, harmful or otherwise damaging, the business channel owner has the right and responsibility to moderate or delete them. DPMC will publish a transparency statement on its website that outlines how we use social media and for what purpose, how we will moderate comments and considerations for deletion of comments, how we will manage and respond to concerns or complaints and how those can be raised.

Complaints regarding use of social media or content

Any concerns or complaints regarding DPMC's use of social media must be dealt with immediately by the business owner of the relevant channel. If it is of a serious nature, for example concern about political neutrality or a breach of privacy, the relevant ELT member must be informed as soon as possible to determine next steps.

Use of social media outside of work

Care must be taken when using social media outside of work to ensure it does not call into question your role and work as a public servant.

We recognise social media is used every day outside of work and is part of how we all interact with family, friends, colleagues and others in today's world. This policy does not prevent that. However, keep in mind our Code of Conduct and also the SSC principles (below) for interaction with social media in a private capacity, which says:

- *"State servants have the same rights of free speech as other New Zealanders, but with some additional obligations:*
 - *Regardless of the media being used, you must not do anything which could harm the reputation of your agency or the State services, and you must not disclose any agency material that you are not specifically authorised to disclose.*
 - *Where there may be uncertainty about the capacity in which you are acting, you should make it clear to others that your contribution is as a private individual and not as a representative of your agency.*
 - *You should ensure that any comment you make on matters of government policy is appropriate to the agency role you hold, and you must respect the need to maintain politically neutral State services."*

Social media transparency statement

DPMC will publish a transparency statement on its website that outlines how we use social media and for what purpose, how we will moderate comments and considerations for deletion of comments, how we will manage and respond to concerns or complaints and how those can be raised.