

health

Department of Health

Social Media Action Plan

Part 1: Policy

Acceptable use policy, code of conduct, governance
and approval

Final Version 1.0

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Foreword

Government 2.0 involves the use of new internet based tools, technologies and approaches that are transforming the web into a powerful open platform of collaboration, engagement, co-production and participation between citizens and government.

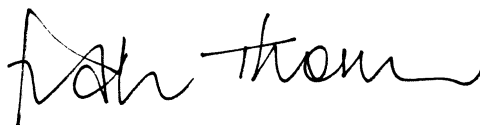
From Facebook and Twitter to wiki's, blogs and applications, Social Media is not only at the cutting-edge of communications tools, it is increasingly a key service delivery mechanism for government.

The Department of Health Social Media Action Plan provides a roadmap for staff and business units wishing to engage with the community through Social Media and digital technologies. It describes and defines a managed but streamlined social media presence for the Department of Health that is both engaging and controlled.

It will evolve and develop as we continue to learn, adapt and build on innovative ideas and initiatives already being developed within the department to support the delivery of improved health outcomes for all Victorians.

This Plan should be read in the context of the [Victorian Gov 2.0 Action Plan](#) and the State Services Authority's *Guidance for use of social media in the Victorian public sector* <http://www.ssa.vic.gov.au>.

It will be updated to reflect any changes in those documents and over time will also incorporate new improvements from the feedback you provide.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fran Thorn', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Fran Thorn
Secretary

Introduction

The Department of Health's Social Media Action Plan was developed to enable and facilitate the department and its staff's active participation in social media.

- This social media policy aims to develop acceptable use policies & codes of conduct for participation in Web 2.0; and
- Build digital media expertise & skills, practices and approval processes.

In addition, it supports the department's requirements to:

- Plan adequate resources to support and maintain Web 2.0 activities around identified business need; and
- Harness digital media to communicate quickly and effectively during health emergencies and crises.

The Social Media Action Plan comprises three parts:

- *Part 1: Policy* – overarching code of conduct, governance and approval that guide acceptable use policy within the Department of Health;
- *Part 2: Staff toolkit* – best practice guidelines and templates that can be used by business units implementing social media; and
- *Part 3: Reference guide* – descriptions of the major social media platforms and tools and tips for how they can be used by the Department of Health.

This Social Media Action Plan will support the Department of Health and its agencies in implementing social media activities more effectively and successfully. It is aimed at all staff who engage with social media, recognising the many different degrees of engagement and usage that exist and are required.

This policy should be read in the context of the Victorian Government's *Public Service Social Media Protocols* and the State Services Authority's *Guidance for use of social media in the Victorian public sector*¹, and will be updated to reflect any changes in those documents.

¹ [http://www.ssa.vic.gov.au/CA2571410025903D/WebObj/PSSC_Social_Media/\\$File/PSSC_Social_Media.pdf](http://www.ssa.vic.gov.au/CA2571410025903D/WebObj/PSSC_Social_Media/$File/PSSC_Social_Media.pdf)

Social media policy

This policy was relevant at the time of writing and it is acknowledged that the policy will be updated as social media evolves.

Purpose

The Department of Health's Social Media policy recognises that staff and business units will increasingly be using social media to interact with each other and the Victorian community and to promote the work of the Department. This policy provides a safe framework for online participation by representatives of the Department of Health.

The policy recognises that all communications by public servants must comply with the standards of conduct and behaviour set out in the [Public Administration Act 2004](#), the [Code of Conduct for Victorian public sector employees](#), Victorian Government policies and guidelines, and Commonwealth and state legislation.

Scope

How is social media used?

Social media can be a powerful engagement tool that enables people to engage and communicate with each other and the broader community in an empowering and innovative way. In the Department of Health social media has great potential as:

- A two-way mechanism to encourage feedback and comment from staff or the public;
- A listening mechanism to improve our understanding of staff or public attitudes towards particular topics;
- A tool to share information and consult with specific communities on current or planned policies, programs or services;
- A way to communicate internally through the creation of staff communities for knowledge sharing, professional and personal collaboration, professional development, team building and more;
- A tool to share highly targeted information, for example media releases to journalists, recipes to subscribers, policy information to health professionals;
- A way of fostering debate on a topic or issue without necessarily participating eg. providing a platform for funded agencies to use; and
- An innovative way of delivering or supporting direct services such as self-help programs, health advice services and more.

Who does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to all Department of Health staff members, including staff members on secondment to or from the Department of Health and staff members currently on leave. It also applies to contractors working within or for the Department of Health¹.

Consultants to the Department of Health should be aware that the confidentiality provisions in their contract also apply to their use of social media.

When does this policy apply?

This social media policy² has been developed to assist staff members and business units who:

- Propose to use a social media platform or online community to promote the department's policies, to engage internally with staff or with the Victorian community or to distribute content;
- Are authorised to administer, or contribute to, a department social media site;
- Choose to make contributions in a professional capacity that include references to government, its staff, policies and services, business partners, suppliers or other stakeholders using a social media platform;
- Choose to make references in a personal capacity to government, its staff, products and services, business partners, suppliers or other stakeholders using a social media platform; and/or
- Choose to make contributions in a professional or personal capacity that include references to health, health promotion, disease prevention and treatment or other health issues.

These guidelines do not apply to staff members' personal use of social media platforms where they make no reference to the Victorian Government, the Department of Health, its staff, policies and services, business partners, suppliers or other stakeholders.

Policy overview

1. The Department of Health encourages staff member involvement in professional communities, including online communities and social media.
2. The Department of Health endorses the planned use of social media platforms for content distribution and promotional purposes.
3. Use of any departmental branding or government logos on social media must be approved by the Corporate Communications Unit.
4. The process for proposals for use of social media in an official capacity is summarised as follows:

¹ See also: Code of conduct for Victorian public sector employees, section 1.4 - [http://www.ssa.vic.gov.au/CA2571410025903D/WebObj/CodeofConduct2007/\\$File/CodeofConduct2007.pdf](http://www.ssa.vic.gov.au/CA2571410025903D/WebObj/CodeofConduct2007/$File/CodeofConduct2007.pdf)

² This policy has been adapted from State Library of Victoria Social Media Policy, 2009.

- Staff members must ensure that they are familiar with their responsibilities as described in the department's *Social Media Action Plan: Part 1: Policy*.
- Staff members must complete the Social Media planning template, describing the proposal, objectives, target audience and site management in detail. The Health Web Communications can assist at this early stage.
- The Social Media planning template should be referred to the unit manager for initial consideration. Approval of social media proposals is the responsibility of the unit's Director.
- Staff members can request advice on the proposal, if appropriate, from the Health Web Communications Unit. Proposals to use third-party technical platforms will require input from the Health Web Communications Unit. For assistance on objectives, target audiences and key messages, contact the Corporate Communications Unit.
- Authorisation of staff contributions to department social media and online communities will be at the discretion of the staff member's manager and, for department communities and sites, of the manager of the community or site.
- Social media projects must be placed on the official Department of Health Social Media Register (refer to *Social media register* in the next section).

For a step-by-step guide to setting up a social media site, please refer to the *Social Media Action Plan: Part 2: Staff toolkit*.

5. In the event of an emergency, publishing to social media will occur through central co-ordination between the Corporate Communications Unit and the Health Web Communications Unit.

Social media register

The Health Web Communications Unit will maintain a register of official social media sites and tools used within the Department of Health.

It is Department of Health policy that owners of social media presences must create and maintain their entry in the Social Media Register.

Purpose

To provide a central point where information about all social media sites, tools and initiatives for the Department of Health can be stored and managed, specifically:

- To provide a record of what social media tools are being used by the Department of Health and its staff.
- To facilitate and enable reporting on and monitoring of the Department of Health's overall social media profile.
- To provide an eligibility list for incentives and awards for social media use within the department.
- To enable the Department of Health to publish a best-practice list or lists of social media tools.
- To record who has been authorised to use social media tools, sites and initiatives on behalf of the Department of Health.

By requesting this information, the department can encourage business units to adequately consider the implications of creating a social networking presence.

Scope

This register collects information about all the department's Web 2.0 initiatives including:

- Official membership of and participation in social networking sites (Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, YouTube etc); and
- Social media initiatives on Department of Health-owned websites (eg video libraries, Healthy Living Tips), including use for targeted campaigns e.g. www.health.vic.gov.au/vcap
- Social media initiatives on websites not owned by Department of Health (eg externally hosted blogs).

It does not collect information about

- Staff members' private online activity.

Conduct guidelines for social media engagement

Public servants who administer or contribute to an official government or department social media site, contribute to a third-party site in a professional capacity, or refer to Department of Health business in a personal capacity are expected to demonstrate standards of conduct and behaviour that are consistent with the following:

- [Public Administration Act 2004](#)
- [Code of Conduct for Victorian public sector employees](#)
- ICT Security Policy
- Department of Health values
- Information Management Strategy Principles
- Privacy Management Framework
- Fair Treatment Policy
- Public Service Social Media Protocols (Victoria)
- Other relevant departmental policies and guidelines
- Commonwealth and Victorian law.

The following acceptable use guidelines³ have been developed to assist Department of Health staff when they:

- Are authorised to administer or contribute to a department-branded social media site;
- Choose to make contributions that include references to the department, the Victorian government, their colleagues, department policies and services, business partners, suppliers or other stakeholders to a social media platform in a professional capacity;
- Choose to make references to the department, the Victorian government, their colleagues, department policies and services, business partners, suppliers or other stakeholders to a social media platform in a personal capacity; or
- Choose to make contributions in a professional or personal capacity that include references to health, health promotion, disease prevention and treatment or other health issues.

These guidelines do not apply to staff members' personal use of social media platforms where no reference is made to the government.

³ Sections of this policy have been adapted from State Library of Victoria Guidelines for social media engagement; Telstra's 3R's of social media engagement, 2009; Australian Public Service Guidelines for Participation, 2009; and US Airforce Live, 2009.

Social media engagement for business purposes

"Public sector employees only make public comment when specifically authorised to do so in relation to their duties, a public sector body, or government policies and programs. Such comment is restricted to factual information and avoids the expression of personal opinion. Public comment includes providing information or comment to any media (electronic and print), the internet and speaking engagements."⁴

This section outlines how the guidelines apply when staff members have been authorised to use social media platforms for conducting department business (e.g. department official Facebook page, a specific health campaign on Twitter) or when using a social media platform in their professional capacity as an employee of the Department of Health (e.g. discussing government new media policies on US-based site GovLoop).

Respect privacy

Do not post any information that would violate the privacy of others, including details of private conversations (unless you have gained permission).

Protect yourself online

Remember to protect your own privacy and use common sense: what you publish will be public for a long time.

Correct mistakes

If you make an error, be upfront and correct it quickly.

Use your best judgment - you are responsible for what you write

If you have any doubt, talk to your manager.

Understand the tool

Make sure you understand the user guidelines, etiquette and culture of the tool you are using.

Organise appropriate training, and use the Social Media Action Plan *Part 3: Reference guide* and *Part 2: Staff toolkit* to get an understanding of the tool you are using.

Personal opinion

Use disclaimers when expressing personal opinion and make it clear when you are giving facts and when you are giving your opinion.

⁴ Code of Conduct for Victorian public sector employees, section 3.5

If you are expressing your personal opinion then tell readers that the views you express are yours alone (e.g. 'The postings on this site are my own and don't necessarily reflect government positions, strategies or opinions.').

Stay within your expertise

Only post on topics in which you have expertise or direct personal experience.

Authorisation to contribute

Make sure you have appropriate authorisation and you are clear on your role and the information you can provide.

Alignment with other media

You should have systems in place to make sure that information you are providing online is consistent with information being provided elsewhere.

Replace error with fact, not argument

If you see wrong information about the government or misrepresentation, consider whether it is appropriate for you or someone else to respond. The Department of Health's Rules of Engagement (refer to *Social Media Action Plan: Part 2: Staff toolkit*) have been developed to help you decide whether and how to respond. If in doubt, you can send a link or more information to the appropriate business unit.

Explain, don't advocate or criticise

Be accurate and informative in explaining government policies and programmes and be responsive to public views and comment. You should, however, avoid any statements that might be interpreted as advocating government policies or criticising the policies of political parties or groups.

Avoid endorsements

Do not use the government's name to endorse products, opinions or causes unless official endorsement already exists (e.g. 'the Better Health Channel website recommends choosing food products with the Heart Foundation Tick.').

Always clearly identify yourself

Use your real name, and who you are representing, and that you are officially representing your department or the government.

Disclosure

You are required to:

- Disclose that you are a public servant, your name and your role. If an alias or role account is used for reasons of employee privacy, security or other business reasons, it should indicate the relationship to the department
- Disclose only publicly available information. You must not comment on or disclose confidential department information (e.g. information derived from the performance of your work, details of internal discussions, or facts about the government, your colleagues, the government's business and customers that have not been disclosed to the public). If in doubt refer to your manager or the manager, public affairs.

In very rare and unusual circumstances, such disclosure may present a risk to the business operations of the department. A Director *may* grant a staff member permission to use an alias or to not mention their affiliation with the department, but this is an exception rather than a rule and may only be done:

- Where the communication is essential to the business operations of the department and/or to the role of the staff member; and
- Where full disclosure would present an unacceptable risk to the department.

Responsibility

You are required to:

- Ensure that any information you publish is factually correct and complies with government policies (particularly those relating to confidentiality)
- Ensure that you are not making an official announcement unless you are authorised to release information into the public domain or speak to the media
- Offer only advice, support or comment on topics that fall within your area of responsibility
- Be objective and impartial, avoiding any comment or action that could be interpreted as a personal political view
- Avoid making any comments that could be perceived as advocating or criticising government policies
- Ensure you do not post material that is obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, discriminatory or hateful to another person or entity, including the Victorian Government, its employees, its contractors, partners, suppliers, competitors or other stakeholders
- Ensure you do not disclose other people's personal information in social media sites and comply with the Victorian Government's Privacy Policy.

Respect

You are required to:

- Be respectful of individuals and communities online
- Be polite and respectful of others' opinions
- Adhere to the platform's terms of use, and respect the cultural and behavioural norms of the platforms being used

- Respect copyright and creative commons licences, privacy, defamation and other applicable laws when publishing on social media platforms.

Social media use for personal purposes

“When making a comment in a private capacity, public sector employees ensure their comments are not related to any government activity that they are involved in or connected with as a public sector employee and make it clear they are expressing their own view. They ensure personal comments do not compromise their capacity to perform their public sector role in an unbiased manner, and that their comments are not seen or perceived to be an official comment.”⁵

Participation

Participation in social media can be an avenue for self-expression. Public servants can write and contribute to personal social media in their own time using their own resources.

If you are commenting as a private citizen, then make sure that your posts cannot be interpreted as an official statement on behalf of the Department of Health or of the government. Also make sure that your posting does not compromise the perception that you can do your job in an unbiased or professional manner.

Correcting errors

If you are concerned about something you read about the Department of Health when you are online in a personal capacity, refer your concerns to your Manager or to someone who is authorised to respond on behalf of the Department.

Managing your personal online presence

In using social media tools for personal use, keep in mind that:

- By being honest, transparent and respecting others you will avoid conflicts with your personal and professional online activities.
- Anything you say online will be available for a very long time.
- It's worth thinking carefully about how you present yourself online because the private and professional are often blurred.
- You are not necessarily anonymous online.

For example, a personal opinion you express on Facebook can be linked to your profile, where you may have listed where you work. Your email or IP address may be traceable to your place of work. Your name and place of work may be easy to find through a simple web search.

Be aware that things you may write online may compromise perceptions about your ability to do your work in an unbiased manner.

⁵ Code of Conduct for Victorian Public Sector Employees, section 3.5

Check with your manager about the levels of tolerance of personal use of social media during working hours. The department will incorporate any guidelines from the *Public Service Social Media Protocols* as they become available.

Roles and responsibilities for social media

Role	Responsibilities
<p>Staff members who participate in social media on behalf of the Department of Health</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comply with the <i>Conduct guidelines for social media engagement</i>. • Seek social media training and development as required
<p>Consultants and contractors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comply with the <i>Conduct guidelines for social media engagement</i>. • Seek social media training and development as required
<p>Managers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that social media proposals are appropriately authorised; • Ensure that staff understand and comply with the <i>Conduct guidelines for social media engagement</i>; • Ensure that responsible staff are, where appropriate, trained in legal and cultural issues relating to social media.
<p>Directors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorise staff member participation in and contributions to department social media sites
<p>The Health Web Communications Unit (HWCU)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under the Shared Services SLA, the HWCU is responsible for providing strategic advice, support and development of Social media applications and tools • Engage specialist e-services providers to advise on strategic and operational use of Web 2.0. • Refer queries to Corporate Communications when advice on target audiences, key messages and branding is required. • Produce and maintain appropriate standards, guidelines and tools for social media usage. • Model best practice social media approaches and behaviours. • Co-ordinate availability of resources and tools to support Department of Health staff in their use of social media • Maintain the department's Social Media Register (when built) • Co-ordinate development of submissions to the Department of Health Web Management Taskforce, when appropriate.
<p>The Corporate Communications Unit</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist with strategic development, identification of objectives, target audiences, key messages, content, and evaluation. • Engage external suppliers through the Marketing Services

Role	Responsibilities
The department Web Management Taskforce	Panel to provide specialist services such as digital marketing, online advertising campaigns, and strategies.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide assistance with online media placement and the development of submissions to the Web Review Group (WRG). The Web Management Taskforce currently refers proposals for an official government website presence to the Web Review Group. This may extend to Social Media tools, depending on the outcomes of Whole of Victoria Government work.
DCRG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider new social media site proposals and briefings as required and refer to HWCU where appropriate.

Social Media Approvals

The table below describes the approval requirement for new Department of Health social media presences and applications, as well as for users wishing to contribute to an existing Department of Health social media presence.

Activity	Create a new DH social media presence	Contribute to a DH social media presence	Build a DH social media application	Publish to social media during an emergency
Approval	Director	Present owner	HWCU (as per existing policy)	DH Emergency Comms Co-ordinator
Register	Owner to register presence	N/A	Application owner to register	N/A
Resources & Toolkits	HWCU co-ordinates ⁶		DH Emergency Comms Co-ordinator	

⁶ The HWCU may take a more active role in sourcing and/or providing training if additional funding and resources become available.