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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 NSW Health and Social Media

The official NSW Health social media websites, platforms and applications are authorised to represent the agency or health organisation. NSW Health has the following social media platforms:

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Twitter
- YouTube
- LinkedIn

NSW Health encourages a greater use of social media as a way of communicating information, providing a platform for broad marketing campaigns and engaging audiences to improve customer service.

1.2 Definitions

NSW Health: means public health organisations, the NSW Ministry of Health, the Ambulance Service of NSW, and all other organisations under the control and direction of the Minister for Health or the Secretary of Health.

Social Media Platform: refers to social media websites, platforms and applications which enable users to connect, communicate and participate in content or information sharing. They include but are not limited to:

- Social networking sites- Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter
- Internal social networking tools- Office 365, Microsoft Teams, Yammer
- Video sharing sites- Youtube, Tik Tok, Snapchat, Flickr
- Forum discussion boards- Whirlpool, Yahoo! Groups, Google Groups, Reddit
- Blogs- corporate blogs, personal blogs and blogs hosted by social media outlets
- Online encyclopaedias- Wikipedia
- Instant messaging software/applications- MSN, WhatsApp, iMessage, WeChat, Skype, Microsoft Teams

Post/Posting: Includes but is not limited to publishing, blogging, tweeting, tagging, uploading photographs, commenting, sharing, liking and re-tweeting content on social media.

2 NSW HEALTH CORE VALUES

The NSW Health CORE values build upon the public sector core values of integrity, trust, service and accountability.

The NSW Health CORE values are:

- Collaboration
- Openness
- Respect
- Empowerment

We strive to reflect these CORE values in our workplaces and in our conduct by demonstrating the following characteristics:

Collaboration

- We are an organisation that believes in its people and is people centred.
- Our leaders are role models for our core values and they are accountable.
- We willingly work in teams to provide excellent levels of care.
- Our teams are strong and successful because we all contribute and always seek ways to improve.
- We encourage and recognise outstanding performance.

Openness

- We want our community to have confidence in their local health services.
- We foster greater confidence and cooperation through open communication.
- Our performance is open to public scrutiny through patient and employee surveys.
- We welcome and use feedback as a tool to do better.
- We encourage those around us to speak up and voice their ideas as well as their concerns by making it clear that speaking up is worthwhile and valued.
- We communicate clearly and with integrity.

Respect

- We never lose sight of our patients' fundamental right to be treated with dignity, compassion and respect.
- We listen to patients, the community and each other.
- We welcome new ideas and ways of doing things to improve patient care.

- We treat our colleagues and patients with dignity and respect, and care about those around us.
- Each of us is responsible for workplace culture and performance.
- We have zero tolerance for bullying and no-one, no matter how senior, is exempt.

Empowerment

- We encourage and support local decision making and innovation.
- We accept that with local decision making comes responsibility and accountability.
- We make best use of resources and experience to meet patient and community expectations.
- While we seek direction from our leaders, we believe that everyone is empowered to make a difference in our workplace.
- As individuals, we can improve our workplace culture and performance by addressing issues that hold us back.
- We strive for individual excellence on behalf of our patients and our teams, and to deliver the best possible care and services.

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3 APPLYING THE POLICY

3.1 Who does this policy apply to?

- 3.1.1 Persons who are employed in NSW Health whether on a permanent, casual or temporary basis
- 3.1.2 Contractors (including visiting practitioners, agency staff and volunteers) working in NSW Health, and
- 3.1.3 Students, researchers or those undertaking or delivering training in NSW Health, who will be referred to as staff throughout this policy.

3.2 Official Use of Social Media

The official use of social media includes:

- 3.2.1 Any comment, post or video which has been authorised by the manager, Chief Executive or their delegate to be published as the position of NSW Health.
- 3.2.2 A staff member authorised to comment, post or engage on the official NSW Health social media platforms using their name and official title.

All staff who have been authorised to post on the official NSW Health social media accounts are to follow the expectations of behaviour set out in the [NSW Health Public Communications Procedures](#) and the [NSW Health Code of Conduct](#).

3.3 Private Use of Social Media

Private use of social media is when a staff member is using their own personal account and not posting as an authorised staff member of NSW Health.

While social media allows for altering names, content and privacy settings, posts may be shared beyond the intended recipients. Staff are reminded that posts on social media often remain there permanently and can be reproduced in other media.

Staff have the right to post or interact on social media in a private capacity. However, such posts must be made strictly as a private citizen and avoid any reference to employment with NSW Health. Staff should also recognise that any private use of social media could still identify them directly or indirectly as an employee of NSW Health. Accordingly, they are personally responsible for the content they publish.

3.4 Use of Social Media and the NSW Health Code of Conduct

The objective of this policy is to:

Use of Social Media

- Clarify the existing obligations under the NSW Code of Conduct for NSW Health staff
- Clarify to staff that when participation on social media is subject to the standards of behaviour set out in the Code of Conduct.
- Confirm that the Use of Social Media policy does not change the Code of Conduct or any other existing policies.

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4 SOCIAL MEDIA CONTENT

Any content published on the official NSW Health social media platforms represents NSW Health's position. Any staff member making a public comment must have authority from their manager, Chief Executive or their delegate before posting on the account and must comply with the [NSW Health Public Communications Procedures](#) and [NSW Health Code of Conduct](#).

When using social media in a private capacity, staff must not do anything that may adversely affect their standing as a public official or bring them or their employer into disrepute.

4.1 Key principles for official use of social media

When posting and interacting online in an official capacity, staff must:

- 4.1.1 Be polite and respectful and uphold NSW Health's core values.
- 4.1.2 Represent NSW Health professionally and only publish information which is consistent with relevant policies and has been authorised for disclosure as official information.
- 4.1.3 Remain apolitical and impartial.
- 4.1.4 Not disclose information, make commitments or engage in activities on behalf of NSW Health unless authorised to do so.
- 4.1.5 Obtain permission from the Chief Executive or their delegate before posting anything online which may be interpreted as an official statement or commitment.
- 4.1.6 Not publish personal opinions on the official NSW Health social media platforms.
- 4.1.7 Not cross-promote personal accounts when posting on the official NSW Health social media platforms.
- 4.1.8 Not interact with and provide comments to journalists, politicians and lobby groups unless authorised to do so.

4.2 Use of Social Media during Caretaker period- State Elections

During election years, special rules apply to Government communications including the use of social media platforms. The Department of Premier and Cabinet mandates that social media pages or posts are to not contain material that could be seen as compromising the neutrality of the public service or as using agency resources for electioneering or biased political purposes.

Certain campaigns that are clearly in the public interest, such as safety or public health warnings, may be allowed.

Health Organisations are to ensure there are no risks that any social media posts could be seen as promoting a particular party or its policies.

Given the fixed-term nature of New South Wales Parliaments, Ministers and agencies will know in advance when the caretaker period will commence. For more detailed guidance, staff are to refer to relevant Premier's Circulars issued from time to time.

4.3 Key principles for private use of social media.

When using social media privately, staff must:

- 4.3.1 Not post anything about other staff, patients or members of the public which could be interpreted as, or contribute to, discrimination of people with disability, or people of a different background, culture, ethnicity or beliefs, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- 4.3.2 Not post anything about other staff, patients or members of the public which could be interpreted as, or contribute to, bullying, harassment or discrimination against them on the basis of their sex, race, marital status, pregnancy, carers' responsibilities, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status.
- 4.3.3 Not post any material that is pornographic, sexually explicit, defamatory or otherwise inappropriate.
- 4.3.4 Not post material that encourages behaviour that may constitute a criminal offence or otherwise violate the law.
- 4.3.5 Be clear that their views are their own and not those of NSW Health.
- 4.3.6 Not imply they are authorised to speak as a representative of NSW Health or give the impression that the posts and views are those of NSW Health.
- 4.3.7 Not publish content that is likely to bring NSW Health into disrepute or cause damage to the reputation of NSW Health.
- 4.3.8 Only represent their own views and not impersonate or falsely represent any other person or organisation.
- 4.3.9 Understand that if they like, share or comment on a post, they may be endorsing the content or author
- 4.3.10 Not use a NSW Health or NSW Government logo or emblem.

4.4 Use of NSW Health's resources lawfully, efficiently and only as authorised

NSW Health's communication systems, devices and internet resources are only to be used for work purposes and permissible personal use. Personal use of NSW Health's resources is not considered private, and the personal privacy rights do not apply. When accessing social media platforms using NSW Health's resources, staff must comply with the principles of the [NSW Health Code of Conduct](#) policy.

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5 Obligations under this policy

5.1 Accountabilities

All staff are responsible for the content they publish in a personal capacity on any social media platform.

Managers are responsible for ensuring that the staff they supervise are aware of and understand their responsibilities under this policy.

5.2 What to do if you are concerned about a breach of the policy?

In the first instance, staff should report any concerns or suspected wrongdoing to their manager. If staff are not comfortable about raising their concerns to their manager, they should raise it to a more senior manager.

Managers have a responsibility to address alleged breaches of the policy promptly, in a fair and reasonable manner. For guidance, any potential breaches be managed consistent with the Managing Misconduct policy.

5.3 What happens if there is a breach of the policy?

There are a range of consequences for breaches of this policy depending on the nature and seriousness of the matter.

Possible outcomes for a staff member who has breached this policy may be:

- Counselling
- Performance improvement plans
- Formal disciplinary action
- Referral to the relevant registration board when the staff member is a registered health practitioner
- Referral to the police in cases of suspected criminal activity
- Referral to other Government agencies, such as the Independent Commission Against Corruption, or
- Termination of employment.

6 RELATED DOCUMENTS

The table below lists the NSW Health policy directives that support, must be read in conjunction with, or are referred to in this policy.

Title	Author Branch
NSW Health Code of Conduct	Workplace Relations
NSW Health Public Communications Procedures	Strategic Communications and Engagement
Managing Misconduct	Workplace Relations

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Attachment 1: Implementation checklist

LHD/Facility:			
Assessed by:	Date of Assessment:		
IMPLEMENTATION REQUIREMENTS	Not commenced	Partial compliance	Full compliance
1.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Notes:		
2.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Notes:		
3.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Notes:		
4.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Notes:		
5.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Notes:		
6.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Notes:		