



THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF GRAFTON DIOCESAN POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

SUBJECT: USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA		PROCEDURE REFERENCE NUMBER GEN-008
DATE APPROVED 27 February 2025 by Bishop-in-Council		REVISION NUMBER 2.0
IMPLEMENTATION DATE 27 February 2025	REVIEW DATE AND FREQUENCY 3 Yearly	RESPONSIBLE FOR REVIEW Bishop-in-Council

1.0 PURPOSE

To set standards for the use of social media and online communication within the Anglican Diocese of Grafton.

This policy is intended to help clergy, employees and volunteers of the Diocese to make appropriate decisions about the use of social media and online communication.

2.0 SCOPE

This policy applies to clergy, employees and volunteers of the Anglican Diocese of Grafton including those within the Registry, Archives, parishes, bodies corporate and ministries of the Diocese.

Where a body corporate of the Anglican Diocese of Grafton (e.g. schools, Anglicare) has a policy on this topic that policy takes precedence and this policy is not applicable for that organisation's context.

For those involved in the delivery of Special Religious Education in NSW government schools, the SRE Social Media Policy applies for that context.

3.0 BACKGROUND

The Anglican Diocese of Grafton recognises the importance of social media as a tool for promotion, communication and collaboration. Online platforms are fundamentally changing the way clergy, paid employees and volunteers work and engage with each other, with parishioners and the wider community.

Our electronic presence is a window into the life of the church through which many people gaze. They get a perspective of who we are and what we believe by what is included in our messages.

All offices and officials of the Diocese are therefore accountable to ensure the use of social media and online communication is aligned to this policy to ensure the Church and users are protected from inappropriate use whilst also harnessing the benefits of social media.

Where knowledge and skills on Social Media are lacking, potential users should seek advice before establishing a new Social Media account.



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4.0 POLICY STATEMENT

4.1 *Key Principles*

The key principles for functioning in an online world are equivalent to the principles of behaviour and communication in the off-line world and clergy, employees and volunteers are reminded to consider appropriate values, ethics and confidentiality in their social media use.

Your use of Social Media and online communications, whether it is your original content or material published or shared by you, shall:

- (a) At all times be consistent with your Christian values and the organisation that you represent;
- (b) Recognise that you are an ambassador for the Diocese. If you are ordained, employed by the Diocese or have a role within the Diocese, others will see you as a representative of the Diocese and may attribute your comments and behaviour to the Diocese;
- (c) Always be in compliance with Commonwealth and NSW legislation, policies of the Diocese and within child protection protocols;
- (d) Be courteous and respectful;
- (e) Be transparent and accountable, taking responsibility for the things you do, say, write or otherwise publish. It is not permitted to use another person's identity, a pseudonym, or use a fake identity for the purpose of circumventing this policy, or make anonymous comments or publication to circumvent this policy.

4.2 *Standards for Posting Content*

These standards apply to all instances of publishing content, whether it is new material, shared or re-published material or a comment on your or another's post.

- (a) DO:
 - Ensure that content posted is consistent with standards covered by the code of conduct Faithfulness in Service and any other applicable code of conduct.
 - Ensure content is consistent with your work and the organisation that you represent;
 - Ensure content is consistent with the Christian values of love, tolerance and forgiveness;



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- Comply with laws relating to copyright, libel and defamation;
- Correct your mistakes and apologise if anyone was upset or offended;
- Consider content carefully and apply your best judgement being aware that what is published will be around for a long time; and
- Maintain online information to ensure that it is up to date especially contact details, service times and other information that members of the community will rely upon.

(b) DON'T:

- Publish, share or make supporting comments for content that is offensive, discriminatory, defamatory, harassing or unreliable;
- Provide sensitive, private or confidential information of the Diocese without the explicit authority to do so;
- Use Diocesan logos or trademarks without approval;
- Forget your Diocesan employment or role when using Social Media or online communications as a private citizen.

4.3 Standards – Privacy Regulations

For a more detailed understanding of Privacy please refer to GEN-001 Privacy.

(a) DO:

- Ensure that privacy of individuals is respected such that their contact details, photographs, and personal information are not published without their knowledge and verbal consent;
- Ensure that any photographs or videos including children which shows the child's face or where the child can be identified is supported by the signed consent of a parent-guardian where the consent especially acknowledges the possible use of the photograph or video on Social Media.
- Ensure that you consider your protection and personal privacy before you share any of your personal information and details; and
- Ensure that removal of an image or personal information requested by the person affected is done in a timely manner.

(b) DON'T:

- Provide personal information and details without consent.



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4.4 Standards – Professionalism

(a) DO:

- Exercise care in private conversations remembering that online communication may be misinterpreted because of a misunderstanding of context and the lack of visual cues that would assist with proper interpretation of the message;
- Always consider the tone of ‘voice’ that your online communication conveys. Especially consider how a message would sound to someone who does not have the benefit of knowing you well;
- Exercise personal responsibility for your online activity considering comments, posts or sharing carefully before doing so and apologising and correcting as necessary;
- Before commenting, publishing or sharing, consider the impact on the reputation or ministry of the Anglican Church or the Anglican Diocese of Grafton;
- Know and follow child protection principles in your online activity;
- Respect your audience and avoid ethnic slurs, personal insults, personal insults or engaging in any conduct that would not be considered acceptable in a Christian environment;
- Assign Administrator status to one or two trusted people and ensure that each person who is permitted to post material is fully aware of this policy; and
- On blogs, personal websites or in the publication of articles, include a disclaimer that the views are your own and not those of the Anglican Church or the Anglican Diocese of Grafton.

(b) DON'T:

- Air personal grievances. Social networks are never a good place to air personal grievances with your organisation, its members or your colleagues;
- Use online communication or Social Media while distressed, intoxicated or otherwise prone to make comments or posts that you ordinarily wouldn't say or publish;
- Belittle or denigrate others for the views they hold or express;
- Write messages with only capital letters as this can infer an aggressive tone;
- Do anything that breaches your terms of license, employment or an ordinance or policy of the Diocese;
- Make comments that are obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, discriminatory or hateful about another person or entity.



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4.5 *Standards – Communicating with Children*

- (a) When children first join a ministry, advise their parents that you intend to use Social Media or digital communication (e.g. email, instant messaging, mobile phone);
- (b) If you receive a digital communication from a child, consider whether a copy should be sent to another person in the ministry (e.g. Rector, Churchwarden, Ministry Support Officer);
- (c) When sending a digital communication to a child, consider whether a copy should be sent to another person in the ministry (e.g. Rector, Churchwarden, Ministry Support Officer), particularly if you consider the child to be a person at risk; and
- (d) When telephoning a child, try to ring the parents' telephone rather than the child's mobile phone. [Note: If a child is considered to be at risk contact with parents or guardians is a priority.]

4.6 *Standards – Site Policies*

Each Social Media platform has a set of terms and policies of use. It is important to familiarise yourself with and abide by these policies. Examples are:

Facebook: www.facebook.com/tos

X (Twitter): <https://x.com/en/tos>

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/legal/user-agreement

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/about/legal/terms/api/>

Snapchat: <https://www.snap.com/en-US/terms/#terms-row>

YouTube: www.youtube.com/static?template=terms&gl=AU

4.7 *Standards – Anglican Diocese of Grafton Facebook Page*

Only those officially designated by the Bishop of Grafton or by Diocesan policy have the authority to speak on behalf of the Diocese or to post online content on behalf of the Diocese.

Otherwise, individuals, whether they are clergy, employees, members of parishes, volunteers or supporters of the Anglican Diocese of Grafton do not have permission to post official Diocesan content. They can, however, share, repost, retweet or take similar action with Diocesan posts or material without substantial or meaningful change as part of showing their affiliation or support for the organisation.

The above also applies to supportive comments on Diocesan material.



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Where an individual who is a member of the clergy, employee or holder of a designated role within the Anglican Diocese of Grafton has an objection to, or disagreement with, online content published by the Anglican Diocese of Grafton, those feelings are to be expressed to the Bishop of Grafton or another senior officer of the Diocese instead of as public online comments.

4.8 Standards – Handling Online Content

(a) **Monitoring Social Media accounts**

It is strongly recommended that parishes and other diocesan organisations with Social Media accounts (e.g. Facebook page, Twitter account, Webpage) check their account regularly so that any of the following can be attended to in a timely manner:

- Pleas for assistance;
- Inappropriate content; and
- Unauthorised change to account or information (e.g. hacking)

(b) **Crisis Support through Social Media**

It is not recommended to handle crisis support through Social Media. In the case where crisis outreach occurs through a Social Media platform, a message advising how to obtain further support should be posted to the page as quickly as possible.

(c) **Complaints Support through Social Media**

It is inevitable that complaints or negative comments will be made through Social Media platforms. In the case where this occurs, it is not recommended to argue or refute the complaint or comment as this behaviour can antagonise or escalate the situation. Rather, it is important to address the comment as soon as possible in a constructive manner.

(d) **Deleting Posts**

Social Media is a two-way platform in which information can be disseminated and as such is a form of two-way communication and a vehicle to hear community views. It is not recommended to delete any posts from your page without archiving except where they are defamatory or contain offensive material. As a general rule, in circumstances where a post is deleted, it is advised to contact the user whose post has been removed to explain why it has been removed and to outline any necessary actions for it to be reposted.

If posts are being removed to manage space or data or when a site is being closed, then the intended action should be notified for at least three weeks on the same social media platform.



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- (e) **Mistakes**
Mistakes sometimes happen when posting on social media and some mistakes may cause unintended harm. When a mistake occurs, take timely action to remove or edit the error and apologise for mistakes that could cause offence. (An example of this type of mistake is where a predictive text tool substitutes an unintended word that makes the message vulgar).
- (f) **Bringing issues to the Diocesan Office's attention**
The Facebook page of the Anglican Diocese of Grafton is monitored by staff at the Bishop's Registry. However, if you find information or activity on other online environments that you think that the Diocese should be aware of or respond to, please send those comments to admin@graftondiocese.org.au or contact the Registrar's PA on 02 6642 4122. This can apply equally to comments that are complimentary and critical of the Diocese or any of its representatives.
- (g) **Personal Impact**
The Anglican Diocese of Grafton desires a safe working environment for its clergy, employees and volunteers. If you feel that you have been harassed, bullied or offended by online communication or material posted or uploaded by a colleague to a Social Media platform, please do not hesitate to bring this matter to the attention of your supervisor or person with oversight of your work environment. In instances where your supervisor or person with oversight of your work environment is responsible for the action, you may take it to that person's supervisor for resolution.

5.0 DEFINITIONS

- 5.1 Social media** is defined as any form of online publication or presence that allows interactive communication. This includes, but is not limited to, social networks, blogs, websites, apps, internet forums and wikis. Social media platforms, include but are not limited to, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Tumblr, and blogs.
- 5.2 Child** is defined as any person under the age of 18 years.



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6.0 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

GEN-001 Privacy
GEN-002 Faithfulness in Service
REG-001 Administration Code of Conduct