

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF BROKEN BAY

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY



CATHOLIC
DIOCESE OF
BROKEN BAY

CONTENT

This document contains the Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay (**Diocese**) Policy on Social Media as it relates to all Workers, including clergy and volunteers who undertake work for Chancery Offices, Parishes and Agencies within the Diocese.

APPLICATION & SCOPE

This Policy applies to clergy, employees, contractors, volunteers, work experience students and trainees (**Workers**) of the Diocese including those working in or visiting its Parishes. Where an Agency within the Diocese (such as Catholic Schools Broken Bay or CatholicCare) has its own policy, the relevant Agency policy will apply to Agency Workers.

Unless specified otherwise, this Policy applies regardless of where or when Workers post or communicate information online. It applies to posting and online activity at home, work or other locations, while on duty or off duty, and regardless of whether Workers are using their own property or the property of the Diocese.

It will be considered a breach of acceptable conduct to post on any public or private website or other forum, including, but not limited to information sharing sites, Social Media sites, social or business networking sites (for example LinkedIn, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, YouTube, SnapChat, Tik Tok) or any other electronic or print communication format, if Workers are not adhering to the conditions outlined in this Policy.

DEFINITION

For the purpose of this Policy:

- **Social Media:** is the collective of online communications channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content sharing and collaboration. It means any facility for online publication and commentary and, refers to the means of engagement among people in which they create, share, and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks, including a Social network.

It is entirely driven by user-generated content. Individuals are allowed flexibility in privacy settings; in posting text, photos, video, links, and other information; and in level of interaction with other members. Examples (but not limited to): Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, Pinterest, SnapChat, Flickr and TikTok. It also includes Podcast platforms such as Apple, Google Play and Podbean and new modes of online engagement being added regularly.

- **Ministry website:** is an Internet website/tool created by Workers, clergy, and volunteers for the sole purpose of conducting Diocesan/affiliate business.
- **Personal website:** is a Social Media page, blog, or any Internet website/tool created by Workers, clergy, and volunteers primarily to share personal communication with friends and associates.

PURPOSE

The Diocese embraces all that is good in digital technologies and seeks to engage with people in newer and more creative ways as a means of inviting them into deeper relationship with Jesus Christ, within the Christian community. The Diocese also understands that its Workers will engage with Social Media sites, for example Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, LinkedIn, chat rooms (Zoom and Microsoft Teams), Podcasts, create and maintain personal websites,

including blogs, and respects Worker's right to have an online Social Media and personal online presence, both using the Diocese's on-line resources and their own.

Social Media is a major phenomenon in which the online building of networks for communities of people who share interests and activities has fundamentally changed the way in which people, especially young people, communicate and share information.

In doing so, however, Diocesan entities and Diocesan Workers and members of official Diocesan organisations or groups, need to be aware of appropriate boundaries and activities when communicating in the name of the Diocese in an online environment. It is the purpose of this Policy to make Workers aware that there can be a strong connection between their online presence and the Diocese's activities, image and reputation because someone's words, images, posts and comments whether made inside or outside the work environment can be attributed to the Diocese and the wider Catholic Church by reflecting on the character, competence or performance of individuals or other Church interests.

The Diocese is committed to ensuring that internal and external communication of both publications and commentary in the use of Social Media platforms, are **responsible, respectful and lawful**. It is important that the Diocese and its Workers make every effort to ensure the safety of producers and consumers of Social Media. In its desire to engage with technology in pursuing new forms of communication, the Diocese understands that at all times, such activity must mirror God's creative love, with particular focus on respect for the dignity of the human person. The Diocese reserves the right to delete comments and block inappropriate Social Media accounts.

1. GENERAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Social Media can be a very powerful and positive way for the Diocese to communicate. Social Media presents a number of opportunities to engage with Parish, School and Agency communities, and the wider community. This form of communication enables the Diocese to be more active in relationships with Workers, parishioners, volunteers, communities, partners and associated organisations, as well as increasing the frequency and speed of engaging with the public. As such, the use of Social Media is encouraged within the parameters set out in this Policy.

Social Media cannot replace other forms of communication (see **Section 5 - The Digital Divide**), but can be useful as a range of communication options to engage and inform key interest groups, for example with public relations activities, awareness raising campaigns and education activities. When using Social Media, it is very important to choose the most appropriate tool in order to achieve the intended purpose.

2. OFFICIAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Workers must not engage in online Social Media on behalf of the organisation unless they have been explicitly authorised by the Diocese.

Workers who have been authorised by the Diocese to use Diocesan Social Media as part of their duties must conduct themselves in accordance with the standards of behaviour as set out in the organisation's policies.

The overriding principle for Clergy, members of religious communities, Diocesan Workers and members of Diocesan organisations or groups is that their behaviour online **should reflect the standard of appropriate behaviour which is expected in all person-to-person interaction**. Such behaviour should at all times demonstrate a Christ-centred respect for the dignity of each person. Appropriate boundaries should always be observed, especially in communication with young people. The Safeguarding protocols and policies of the Diocese and civil authorities must always be observed (refer also to **Section 4 - Communicating with Youth**).

Social Media should not be used by Diocesan Workers, volunteers or members of organisations or groups to be a vehicle for personal communication with those to whom

they minister which would fall outside of normal professional or pastoral relationships. A clear distinction should be maintained between personal and professional communication in the Social Media environment.

Identifying oneself as a Worker of the Diocese through personal use of Social Media is not prohibited, and indeed **transparency and honesty is encouraged**. However, once identified as a Worker with the Diocese, or if known to be a Worker with the Diocese (regardless of whether the Worker has identified themselves as that or not), any content that a Worker posts on-line may be related to Diocese (which includes any persons associated with the Diocese). In fact Workers should be aware that even without a specific comment about their role within the Church it should usually be assumed that others may be aware of their role. Workers must ensure that any content associated with them is consistent with Diocesan policies. This applies regardless of whether the Worker participating in Social Media inside or outside of working hours (unless specified otherwise), and whether the Worker is using their own personal property or the property of the Diocese.

Conditions of publishing or commenting via Social Media:

- That the reputation, or interests of the Diocese are not brought into disrepute.
- That no disparaging, discriminatory or harassing commentary is published, including but not restricted to any Worker, including clergy, volunteer, member or other person associated with the Diocese.
- That no person is defamed, including but not restricted to: Clergy, Workers, volunteers or any other representative of the Diocese or the Catholic Church.
- That media authorisation processes apply in relation to making any kind of statement or comment on behalf of the Diocese (refer to the **Diocesan Communications Policy**).
- That compliance is maintained with relevant legislation including copyright, privacy and anti -discrimination legislation.
- That Diocesan information which is not in the public domain is not published (refer to the **Diocesan Privacy Policy**), particularly around violation of the confidentiality of Workers, clergy, clients, parishioners or students.
- Workers endorsing Diocesan services and activities, must disclose their relationship with the Diocese (for example employee, volunteer etc), and must ensure that endorsements do not contain representations that are misleading or deceptive or cannot be substantiated.
- Workers must clearly identify themselves when they are speaking about content related to the activities or services of the Diocese or speak in the first person and issue a disclaimer to make it clear that the views expressed are theirs alone and do not necessarily reflect or represent the views of the Diocese.
- Workers should assume that content may be viewed by, sent, forwarded, shared or transmitted to someone other than who was intended to view the communication.
- Be mindful that certain Social Media platforms have functions that allow users to endorse posts without using actual text (for example “liking” or “re-blogging”) and using such functions is no different from specifically saying something with text on Social Media.
- If running a promotion or competition, ensure all legal requirements are in place i.e. Permits, which the requirements can be checked at <https://www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au>.
- Ensure that all recruitment practices for hiring managers conducted via Social Media is open to all candidates and free from discrimination.

- Implement and maintain appropriate measures to protect accounts from hacking and other security risks.

3. PUBLIC SITES

When using public Social Media platforms such as, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and Podcast platforms, etc. the following applies:

3.1. Developing a Social Media Channel

Any individual working on behalf of the Diocese who wishes to use Social Media platforms as part of their professional duties should first seek the permission of their most Senior Manager in consultation with the Diocesan Director, Communications. Refer to the **Diocesan Social Media Guidelines** for further information about processes and recommendations.

3.2. Use of Disclaimers

As stated above unless a Worker specifically wants to ensure their comments are not associated with the Church (see below), the Worker should assume that this association will be made. Therefore, if a Worker feels that there is a risk of potential misrepresentation of the Diocese, or individuals and groups within the Church, that Worker should declare in their post that the views are theirs alone and do not necessarily reflect or represent the views of the Diocese or that of the Catholic Church.

3.3. Protection of One's Own Privacy

The private use of Social Media sites by Clergy, members of religious communities, Diocesan Workers, volunteers or members of groups or organisations should be kept distinct from their professional use of such sites. It is advisable that people exercise great care and judgment in accepting 'Friend' requests from people to whom they minister, especially young people. In this way, appropriate boundaries can be maintained. It is advisable that people NOT 'Friend' minors outside of family, especially if those connections have been made through particular ministries (eg. teaching etc). Please refer to **Section 4 - Communicating with Youth** and the **Diocesan Social Media Guidelines** for further information.

3.4. Protecting the privacy of others

When using Social Media, Workers must respect the privacy of all persons associated with the Diocese. Workers must not discuss others without their permission, and must ask permission before posting their picture. Social Media should not be used for internal communications amongst fellow Workers. Great care should be used to protect people, especially young people, from exposing personal information on publicly available Social Media sites. Phone numbers or email addresses should not be available.

3.5. Respect Confidentiality

It is perfectly acceptable for Workers to discuss their work and have a dialogue with various communities. However, it is not acceptable to publish or disclose confidential information. Workers must take care not to purposefully or inadvertently disclose any information that is confidential or proprietary to the Diocese. If Workers are unsure about the confidentiality of information, they are to consult their Manager or the Office of Communications before publishing on Social Media.

3.6. Respect for Audiences

Workers are not to publish or disclose information or comment on any matters that contradict or are in conflict with the Diocesan opinions, website or its policies.

3.7. Communicate respectfully

Workers are expected to use Social Media in the way that is respectful towards the Diocese and all persons associated with Diocese and its values. This includes not only matters that

could be deemed discriminatory (for example those areas covered by Equal Employment Opportunity or Human Rights legislation and regulations), but also consideration of topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory.

3.8. Respect Intellectual Property Laws

It is critical that Workers show respect and adhere to the laws governing intellectual property. This includes the Diocese's own copyrights and branding. To avoid plagiarism, Workers must always reference or attribute written work to the original author and source. If you are unsure of the potential intellectual property risk, please consult your Manager and the Office for Communications before publishing on Social Media.

3.9. Writers (Workers) identity

Do not blog anonymously, use pseudonyms or false screen names. The Diocese is committed to transparency and honesty. Workers are to use real names, be clear who they are, and identify they work/volunteer for the Diocese. Workers are not to say anything that is dishonest, untrue, or misleading. If Workers have a vested interest in something they are discussing, point it out. But they also need to be prudent about protecting themselves and their privacy.

3.10. Password Protection

Workers are responsible for maintaining the integrity of their system password. A system access is based on a username. Workers will be held accountable for any Social Media attributed to their username. Workers are not to use another person's password without the Diocese's approval. It is encouraged that passwords and usernames for official parish and ministry sites be logged with the Office for Communications.

3.11. Controversial Issues

If Workers read misrepresentations made about the Diocese in the media and wish to bring them to the attention of executives/management, they must do so respectfully, presenting the facts. If Workers speak about others, they need to ensure the information is factual and that it does not disparage other person(s). Arguments must be avoided at all times.

3.12. Unlawful Use

Whether Workers are operating within Social Media in a personal capacity by the specific use of disclaimers or in their Church role there are unlawful uses of Social Media that Workers need to be aware of including distribution of:

- Offensive material, including but not limited to, items of pornography or any inappropriate materials that have the potential to offend another person or group of people.
- Information with the potential to harass or cause harm to any other person. Examples would include discriminatory material in the form of comments, jokes, pictures or photos etc.

Refer to the **Diocesan Policy on Acceptable Use of Communications Systems (including electronic) & Devices** and the **Diocesan Code of Conduct Policy**.

3.13. Pages, Groups, Individuals

Diocesan entities wishing to engage in official Church Social Media activities should only set up as Groups or Pages (e.g. Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay) on these sites and not as individuals (eg 'Joe Smith', Youth Minister for Broken Bay). This removes the possible ambiguities surrounding the issue of whether it is appropriate for Diocesan employees to 'Friend' with the people to whom they minister. Refer to the **Diocesan Social Media Guidelines**.

3.14. Descriptor of Social Media sites

It is advisable, particularly in the area of Youth Ministry, that in using sites such as Facebook and Instagram, Diocesan groups should be clearly placed under the “Religious Organisations” grouping and in the descriptor, they should clearly identify that it is the Official Group of the Diocese.

3.15. Use of photos and/or videos

Those maintaining official Diocesan Social Media sites should take particular care with the use of photographs or video. Global permission should be sought from all individuals in photos or in videos before they are posted. Material which might embarrass or offend those pictured should at all times be avoided. Material should be removed at once if it is the subject of a complaint or if the posting of a particular item makes an individual uncomfortable. Refer to **Consent to Film and Photograph a Child or Adult Forms Consent Forms** on the Intranet (refer to **Related Forms** in this Policy).

Mobile device recording capabilities such as voice, image or video should be used with extreme caution to protect confidential information. Recording confidential or protected information using mobile device voice, image or video capabilities is prohibited.

3.16. Moderation of Sites

Moderation of official Diocesan Social Media activities is crucial. Respect for human dignity should at all times guide the moderation of such activities. Comments which are rude, disrespectful or even bullying in nature will be immediately removed.

4. COMMUNICATING WITH YOUTH

- Anyone using Social Media to communicate to youth on behalf of the Diocese of Broken Bay must have a **Working with Children Check**.
- While it is recognised that the utilisation of Social Media has become an effective ministry tool with teenagers in youth ministry programs and secondary school students, **no direct electronic communication (using any form of Social Media or technology) between children younger than 13 in any Church-sponsored group or activity and adults ministering to them, teaching them or coordinating the program or activity should ever take place.**
- Before any electronic communication, including text messaging platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, Instagram DM, may take place as part of ministry with youth participants **older than 13, parents must be informed of the intent of the adult agent of the Diocese of Broken Bay to use that technology as part of his/her ministry.** Where Social Media platforms involve a direct appeal or invitation for participants to join, **parents must first grant permission in writing for the agent to invite the teen.**
- Adult agents of the Diocese must acquire contact information, including a phone number, for the parent or legal guardian of any minor with whom there is electronic communication.
- **Acceptable hours for communicating with youth via Social Media sites or text message should be between 8.00am and 9.00pm.** Communication outside of these hours should only be done under emergency circumstances or if something is time-sensitive to the ministry or an event.
- It is not permitted for an adult to initiate an online conversation with a minor (under age 18).
- **Parents must also have access to everything provided to their children.** For example, parents should be made aware of how Social Media platforms are being used, be told how to access the sites, and be given the opportunity to be copied on all

material sent to their children via Social Media (including text and messaging platforms). While parents should be provided with the same material as their children, it does not have to be via the same technology (that is, if children receive a reminder via Instagram, parents can receive it in a printed form or by an email list).

- The **youth minister must approve each request by youth for membership** in the Social Media site after verification of current participation or leadership in the youth program.
- Church Workers are **encouraged to save copies of conversations whenever possible**, especially those that concern the personal sharing of a teen or young adult.
- No pictures, images, videos or other releases except those that are newsworthy or of general interest may be identified or linked without permission of the person or persons depicted. Refer to Consent to Photograph or Film a Child or Adult Forms located on the Intranet. No picture, image or video of any minor may be posted without verifiable consent of the minor's custodial parent or guardian. Verifiable consent can take the form of a written release/permission form, an email from a parent or guardian, or spoken permission by a parent or guardian in the presence of another adult.
- In **photographs of youth activities, youth should not be "tagged," or identified by name, or any other identifier**, which might cause them to show up in search engines. On the original Social Media site, it is recommended that the "no tagging" option be set.
- Because of the **potential of teen crises or time-relevant information, the page/site should be monitored daily by site administrators**. Anyone who conducts a site relating to youth should sign up to receive notifications about page activity and respond to them throughout the day. A plea for help that goes unanswered can be dangerous for teens and their families and damaging to the parish, school, and/or organisation.
- **All have a responsibility when communicating with youth** to recognise there is a valid way to act when using Social Media sites the Diocese administers, and to participate in sites where teens are present.
- All ministry leaders should be familiar with Diocesan Safeguarding policies and relevant Code of Conduct and Privacy Policies.

5. THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

Great care must be taken by all Diocesan entities not to rely exclusively on Social Media as a means of communication. To do this could exclude those who cannot afford a computer or mobile device who live in remote localities with poor Internet connectivity, who struggle with illiteracy or who face other challenges which place them outside of the online world. Social Media should only ever be one of a range of communication methods that is used to invite people into closer relationship with Jesus Christ.

6. CONSEQUENCES OF BREACHING THIS POLICY

Breaches of this Policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment or engagement. It is the Worker's responsibility to know and understand the Policy. If a Worker has any doubt as to the appropriate guidelines, the Worker should ask their manager.

7. VARIATIONS

This Policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment, nor does it form any part of any Worker's contract for service. The Diocese may vary, replace or terminate this Policy from time to time.

REFERENCES

'Social Networking Policy for the Catholic Church in Australia' published by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Communications Office, May 2015

'Australian Catholic Media Council – Guide to Social Media for Parishes' published by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Communications Office, 2020

'Integrity in our Common Mission', November 2023

RELATED FORMS

Consent to Film or Photograph a Child Form (Events)
Consent to Film or Photograph a Child Form (General)
Consent to Film or Photograph an Adult Form (Events)
Consent to Film or Photograph an Adult Form (General)
Event Signage Form

RELATED GUIDELINES

Identity Standards Guidelines
Social Media Guidelines
Consent to Film or Photograph a Child Guidelines

RELATED POLICIES

It is expected that this Policy is read and understood in conjunction with the existing policies and procedures of the Diocese. In particular, it is expected that Workers understand and regularly review the following policies:

- Communications Policy
- Acceptable Use of Communications Systems (including electronic) & Devices Policy
- Safeguarding Education and Training (Chancery and Parish) Policy
- Working with Children Check Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Code of Conduct Policy

POLICY REVIEW

Review of this Policy, related forms and resources will be undertaken every three years by the Chancery Human Resources Manager in consultation with the Director, Communications and Diocesan Director of Safeguarding and approved by the Diocesan Financial Administrator.

REVISION/ MODIFICATION HISTORY

Date	Version	Current Title	Summary of Changes	Approval Date	Commencement Date
16/08/18	1.	Social Networking Policy	New	Aug 2018	Aug 2018
22/01/22	2.	Social Media Policy	Reviewed and updated	Jan 2022	Jan 2022
04/04/24	3.	Social Media Policy	Reviewed and updated	Apr 2024	Apr 2024

APPROVED DATE/REVISION SCHEDULE

Approved by: Emma McDonald, Diocesan Financial Administrator

Date: 4 April 2024

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