

ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF BUNBURY

POLICY – DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Approved: BIC14Nov19
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PREAMBLE

Interactive online activities and services and all digital communications include social media like Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Podcasts and Twitter, together with meeting apps such as Zoom and OBS and there are others. These platforms, names and capacities are changing, increasing and are widely available and considered mainstream. They are a common means of communication for all people and increasingly used in ministry and are actively used by church workers and members of our communities.

Social media, used well, provide wonderful opportunities for evangelism, advocacy, ministry outreach and are used with enthusiasm and creativity.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all Church Workers (as defined in The Professional Standards Statute) and in our Codes of Conduct.

POLICY

Church Workers are encouraged to use conversations and social media in a way that reflect our values, and share good news of Jesus Christ. Common sense, kindness, respect and sound judgement is requested and expected as it would be in a face to face conversation.

Conversely, Church Workers are asked not to bring our faith into disrepute, compromise our ministry effectiveness, disclose sensitive or confidential information or do anything that would put others at risk, hurt or harm them in our use of social media.

PRINCIPLES

- Use social media to strengthen our capacity for ministry
- Preserve our own and others safety, privacy and dignity
- Recognise these are our opinions and do not imply Diocesan endorsement

PRIVACY, PERMISSION, SAFETY AND APPROVAL

For all social media and digital communications online activity formally provided on behalf of the Anglican Church of Australia in this Diocese, the following must be included in the preparations and considerations:

- the privacy of those involved
- the safety of children and vulnerable persons in particular and for everyone in general
- the permission of all involved in the preparation of material
- approval must be sought for Diocesan and parish material from all parties.
- licensing details checked and included in written and spoken material

ONLINE MEETINGS

When using online apps for holding meetings rather than meeting face to face, there must always be one person responsible for the smooth running of the meeting online, checking the

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behaviour of online participants and able to ensure such meetings are respectful and safe for all involved. The responsible person must be able to shut down and shut out unwanted unsafe behaviour whether it is from those without invitation joining externally or from those invited online.

Confidentiality of conversation within such meetings must meet expected standards for interactive participation and where a platform such as Zoom is unable to guarantee confidentiality, other platforms must be used as an alternative when such circumstances require it due to the sensitivity of the content.

Meetings conducted digitally must only be recorded with the consent of all attending.

LIVE STREAMING

Many clergy persons are now providing online, live-streaming of services, preaching and prayer opportunities for local parishioners and for strangers using podcasts, Facebook pages, YouTube and other similar apps. This is a beneficial offering for all involved and is to be encouraged.

The Diocese provides advice and support for the establishment of such services. Those offering them must be responsible for ensuring the service can be removed or stopped if required.

The Diocese will work with those authorised in each parish to share material and give it wider audiences, but the principles of privacy, permission and approvals to be agreed.

Those attending services in person should not be filmed without their consent.

PERSONAL ACCOUNTS

A church worker may have one or more accounts with interactive service providers and may use these accounts for both ministry and non-ministry related purposes. Regardless of whether purpose or account is public or the user's name is public, Church Workers are asked to make sure their activities are in line with the Principles given in this Policy.

Church Youth Workers must not use their personal social media accounts to do work related messages or must separate out their work activities within their systems so these can be kept accountable, visible and accessible when requested.

PARISH ACCOUNTS

A parish may have one or more accounts with interactive service providers. A parish is responsible for content and for monitoring and managing the content and ensuring the Principles of Privacy and Confidentiality are maintained actively and the guidelines for behaviour, activities and speech. Parishes need to ensure there is active training, support, monitoring and responsible management of this aspect of ministry and evangelism and communication. The parish priest is responsible for and must be given access to all parish accounts.

DIOCESAN (CORPORATE) ACCOUNTS

The Bishop, Diocesan Secretary, or Safe Church Ministry Authority and Council should provide guidance from time to time and oversight of the Diocesan activity and management. The Bishop must have access to all the Diocesan Accounts.

SAFETY AND PRIVACY

All forms of communications must have due regard for the safety of all participants when using social media. Church workers must prioritise safety in all communications with children, seek appropriate permissions and never publish photographs or identifiers of children. Parents must be contacted before any images are shared with signed permission given. See the Safe Church Ministry training for reference and guidance (SMR) and Faithfulness in Service. Confidential and sensitive information obtained through ministry must not be disclosed through social media and digital communications. These considerations apply to all vulnerable individuals.

Any material raising concerns about a child's safety or possible abuse, neglect, grooming or exploitation must be reported immediately to the police and the Director of Professional Standards. Legislation currently before the WA Government will also require Mandatory Reporting of such matters by clergy and others.

The Diocese will monitor regularly all digital communications and social media activity of those involved in the Church to ensure this Policy, Principles and associated standards and practices are being maintained; and particularly those training for ordination, clergy persons and parish lay leaders. Where this policy and practices are not met, this will be brought to the attention of the individual/s to be resolved and improved to meet the expectations of the Diocese for the safety of all concerned.

RAISING CONCERNS

If any Church Worker considers another Church Worker has not met the Principles or wishes to give feedback regarding their social media use, it should be done through a respectful conversation. If this is not possible or not sufficient, the process outlined in the Feedback and Conflict Management and Grievance Policy should be followed, and the Oversight Committee be made aware of the issues and process being used to resolve the matter. The Diocese and the Bishop's leadership team will also take prompt action if they receive complaints or see inappropriate, unsuitable or offensive material posted to the Diocesan social media accounts. This may include deleting comments, blocking users or reporting comments as inappropriate.

DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS GUIDELINES INCLUDE: (See the Church of England Social Media Community Guidelines for further tips and help)

- Be safe
- Be respectful
- Be kind
- Be honest
- Check the facts before sharing
- Take responsibility
- Be a good ambassador
- Disagree well
- Credit others
- Follow the rules