



Fact Sheet

Social Media Use Factsheet for Members of Parliament (Staff) Act employees

Social media use has become a core part of everyday life including for *Members of Parliament (Staff) Act* (MOP(S) Act) employees. This factsheet is designed to help MOP(S) Act employees understand social media and how they can use it responsibly and effectively in both in personal and professional life.

What is social media?

Social media use is a wide ranging and ever evolving suite of online interactions on many different platforms. Platforms include but are not limited to:

- social networking sites like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, or Reddit
- professional networking sites like LinkedIn
- video sharing sites and apps like YouTube and TikTok
- blogs, online forums and communities like WordPress
- comments sections on news articles
- in some cases, more seemingly private tools like email and Slack.

What is the difference between personal use and professional use of social media accounts?

Personal use of social media typically involves connecting with friends and family, sharing personal experiences, and engaging in hobbies or interests. It allows users to express their individuality and participate in community discussions. Personal use of social media may be subject to scrutiny in situations where you identify yourself as working in the office of a parliamentarian or could be identified as working in a parliamentarian's office now or in the future.

Use of social media for professional purposes may involve professional networking, brand building, and maintaining your professional image. Depending on your role, you may also manage or contribute to the social media presence of your employing parliamentarian. Professional use demands a heightened awareness of your posts and interactions as you are easily identified as an employee or are representing your parliamentarian.

As an employee, you must consider the potential impact your online behaviour, both personal and professional, may have on your employing parliamentarian, your colleagues and yourself.

Why should I be concerned about what I do on social media?

The Behaviour Codes and Standards require you to act respectfully, professionally and with integrity. You should be mindful of your online interactions and whether they could undermine your employing parliamentarian's trust and confidence in you or create a conflict of interest that cannot be mitigated.

What should I consider when interacting online?

When interacting online, it is important to be mindful of your position and the perceptions that may be associated with it. Working for a parliamentarian comes with responsibility. By posting or commenting on something, it could be assumed that your comment is informed by knowledge gained through your position, or as representing the position of your parliamentarian.

When on social media ask yourself the following questions:

- How would it look for a person in my position to post, like or comment on this?
- What is the relationship between my work duties and the issue I want to post on?
- Is my post or comment expressed in an extreme way?
- Would I or my employing parliamentarian be comfortable with my post going viral?

What if I don't identify myself online?

While the risk to reputational damage is greater if you identify yourself as an employee, it is not eliminated if you don't.

Employees can be identified online in a range of ways, even if they post anonymously or use an alias. If identified, your behaviour can affect public confidence, or the trust and confidence of your employing parliamentarian in you regardless of any intention to keep personal and professional life separate.

If you are posting anonymously, you should assume that at some point your identity and the nature of your employment may be known.

What tips do you have for safe use of social media?

- **Avoid including details of where you work when setting up your profile** – This helps to maintain privacy and reduces the risk of unwanted attention or misrepresentation.
- **Use privacy settings wisely** – Many social media platforms let you restrict who can see your posts although interactions with public pages may still be visible.
- **Keep personal and work logins separate** – Use official devices for managing workplace social media accounts to maintain security and professionalism.
- **Regularly review account security and permissions** – Cyber security is essential for protecting your accounts and protecting the information you hold or share online.
- **Think before you post** – Consider the reputational risks to both you and your employing parliamentarian, and how your online actions might be perceived.
- **Recognise that engaging in trolling, arguing or harassment can carry extremely negative consequences** – Risks include to your personal safety and professional standing.
- **Report inappropriate content through official channels** – Avoid engaging with inappropriate content directly and use each platform's tools to report and manage inappropriate content.

Where can I go if I have a question or need support?

If you have any questions in relation to this factsheet, please contact the HR Advice team on 1800 747 977 (Option 2) or by emailing hr@pwss.gov.au. If you need support, the PWSS Counselling and Support team can be reached 24/7 on 1800 747 977 (Option 1) or by email at support@pwss.gov.au.

If you believe that a MOP(S) Act employee or parliamentarian's online activity may be a breach of the Behaviour Codes and Standards you can submit a complaint to the [Independent Parliamentary Standards Commission](#) (IPSC). The IPSC is an independent workplace investigation framework for Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplace participants.

The [eSafety Commissioner](#) is able to investigate adult cyber abuse, image-based abuse (sharing, or threatening to share, intimate images without the consent of the person shown) and illegal and restricted content. The eSafety Commission is not able to deal with purely reputational damage, bad online reviews, strong opinions or banter.

Additional Resources

[Online abuse in the Workplace](#)

[How to stay safe online](#)

[The eSafety Guide](#)

 **24/7 Support** 1800 747 977

 **Text the PWSS** 0487 112 755

www.pwss.gov.au