

AUDIENCE	CATEGORY
All staff	Communications Information Management and Technology

THE TREASURY — POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Social Media Policy

This document was endorsed by Peter Alexander, Chief Information Officer
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VERSION CONTROL

Date Modified	Version	Section of document	Author of change	Summary of change
25/06/2012	1.0	All	Tim Dale; Peter Alexander	First release
5/11/2012	1.1	Official Use	Tim Dale	Minor wording clarifications

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OVERVIEW

Consistent with Australian Government policy and the *Strategic Review of the Treasury*, this policy supports greater engagement with stakeholders through the use of social media. It recognises that:

- Greater use of new information technology, social media and communication techniques has the potential to improve Treasury's productivity and effectiveness.
- There is an increased demand for access to information from a variety of platforms, and an expectation of greater transparency.
- Rapidly moving news cycles and improved real-time access to detailed information and news, including increasing use of social media, are increasingly being applied to government.
- Demands for access to government information are likely to continue to grow across a variety of platforms, including social media.

This policy has been prepared to provide Treasury employees who use social media as part of their work with guidelines on appropriate use, personal responsibilities and how the use of social media is related to other Treasury policies.

PURPOSE

Treasury's social media policy helps enable external and internal engagement while ensuring protocols are in place for appropriate use of social media and to protect Treasury's reputation.

The Australian Government's [Declaration of Open Government](#) supports openness and transparency in Government through:

- Informing: strengthening citizen's rights of access to information, establishing a pro-disclosure culture across Australian Government agencies including through online innovation, and making government information more accessible and usable;
- Engaging: collaborating with citizens on policy and service delivery to enhance the processes of government and improve the outcomes sought; and
- Participating: making government more consultative and participative.

The *Strategic Review of the Treasury* highlights the need for Treasury to use social media to better engage with stakeholders and partners, including:

- Supporting stakeholder engagement.
- Trialling new online consultation approaches.
- Enhancing use of information technology tools.

WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA AND HOW CAN IT BE USED?

Although there is no universally accepted definition, social media is essentially about using technology to encourage online discussion, sharing and collaboration. Examples of social media tools include:

- Social networking sites: for example Facebook and LinkedIn.
- Video sharing websites: for example YouTube.

- Blogs and discussion forums and online journals: for example, commenting on an article on the ABC News website, the Department of Finance and Deregulation's e-government blog, and the World Bank's data portal and blogs.
- Wikis (which allow collaborative editing of information): for example Wikipedia.
- Private collaboration platforms: for example, Treasury's team sites, or govdex - a whole-of-government service that allows government agencies to collaborate on projects in a secure environment.

Online engagement tools can support both internal and external engagement and collaboration activities.

For more information on social media and how it can be used please see the Department of Finance and Deregulation's [Gov 2.0 Primer](#).

WHAT OTHER POLICIES AND GUIDANCE APPLY?

Use of social media websites by public servants is governed by the [APS Values and Code of Conduct](#). Treasury employees are expected to maintain the same high standards of conduct and behaviour online as would be expected elsewhere. This includes:

- Being apolitical, impartial and professional.
- Behaving with respect and courtesy, and without harassment.
- Dealing appropriately with information, recognising that some information needs to remain confidential.
- Being sensitive to the diversity of the Australian public.
- Taking reasonable steps to avoid conflicts of interest.
- Making proper use of Commonwealth resources.
- Upholding the APS Values and the integrity and good reputation of the APS.

For more information on how the APS Values and Code of Conduct apply to social media, please see APSC's [Circular 2012/1: Revisions to the Commission's guidance on making public comment and participating online](#).

This policy operates in conjunction with the following Treasury policies and frameworks:

- [Information Security Policy](#) (including the [Treasury Information Security Staff Responsibilities](#))
- [Media Contact Policy](#)
- [Personal Accountability Framework](#).

PROTOCOLS FOR OFFICIAL, PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL USE

OFFICIAL USE

Official use is when you are providing information or a response on a social media site as a Treasury official and you have Departmental approval to do so. Approval is not required to view or read social media content. This is no different to reading content on other types of websites.

When participating¹ in social media for official Treasury business purposes, you need to:

1. Have approval

All comment must be approved by your General Manager or a Manager in the Ministerial and Communications Division. General Managers should consult Ministerial and Communications on appropriate responses or frameworks for ongoing approvals.

2. Remain alert to your role as a Treasury representative

When you use social media for Treasury business, you should where possible disclose your position and title, and the fact that you are authorised to communicate an official viewpoint. While you should be receptive to ideas and comments provided online by stakeholders, you should avoid any statement that could be perceived as advocating or criticising Government policies.

Be responsible for ensuring that any references to the Treasury are factually correct and accurate and do not breach privacy, security or other sensitivity requirements. You must ensure that:

- You are aware of and comply with laws and policies for the protection of official information.
- Any information you communicate is factually accurate, clear and expressed in such a way that cannot be misrepresented.
- All communication is professional, courteous and constructive.
- You offer advice or comment only on topics that fall within your area of responsibility and for which you are approved to comment.
- You do not disclose personal information about Treasury staff.
- Online communication is consistent with information and advice being provided through other media and forums.
- You adhere to the [Treasury Information Security Staff Responsibilities](#).
- You adhere to any intellectual property, copyright, and privacy requirements.

Of course, matters that are subject to handling security restrictions (e.g. Protected) cannot be discussed or mentioned online unless the system is specifically designed to manage these matters.

3. Show respect

You should show respect for the individuals and communities with which you interact on Treasury's behalf. You must abide by the [APS Values](#) and [APS Code of Conduct](#) and [Treasury Personal Accountability Framework](#).

4. Inform and keep records

Inform the Ministerial and Communications Division of any significant social media contact and remember to keep a record ([Recordkeeping Policy](#)) of the communication.

¹ Participating in this context means making a comment, providing feedback on a site, creating and posting a video, taking part in an online community.

PROFESSIONAL USE

Professional use is when you are commenting personally but as an experienced person in your particular field. This should be done using a profile that is connected to a personal email address not a Treasury address. An example of professional use is an experienced accountant employed by Treasury, discussing an accounting matter with peers, using social media that does not relate to government or Treasury policy, but nonetheless benefits from their professional experience.

In such cases, it is important for the employee to notify their manager of any comment that they propose to make in their 'professional' capacity that might reasonably reflect on their APS employment. It is important that the employee also make it clear, when making public comment in this role, that they are not representing their agency or the Government.

PERSONAL USE

Personal use is when you are commenting on a matter in neither of the above capacities, for example, discussing your hobbies. This should be done with a profile linked to a personal email address. Do not use a Treasury profile (e.g. a Treasury email address) for personal use.

Personal use is covered by The Treasury [Information Security Policy](#) (including the [Treasury Information Security Staff Responsibilities](#)). Such use is only allowed if all relevant policies, procedures and guidelines are followed.

Reading or viewing social media content is treated the same way as reading or viewing content on other types of websites.

Note that use of all websites, including social media sites, is monitored by IMTD when accessed from Treasury-supplied equipment.

PROFILES

A profile is a way of identifying yourself online – typically a user name or an email address.

If you use social media sites for official and personal/professional reasons, you should, where possible, use separate official and personal/professional profiles. This will make it easier to participate in online social media by differentiating between your identity as a citizen and your identity as a public servant.

If a social media site allows anonymous or pseudonymous participation, you should always participate as if you were identifiable. At all times you must behave 'in a way that upholds the APS Values and the integrity and good reputation of the APS'², including when participating anonymously.

² Section 13(11) of the Public Service Act 1999.

CONTACTS

For advice on communications and authorisation, please contact the Communications Unit, Ministerial and Communications Division.

For advice on personal accountability and code of conduct issues, please contact the People and Organisational Strategy Division.

For advice on IT security please contact the IT Security Team.

For feedback or questions on this policy please contact Tim Dale (x3267).

TERMINOLOGY

Blog—An online journal of opinions or other content that is usually updated regularly. They include corporate blogs, personal blogs or blogs hosted by traditional media publications (e.g. news articles that allow public comment).

Micro blogging (or micro messaging) – Communicating through the use of brief messages often 140 characters or less e.g. *Twitter*.

Podcasting—An audio file posted to a website which can then be played or downloaded.

RSS (Really Simple Syndication)—A way to allows users to receive updated information from websites, blogs or podcasts without having to visit a website repeatedly.

Social networking sites—Provide users with infrastructure and resources to connect and communicate with each other and share and exchange content e.g. *Facebook* and *LinkedIn*.

Wikis—Web-based systems allowing users to collaborate by adding, removing and editing content collectively e.g *Wikipedia*.