

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT

Program All

Question No. 98

Senator Humphries asked the following question at the hearing on 18 October 2011:

Social Media

Has there been any changes to department and agency social media or protocols about staff access and useage of Youtube; online social media, such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter; and access to online discussions forums and blogs since May 2011? Please explain.

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

The Attorney-General's Department and the following Agencies have not made any changes to social media policy since May 2011:

Australian Commission for Law Enforcement Integrity, Australian Crime Commission, Australian Customs and Border Protection Service, Australian Government Solicitor, Australian Law Reform Commission, Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions, High Court of Australia, Insolvency and Trustee Service Australia, Office of Parliamentary Counsel

Australian Federal Police

In August 2011, the AFP introduced a new policy focusing on the use of Social Media. The Policy outlines appropriate use of social networking for official, operational and personal purposes.

In response to the report of the Government 2.0 Taskforce, the Australian Federal Police (AFP) established a Senior Leaders' Working Group for the purpose of developing a Social Networking Policy.

The AFP Policy on the Use of Online Social Networking, together with Frequently Asked Questions and associated amendments to National Guidelines were developed following extensive consultation with AFP functions, Senior Executive and external agencies. The agreed approach reflects broader Government policy direction. The Policy outlines the AFP's position in relation to official, operational and personal use of online social networking platforms.

Copies of the policy have been distributed to both national and international law enforcement agencies and oversight bodies, as well as other government agencies and private departments. The new policy provides guidance and risk awareness to users whilst highlighting the broad integrity expectations placed on all AFP employees.

A copy of the AFP Policy is attached for information.

Australian Human Rights Commission

The Commission changed its policy on staff use of social media in July 2011. It was decided to allow staff access to some social media sites at work. The sites are Facebook, YouTube, Flickr, Twitter, My Space and LinkedIn.

The decision was taken in recognition of the fact that social media is an increasingly important educational and communication tool. The Commission has detailed guidelines on the use of social media which staff must abide by.

CrimTrac

The CrimTrac Agency introduced a Social Networking/Social Media in June 2011. The purpose of the policy is to highlight that:

- a. CrimTrac is supportive of the Government 2.0 initiative to create an enhanced participatory form of government through the use of various technologies including the appropriate use of social networking platforms.
- b. As a nationally recognised leader in the security of personal and sensitive information, CrimTrac is mindful of its reputation and conduct.
- c. CrimTrac's unique position in relation to the holding of personal and sensitive information makes it imperative to remain conscious of the need to avoid any action which may bring the agency into disrepute.
- d. The purpose of the policy is to provide all CrimTrac employees, secondees and contractors with a framework and a set of principles to support them in the appropriate use of social networking platforms.

The policy defines social networking as on-line communities of people who wish to share interests and/or activities, or who are interested in exploring the interests and activities of others. The definition also includes the term „social media“.

The policy highlights numerous social networking sites including YouTube, Facebook, MySpace, Twitter and online discussions forums and blogs.

CrimTrac's policy states that there are restrictions relating to the use of social networking/media, specifically that:

- a. CrimTrac is not yet in a position to take advantage of social networking sites to support its consultation or community related initiatives. In many instances using social networking sites may be inappropriate given CrimTrac's law enforcement related functions.
- b. As a consequence of the above, CrimTrac has determined that the use of social networking sites is a strictly personal activity. This means that social networking is an activity that is:
 - only to be conducted by individuals outside of the workplace;
 - separate from all CrimTrac duties and sponsored events; and
 - without the use of CrimTrac equipment.

Furthermore, the policy states that there is no access to social networking sites using CrimTrac facilities – visa-a-vis – “[T]o protect ourselves and our reputation CrimTrac has blocked access to social networking sites from internet/web filtering gateway”.

The policy provides guidelines for staff who undertake social networking activities as a personal activity, specifically addressing the questions surrounding identifying oneself as a member of CrimTrac and/or making reference to CrimTrac projects, etc.

The policy is available to all staff on CrimTrac’s intranet site.

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AFP policy on online social networking

Online social networking is the personal or professional use of internet-based sites developed for the purpose of people sharing information/data between one another.

Online social networking platforms and technology offer unprecedented avenues for the AFP to enhance its communications with key clients, stakeholders and the community. The AFP will utilise social networking both outside and within the organisation as much as practicable.

In response to the [2010 Report of the Government 2.0 Taskforce](#), the Australian government stated its expectation that all federal departments will fully utilise the internet in their professional interactions with the community. The desired outcome is to cultivate a more consultative, participatory, information-rich and transparent environment.

The AFP recognises the importance and utility of new advances in online technology. The use of online social networking within a corporate function will enhance the AFP's capabilities to deliver on both business and operational outcomes.

While online social networking is to be embraced as a platform that provides opportunities for the organisation, consequences can arise from careless use.

In principle, the AFP supports a philosophy of reasonable private usage of AFP ICT systems for online social networking, provided this does not compromise or detract from the appointee's official duties. The AFP Senior Executive may at any time restrict non-operational access to certain online social networking and other internet sites.

When using online social media platforms, appointees must take responsibility to ensure that their personal opinions and/or views are not at risk of being misconstrued or misinterpreted as AFP policy or otherwise sanctioned by the AFP. While it is recommended appointees do not identify their employment status online, the AFP trusts appointees to act responsibly and be fully cognisant of the personal and professional risks involved in doing so.

All use of social networking by the AFP and its appointees, both on and off duty, must be in keeping with relevant legislation (including privacy laws and laws governing the disclosure of information), organisational policies, governance instruments and practices. Appointee conduct will be assessed against legislation, the AFP's core values, code of conduct, the [Commissioner's Order 2](#) and the AFP professional standards framework.

The [AFP National Guideline on the use of Information and Communications Technology](#) provides further detail on:

- official use of social networking sites
- operational use of AFP ICT systems for social networking
- personal use of AFP ICT systems for social networking

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31 May 2011

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- issues surrounding being identified as an AFP appointee.



T. W. Negus APM
Commissioner

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