

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
BUDGET ESTIMATES 2011-2012

Finance and Deregulation Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of Finance and Deregulation
Outcome/Program: General
Topic: Social Media

Senator: Ryan

Question reference number: F108

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 6 July 2012

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Has there been any changes to department and agency social media or protocols about staff access and usage of Youtube; online social media, such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter; and access to online discussions forums and blogs since publication of the Australian Public Service Commission's Circular 2012/1: Revisions to the Commission's guidance on making public comment and participating online? If yes, please explain and provide copies of any advice that has been issue. If no, please explain why not.

Answer:

Yes. A minor update was required to the Finance Policy guidance to include a link to the Australian Public Service Commission Circular 2012/1.

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
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Finance and Deregulation Portfolio

Department/Agency: Australian Electoral Commission

Outcome/Program:

Topic: Social Media

Senator: Ryan

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Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: Friday, 6 July 2012

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Question:

Has there been any changes to department and agency social media or protocols about staff access and usage of Youtube; online social media, such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter; and access to online discussions forums and blogs since publication of the Australian Public Service Commission's Circular 2012/1: Revisions to the Commission's guidance on making public comment and participating online? If yes, please explain and provide copies of any advice that has been issued. If no, please explain why not.

Answer:

The AEC's social media policy ([Attachment A](#)) outlines the guidance, procedures and protocol for AEC use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter. The policy is available on the AEC's intranet and was published on 26 March 2012.

The AEC commenced Twitter and Facebook accounts on Tuesday 29 May 2012. Staff were given advice on these channels ([Attachment B & C](#)). Specified staff from the Education and Communications Branch have full access to these sites to manage and monitor social media activity. All other staff have view only access to Twitter and Facebook.

Social Media Policy

Version 1 | March 2012

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Introduction

The *AEC Social Media Policy* establishes guidance, procedures and protocol for AEC staff when using social media to undertake agency business.

Social media offers great potential for improving interactions with the public. Government agencies are increasingly using social media channels to inform, engage and communicate with the Australian community and stakeholders.

Use of social media by public servants is governed by the APS Values and Code of Conduct and the APSC Circular 2009/6: Protocols for online media participation (see links below). Public servants are expected to maintain the same high standards of conduct and behaviour online as through other channels. This document is a guide for AEC employees who use social media in an official capacity or via AEC owned equipment or in a personal capacity where they identify themselves as an AEC staff member.

What is social media?

Social media refers to web-based technologies that allow you to easily publish, share and discuss content. This content can be in a variety of formats including text, pictures, audio and video. The tools are usually free and require little or no specific training or technical knowledge to use.

Forms of social media include:

- social networking (e.g. Facebook, MySpace)
- video/photo sharing (e.g. YouTube, Flickr)
- blogs
- microblogging (e.g. Twitter, Tumblr)
- online forums/groups
- wikis (e.g. Wikipedia)
- the AEC's internal communication tools, such as SharePoint
- discussion boards

Why use social media?

In July 2010 the Australian Government published the [Declaration of Open Government](#) which states:

The Australian Government now declares that, in order to promote greater participation in Australia's democracy, it is committed to open government based on a culture of engagement, built on better access to and use of government held information, and sustained by the innovative use of technology.

Citizen collaboration in policy and service delivery design will enhance the processes of government and improve the outcomes sought. Collaboration with citizens is to be enabled and encouraged. Agencies are to reduce barriers to online engagement, undertake social networking, crowd sourcing and online collaboration projects and support online engagement by employees, in accordance with the Australian Public Service Commission Guidelines.

Opportunities presented by social media could include:

- engaging with stakeholders using familiar and widespread technology
- developing a more active relationship with stakeholders and a better understanding of their attitudes on topics to the AEC's programs and initiatives
- increasing the speed and frequency of public engagement
- increasing trust through greater transparency
- improving the delivery and support of services, particularly to rural and remote communities
- facilitating innovation through collaboration with third parties and industry experts
- organisational and individual development through the open exchange of information, perspective and opinion
- promoting and marketing of AEC activities both within the AEC and to the community, and
- leveraging multiple online communities for broad dissemination or related policy/program information and key messages.

National Office Media Unit

The [National Office media unit](#) is responsible for responding to any comments published online about the AEC. Please contact the media unit if you see any relevant online discussions or blog comments that you think the agency should be aware of or should respond to.

Social media business case

All official AEC social media activities must be authorised by the Education and Communications Branch and require a business case, supported by a director or above, showing consideration of the following:

- the aim of the activity
- the appropriateness of the channel for the activity
- the target audience
- a risk assessment, including security and privacy
- a communication strategy
- staff training
- an evaluation strategy.

For further information on developing a social media business case, contact your [communications account manager](#) in Education and Communications Branch.

Official use

While social media is a relatively new communication channel, the principles for using it are really no different to more traditional forms of communication, such as face-to-face, telephone and email. No matter how you communicate with your colleagues and the public, your behaviour should be governed by the APS Values and Code of Conduct. The following points are a guide for employees authorised to use social media in an official capacity for the AEC.

1. **Be helpful and honest.** Social media is a great way to engage with the public and help the AEC achieve its goals. When using social media in a professional capacity, always be helpful, thorough and honest. Make sure the information you provide is accurate and respond professionally to criticism of the AEC.
2. **Be respectful.** As an ambassador for the AEC, it is important to behave with respect and courtesy towards others. Be polite, honest and sensitive to diversity.
3. **Be professional.** When acting in an official capacity online, it is important to disclose that you are an employee of the AEC and ensure that published content complies with all laws and relevant policies. Only comment in relation to the activity for which you have authorisation – of course, it's ok to discuss factual, unclassified and non-controversial material related to the AEC. It is important that care is taken not to disclose unauthorised information. Any disclosure of personal information must be consistent with the Information Privacy Principles (*Privacy Act 1988*, Section 14).
4. **Remember that you are a public servant.** As an employee of the AEC, it is important to remain apolitical and impartial when participating in social media. Always uphold APS values and the integrity and good reputation of the AEC.

5. **Use common sense.** Remember that participation online means your comments are permanently available and open to being republished in other media. It's also important not to divulge personal information – such as your home address – that could put you at risk.
6. **Keep a record.** You should keep records of any social media posts you make in an official capacity.
7. **Risk management.** The approving officer for a social media presence is the risk owner for the project and is responsible to ensure risk controls are effectively implemented and monitored.
8. **Identity and authenticity.** AEC staff should use an authorised AEC identity and not their personal identity (unless under exceptional circumstances e.g. AEC spokesperson). At all times ensure you disclose your role and authority to engage on behalf of AEC.
9. **Respect privacy.** Don't share other people's private details. Don't disclose details from private conversations unless you have obtained consent from the relevant parties.
10. **Consider intellectual property issues.** Respect copyright. Be aware of the terms of use for the site you are posting to and check whether those terms are consistent with the basis on which you are proposing to share or access content. Any use of AEC branding and logos must be approved.

Personal use

1. **It's ok to use social media for personal use.** You don't need permission to use social media in a personal capacity on your own equipment or via your own Internet Service Provider. However, you should consider the impact of your activities on the reputation of the AEC before you make a comment or produce any content on social media. This is particularly the case if you identify yourself as an AEC staff member.
2. **Take care when discussing the AEC.** It's ok to discuss factual, unclassified and non-controversial material relating to the AEC. However, when using social media in a personal capacity, do not commit the AEC or the APS to any action, and don't speak on behalf of the AEC or the APS. Do not comment on any matters if you are not authorised to. If you see any discussions relating to the AEC online that you think the agency should be aware of and respond to, please contact the [National Office media unit](#).
3. **The AEC has important requirements that must be adhered to.** Remember that your actions online must not conflict with the AEC's political impartiality requirement.
4. **Remember the rules when using the internet at work.** If you are accessing social media at work, you must ensure your online use is not excessive, inappropriate and does not interfere with your work. Your participation in social media activities must comply with the AEC's *Policy on using the Internet*.

5. **Use common sense.** Remember that participation online means your comments are permanently available and open to being republished in other media.

Related policies

The AEC Social Media Policy is underpinned by the following documents:

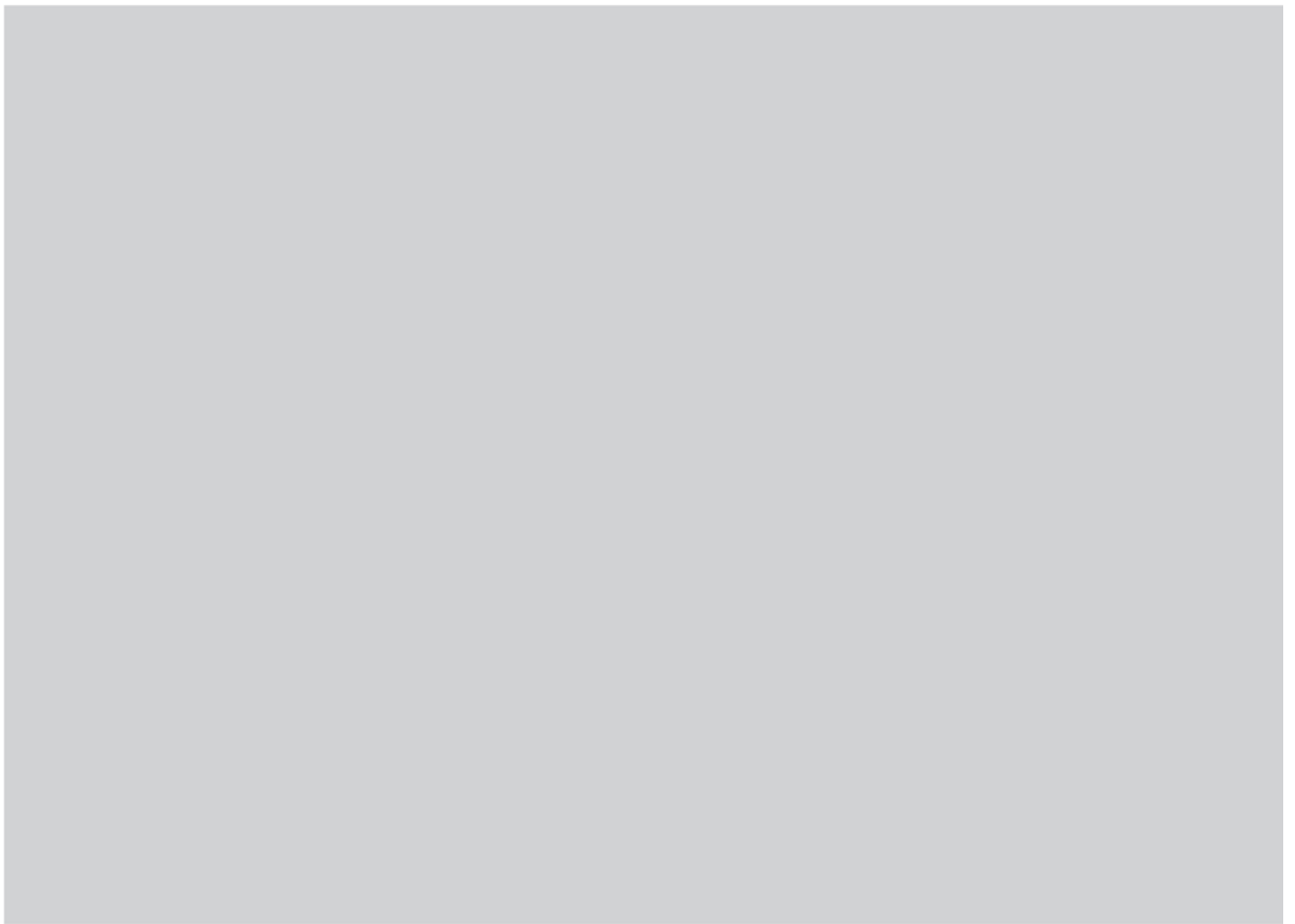
- [APS Code of Conduct](http://www.apsc.gov.au/conduct/)
http://www.apsc.gov.au/conduct/
- [APS Values](http://www.apsc.gov.au/values/)
http://www.apsc.gov.au/values/
- [AEC Political Neutrality policy](http://intranet/hr/policy/political-neutrality.html)
http://intranet/hr/policy/political-neutrality.html
- [APSC Circular 2012/1: Revisions to the Commission's guidance on making public comment and participating online](http://www.apsc.gov.au/circulars/circular096.htm)
http://www.apsc.gov.au/circulars/circular096.htm
- [AEC National Business Plan 2011-2012](http://dnet.hosts.network/services/governance)
http://dnet.hosts.network/services/governance
- [AEC IT Security policy](http://manuals/security/policy/IT_Security_Policy.htm)
http://manuals/security/policy/IT_Security_Policy.htm
- [Overview of IT security](http://intranet/office-services/security/it-security.html)
http://intranet/office-services/security/it-security.html
- [Recordkeeping in the AEC](http://intranet/office-services/recordkeeping/index.html)
http://intranet/office-services/recordkeeping/index.html
- [AEC Risk Management policy](http://intranet/about/files/risk-mngmnt-policy.pdf)
http://intranet/about/files/risk-mngmnt-policy.pdf
- [Declaration of Open Government](http://agimo.govspace.gov.au/2010/07/16/declaration-of-open-government/)
http://agimo.govspace.gov.au/2010/07/16/declaration-of-open-government/

Who should I contact for further information?

If you require assistance in interpreting any part of this policy or are interested in investigating the use of social media in your business area, please contact Phil Diak, Director Media.

Twitter procedures

@AusElectoralCom



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@AusElectoralCom

The AEC's corporate Twitter account is managed by the National Media Unit.

AEC Twitter policy

The AEC's Twitter policy outlines what the public can expect from the AEC's Twitter account during an election and non-election period. This document will be updated by the National Media Unit as is necessary and is linked to from the @AusElectoralCom Twitter profile.

Email address

twitter@aec.gov.au is the contact point for @AusElectoralCom. This includes monitoring tweets sent directly to the account, receiving staff requests for tweets and any other administration tasks.

Records management

The National Media Unit records all Twitter activity on @AusElectoralCom daily. Screenshots are taken at the end of each day and saved into monthly files.

Design

The Twitter profile is designed to conform to AEC branding. Profile design can vary depending on business needs.

Promotion

A Twitter logo is displayed on the AEC's homepage and AEC media releases. It will be incorporated into AEC promotional material as appropriate.

Following

The @AusElectoralCom Twitter account follows other accounts where there is clear relevance to the AEC and the Australian electoral sector.

Issues management

The National Media Unit maintains an issues register to record issues and resolutions. Any major issues are escalated to the Assistant Commissioner, Education and Communications Branch.

Monitoring effectiveness

The Media Unit will be investigating the option of monitoring how many people view the @AusElectoralCom Twitter account. This will potentially be done by using applications such as hoot suite. **More information to come.**

Non-election period

Tweeting

It is the responsibility of the Media Unit to control the tweets posted by the AEC. The AEC Twitter policy on www.aec.gov.au outlines that the AEC will post approximately 10 tweets per week.

At the beginning of each week the Media Unit proposes tweets to the Assistant Commissioner, Education and Communications Branch. This content is derived from Media releases or Campaign messaging.

Media releases

In conjunction with all media releases, the Media Unit drafts a tweet with a link to the media release published on the AEC website. Following approval from the Director of Election and External Communication, Media Unit staff post the tweet.

Campaign messaging

The Media Unit proposes tweets according to AEC events of interest to the public.

In addition, communication account managers can propose individual tweets or a series of timed tweets to be posted on the @AusElectoralCom Twitter account. To propose tweets, communications account managers need to complete a Twitter request form and forward it to the twitter@aec.gov.au.

Public enquiries

An enquiry tweet sent directly to the @AusElectoralCom Twitter account is seen by the Public Enquiries Officer through the twitter@aec.gov.au inbox.

Depending on the nature of the enquiry, the Public Enquiries Officer will ignore inappropriate enquiries following consultation with the Media Unit; forward a direct reply based on Twitter reply scripts to the Media Unit for publishing; or forward the enquiry to the relevant business area for information/action.

Election period

Election-time Twitter Officer

It is anticipated that the @AusElectoralCom Twitter account will have a higher volume of incoming and outgoing tweets during an election period. In anticipation of higher volumes, the Media Unit will appoint an Election-time Twitter Officer (ETO).

Availability

During an election period the @AusElectoralCom twitter account will be monitored, predominantly by the ETO, for extended hours. The extended availability will be at the discretion of the Director of Election and External Communication.

At the start of an election period, the Media Unit will arrange the Web Team to post extended availability hours on the AEC's Twitter policy.

Pro-active messaging

The ETO will publish a set of timed tweets throughout an election period. Tweets during this period have the potential to eliminate enquiries, capturing a range of audiences by combining interesting electoral facts with important messaging and links.

Pro-active tweets are developed by the Media Unit before the election.

Public enquiries

The AEC will not respond to individual enquiries during an election period and this is outlined in the AEC's Twitter policy.

Responding to trending topics/emerging issues

If a particular public enquiry is trending on the @AusElectoralCom Twitter account (e.g. I'm in Holder, ACT where can I vote tomorrow?) The ETO will seek approval from the Director of Election and External Communication to tweet a generic response (e.g. to find out where you can vote tomorrow, visit www.aec.gov.au/voting).

The ETO will consult regularly with the AEC Wizard Cell, Web Team and Media Unit on emerging issues so that all communication channels are aware of trending enquiries.

Social media policy

The AEC's [social media policy](#) outlines the guidance, procedures and protocol for AEC use of social media for both organisational and personal purposes.

Twitter

The AEC's Twitter account is @AusElectoralCom.

The [National Office Media Unit](#) manages the AEC Twitter account.

What is Twitter?

Twitter is a 'microblogging' platform which allows users to post short text messages (up to 140 characters in length) and converse with other users via mobile phones or web browsers. Unlike email or text messaging, these conversations take place in public.

Government agencies are increasingly using social media networking channels such as Twitter, as they provide unique characteristics to inform, engage and communicate with the Australian community and stakeholders.

How the AEC Twitter account will work in practice

The use of the AEC Twitter account is governed by the AEC [social media policy](#).

The [Twitter policy](#) on the AEC website clearly sets out what people can expect by following the AEC Twitter account.

The Twitter account is managed by the National Office Media Unit in the Education and Communications Branch, under the direct oversight of the Director, Election and External Communication.

A [procedural guide](#) covers the ongoing operation of the AEC Twitter account and its key aspects are detailed below:

- The AEC's Public Enquiries Officer monitors tweets sent directly to @AusElectoralCom
- The National Office Media Unit manages @AusElectoralCom
- The National Office Media Unit creates and posts all tweets, following director approval
- The National Office Media Unit records all daily Twitter activity
- The National Office Media Unit maintains an issues register for @AusElectoralCom
- The National Office Media Unit provides a dedicated election-time Twitter officer during an election period

How the AEC Twitter account will work with areas in the AEC

If business areas want to engage via Twitter, they need to discuss options with their communication account manager. Following consultation with your communication account manager, a [Twitter request form](#) needs to be completed and sent to twitter@aec.gov.au. Business areas may be contacted to provide information to respond to a public enquiry tweeted directly to @AusElectoralCom.

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
BUDGET ESTIMATES 2012-2013

Finance and Deregulation Portfolio

Department/Agency: Comsuper
Outcome/Program:
Topic: Social media

Senator: Ryan

Question reference number: F108

Type of question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: Friday, 6 July 2012

Number of pages: 2

Question:

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 publication of the Australian Public Service Commission's Circular 2012/1: Revisions to the Commission's guidance on making public comment and participating online? If yes, please explain and provide copies of any advice that has been issue. If no, please explain why not.

Answer:

Yes, ComSuper has undertaken a number of initiatives since Circular 2012/1 was released.

ComSuper communicated to staff regarding their rights and responsibilities (see Attachment A). ComSuper is currently updating existing policies and procedures to include social media protocols (where relevant), referencing the APSC's guidelines and drafting a "Making public comment" policy.

In addition, social media risks have been included in new staff induction and in compulsory all staff annual awareness training as part of the broader APS Code of Conduct and Conflict of interest subjects.

There has been no change to ComSuper staff's access to social media websites as these remain blocked since 2011.

To all staff

Purpose

To inform you that the Australian Public Service Commission has issued a guidance on 'making public comment and participating online'. It is important that you take the time to read the circular located at <http://www.apsc.gov.au/circulars/circular121.htm> as it explains what is expected of you as a public servant, and relates to the APS Values and Code of Conduct.

Details

- The arrangements specified in the circular are now in effect. Specifically, guidance has been provided on what each of us need to consider when making public comments, both in our professional and private capacity. It will also inform ComSuper's policy on social media.
- Social media is becoming part of our daily lives with many people using Facebook and other online tools. So it is important to understand what is appropriate when you provide public comments in an official capacity at events or forums and also in a private capacity, including online.
- Last year, all APS agencies were given the opportunity to provide feedback on successive drafts of this guidance, and ComSuper participated in this process. Our input was sourced from a variety of staff in the communications, governance, finance, legal and business areas. Thank you to those involved.

Next steps

- ComSuper is in the process of updating our draft social media policy to reflect the contents of the amended circular. This will be reviewed at the next Executive Committee on 7 February 2012.
- Once the policy is finalised it will be shared with all staff and become part of our annual awareness program and materials for new staff.

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
BUDGET ESTIMATES 2012-2013

Finance and Deregulation Portfolio

Department/Agency: Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation
Outcome/Program:
Topic: Social media

Senator: Ryan

Question reference number: F108

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Answer:

No. Not necessary.

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
BUDGET ESTIMATES 2012-2013

Finance and Deregulation Portfolio

Department/Agency: Future Fund Management Agency

Outcome/Program:

Topic: Social media

Senator: Ryan

Question reference number: F108

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Answer:

No. The Agency has been reviewing its policies and this has resulted in draft changes but these have not yet been finalised or communicated to staff.