

# SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE WORKPLACE



With a growing number of Landcare groups employing social media to connect with the community, the importance of having a workplace policy on social media use is vital.

Social media consists of websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. It can be a powerful tool for promoting your Landcare group and attracting new members. Users should always make themselves aware of the relevant codes of conduct, privacy settings and other key suitability aspects of any social media or digital platform before deciding on its use.

Philip Brewin, Specialist in Workplace Relations, Nevett Ford Lawyers (2013) recommends, if a social media use policy is to maintain reputation and manage risk, it should ensure that:

- It is publicised to employees in the way that other policies are.
- Use of social media in the workplace is banned except for those employees who are specifically authorised to use it.
- Employees' social media account pages are scrutinised for content
- Employees do not link their content on social media with their employer except where LinkedIn might be used as a genuine marketing tool.

For example: employees should avoid the use of pictures that have them in work uniforms or the listing of work email addresses, for social media that are meant for private or personal use.

- The use of social media by employees to harass, bully or vilify other employees is as contrary to anti-discrimination and workplace health and safety law and practice as "in person" instances.

- Employees do not use social media for activities that may give rise to a conflict of interest between the employees' personal activities and the employer's professional activities. For example, employees should not use social media to set themselves up in competition with their employer's business or undertaking.

- Employees do not use social media to disclose information that their employers see as confidential and not in the public domain.

- It is clear that failure to adhere to the policy will result in investigation, and possible disciplinary action including, in appropriate circumstances, dismissal.

**NOTE:** A social media use policy is not intended to muzzle employees, but to ensure they respect the parameters of free speech without abusing it.

Employers have always had the right to discipline or dismiss employees because of their extra-curricular activities. It is implied in the employment agreement that an employee always has an obligation to act in the employer's best interests.

*See Social Media Policy, LNSW Template 004.*

