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## SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

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*The purpose of this guideline is to raise awareness among all staff members about their private use of social media.*

### **Echuca College Staff Use of Digital Technology Philosophy**

The rapid growth of social media including social media platforms and communication technologies such as Twitter, YouTube, email and Facebook, or texting/SMS technology, combined with their ease of use; make them attractive channels of communication. However, the availability and ease of use of these technologies present a risk of unintended consequences or miscommunication. A staff member's private use of social media can create confusion about one's role as a staff member versus one's role as a private individual. Social media has the potential to raise questions about professional conduct and the professional boundaries between the staff member and students.

Echuca College adopts these guidelines to help staff identify and avoid potential issues. Adoption of these guidelines should in no way be construed as an attempt to limit the inherent personal communication rights of staff members in their private lives. Rather, these guidelines are intended to help staff understand, from a wide range of perspectives, the implications of participation in social media and where it may potentially become of concern to the school as an employer. Social media has the potential to influence employment prospects now and in the future.

### **Responsible Use and Best Practices Generally**

Staff members should recognise before they post information to any social media site or platform that there is realistically no such thing as a 'private' social media site and that online postings can be permanent even if they are 'deleted'. The user should always check and recheck privacy settings to protect their identity and any confidences. Search engines can turn up posts and pictures years after the publication date, and even 'private' comments can be forwarded or copied. Archival systems save information even after posts are deleted.

When using social media, staff members are encouraged to ask themselves whether

- the content of the message would be acceptable for face-to-face conversation, over the telephone, or in another more personal medium. If not, it is likely inappropriate for use in social media.
- you would want to see the message/image published in another public medium, such as a newspaper or billboard, at any time in the future.
- their 'privacy settings' are set as securely as possible on social media sites.

These points are intended as constructive suggestions for responsible use and to maintain personal confidences. That stated, however, the school recognizes that it is up to each individual staff member as to how they utilize social media in their personal lives and how much they share via social media.

The DEECD Acceptable Use Policy spells out in detail the expectations and legal obligations of all employees.

<http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/govrel/Policy/2011acceptable-use-policy-ICT.pdf>

### **Echuca College Expectations**

In addition to encouraging staff members to consider the recommendations above, Echuca College establishes the following specific expectations regarding the use by staff members of social media in reference to their employment with the school:

- When a staff member utilizes social media, he or she shall not post confidential or personal information about the parents, its students (present and past), or colleagues.
- Use of digital images of students or school operations outside school authorization is prohibited. This can include images generated from the school environment or school events.
- It is also recommended that staff members avoid the use of other school images on personal social media sites.
- Echuca College staff will not 'friend' a student at the school unless there is a pre-existing relationship independent of the staff member's professional role (i.e. parent, family member, etc).
- Staff members will carefully consider the personal information/images that they share on social media sites in order to maintain a positive professional standing in the school and wider community.
- An individual may express concern to the principal regarding information presented on social media sites that reflect negatively on the school or a staff member. The principal will provide support and follow up as each individual case merits.

