

IMPLEMENTATION TOOL

Managing Social Media Records

INTRODUCTION

This guide to managing social media records is for government employees who manage social media accounts as part of their work. It will help you to meet your compliance obligations.

WHY DO I NEED TO DO THIS?

Social media tools are often used to have informal conversations, but legislative requirements still apply.

If you are using social media for government business purposes then the information you issue, share or receive via social media is official government information.

STEP 1: IDENTIFY SOCIAL MEDIA RECORDS

A social media record is a record of business activity that is freely available online. Social media records may be tweets or posts, such as your Facebook page or YouTube channel and other social networking tools, blogs, photo and video sharing and wikis.

If your tweets or posts were used by someone, such as a member of the public, or a user of your service, to make an important decision or take an action, then you may need to show exactly what information was posted at a specific point in time and any interactions or transactions in relation this. Something which seems minor can be critical evidence at a later period of time.

Some social media channels are used by government to communicate and engage on issues that would be regarded as critical and/or high risk - they impact vulnerable communities, or are about very high profile projects or they are seeking community feedback on significant issues.

To understand the value and risk of your social media records ask yourself - what is the risk and impact for all stakeholders if the information isn't accessible or available?

STEP 2: WORK OUT WHAT YOU NEED TO MANAGE AND FOR HOW LONG

Social media records need to be kept for a period of time based on their purpose and value as evidence of business activities. This is commonly referred to as their 'retention period' and is documented in Disposal Schedules authorised by the State Archivist.

There is no requirement to keep information about absolutely everything you tweet and every update on your organisation's Facebook page. Most social media records have short retention periods, and you won't need to do anything extra to manage them.

Sometimes, social media records may be required for Right to Information requests, or for formal inquiries such as royal commissions. They may also be required by your organisation or clients as evidence of past decisions or transactions. These will have longer retention periods, and require more intensive management.

A small amount of social media records are considered to have high value to the Tasmanian community, and these will need to be kept permanently as State archives.

For example:

- Records relating to promotional, marketing or explanatory information about the organisation, its services and activities need to be retained for only 2 years. The same retention period applies to media releases relating to non-significant or non-controversial issues. (*Disposal Schedule for Common Administrative Functions (DA2157)*)
- Official social media accounts of Ministers are required as State archives because they are considered to be media releases or statements issued by the Minister. (*Disposal Schedule for Functional Records of Ministers of the Crown (DA2339)*)
- Communications on Twitter and Facebook during a bushfire may need to be kept for a very long-time (25 years) or even permanently if the severity or scale of the incident is major and the social media posts are part of the incident management response. (*Disposal Schedule for Functional Records of Parks & Cultural Heritage (DA2487)*)

To find out how long you need to manage your social media records, contact your information and records management team or visit the OSA website.

STEP 3: WORK OUT HOW AND WHERE YOU WILL MANAGE LONGER TERM RECORDS

To manage longer term records you need:

1. A capture process:

- One way to capture records is to download your Twitter archive, Facebook feed or YouTube archive periodically, for example, annually, monthly, or weekly, depending on volume.
- Consider capturing screenshots saved as PDF if it is important to keep a record of how your social media site looked at a particular point in time or if you need to capture a record of a specific comment in the context that it appeared.
- There are also commercial software tools available. (See reference to NSW State Archives and Records in More Information.)

2. A storage approach:

- Most organisations have a digital recordkeeping system where you store longer term records. Your information and records management team can help with this.
- For any social media records you identify as having permanent value, you need to make sure you store them in a digital format that can be preserved as State archives.
- Don't assume backups or storage on network drives is sufficient, they don't properly preserve the context or allow easy access.

A basic rule of thumb to apply is: If you need to keep it for any length of time, capture and store it. If you won't need to access it in a year or two, leave it where it is.

WHAT STANDARDS MUST BE MET?

Your approach to managing social records will need to be based on:

- Your organisation's information and records management policy and procedures
- *Tasmanian Government Information Management Framework*
- State Service Code of Conduct
- Personal Information Protection and Privacy legislation
- Other relevant state and federal legislation.

To ensure you meet your organisational requirements and the relevant standards, we recommend you discuss your management approach with your nearest experts, your information and records management team.

Case Study 1

Libraries Tasmania, part of the Department of Education, has a Facebook Page managed by their Marketing and Communications team. Most of the posts are short-term records promoting Library network programs and activities. These can be managed in place, they don't need to be captured and stored elsewhere. If an interaction with a client occurs that might need to be kept for longer, the team captures a screenshot and saves it as a record.

Case Study 2

TasWater has purchased a tool called Brolly that monitors all of their social media accounts, including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. This tool captures the original post and any interactions on the post as records, (and accompanying metadata such as permalinks, date and time stamps) in real-time. Their Records Management team exports a copy each month and places it in a Social Media Folder in their corporate recordkeeping system for the Communications team to access when needed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This fact sheet is based on the following, now withdrawn Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office Publications:

- *Guideline No 18: Managing Social Media Records*
- *Advice 57 Parts 1-4: Managing Social Media Records*

MORE INFORMATION

NSW State Archives & Records (2014, updated 2016) [Strategies for managing social media records](#), NSW State Archives & Records website, accessed 3 August 2020.

Office of the State Archivist (OSA) (n.d.) [Disposal Schedules](#), OSA website, accessed 3 August 2020.

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Managing Social Media Records is part of the *Tasmanian Government Information Management Framework*. It supports the *Information and Records Management Standard*. This is a living document and we will make minor changes as needed. If you notice anything that needs updating, please let us know.



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Document Development History

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