



## **ANZCVS Social Media Policy**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to Chapters about the use of social media. The advice is intended to be a guideline and is not mandatory unless otherwise stated. However, when using social media, Chapters should keep in mind the College's values of professionalism, excellence, ethics, fairness, transparency, evidence-based and collegiality.

Council has a very low tolerance for actions, behaviours, products or perceptions from members, volunteers, staff, Chapters and Council that would impugn the reputation, members and the College.

### **Background**

#### **What is social media?**

Social media are web-based platforms that allow people to connect, communicate and interact online in real time to share and exchange information. Social media includes Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Blogs, YouTube, and Discussion Forums amongst others. Social media can offer many professional and educational opportunities. These can include increased and enhanced communication with members, colleagues and the public, networking, discussion, professional development, and promoting the benefits of membership or fellowship.

#### **Why use social media in the context of College activities?**

There are a number of strategic result areas that the use of social media could be used for or to enhance which include:

- Promoting the diversity of our Chapters to the greater profession and general public for advancing veterinary science, collegiality and professional development
- Marketing of College key points of difference
- National and International Branding
- Increasing support for membership (member value)
- Improving and streamlining communication between the College and Chapter members

Social media also provides a useful tool for communication within Chapters.

#### **Considerations for using social media**

The following are a list of considerations that Council suggests Chapters take into account when considering using social media:

- who is your audience
- what are you hoping to achieve
- do Chapter members have the skills, time and resources to engage in social media

- which platform is best suited to what you want to achieve – it is better to use one platform well, than to use a number inconsistently

## Risks

It is important to be aware of the downside of using social media. Potential risks include:

- breaching confidentiality
- legal liability and contravention of defamation law
- causing distress to colleagues
- impacting on the public's trust and confidence in the profession
- damaging the College's reputation

Veterinarians must be aware of the implications of their actions and maintain professional standards; whether their online activity is able to be viewed by the public, or is limited to a specific group of people.

## Managing your Chapter's social media presence

**Be consistent** – to avoid conflicting information, media or unsanctioned material – it is suggested that only 1 or 2 people within the Chapter manage social media.

**Timeliness** – posts should be done quickly and responses should generally also be replied to swiftly, rather than delaying or not posting at all. Aim for a short approval process.

**Chapter social media policy** – Chapters may wish to develop their own additional policies – which could list the people responsible, the approval process, a calendar of intended posts and post subjects.

**Reputational risk** – be conscious of how your online content may affect the reputation of the College and its members. Information posted should not be contrary to any College policies.

**Professionalism and respect** – it is unacceptable to post informal or incorrect information or derogatory comments about other veterinarians, members, Council or the College. Personal comments that in any way could be defamatory **must not be posted under any circumstances**. It is no defence that you thought the comment was true or accurate. Any defamatory comments posted by a third party **must be deleted immediately**.

**Endorsement of products or services** – Chapters must not endorse the products or services of a sponsorship company through social media posts. (Chapters may advertise that a company is sponsoring their Science Week program or another event where the sponsorship has been approved).

**Avoid negative outcomes from posts** – avoid making posts that may result in controversial outcomes. Posts should reflect the integrity and professional requirements of the veterinary profession and the College values.

**Maintaining privacy of members** – Chapters must maintain the privacy of members so must not identify the personal details of members without their permission.

**Expression of opinions** – posts must take into account the Council policy of the expression of opinions. Chapters must not make public statements on behalf of the College or Chapters unless a number of criteria are met (see the **Expression of Opinions Policy**).

**Permanence** – remember that any information posted may end up in the public domain and remain there permanently.

**Loss of control** – once information is posted you lose control of what happens to it subsequently.

**Dealing with negative posts** – don't delete negative posts. Attempt to take the issue off line and deal with as you would with any other complaint. It may be appropriate to make a post once the negative comment has been resolved, recording the positive outcome.

### **Conclusion**

Council is very supportive of Chapters using social media platforms since it potentially can promote the College and information transfer between members. The policy provides suggested guidelines and identifies potential pitfalls.

Council requests that Chapters remain cognisant of the College's values and reputation when engaging in social media communications.

If there is any doubt, or clarification is required, Chapters should contact the Executive Officer or Council President.