

NATIONAL SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT POLICY



November 2021

1. Application

The *National Social Media Engagement Policy* (**Policy**) applies to an Australian Football league that is conducted or administered by:

- (a) a State or Territory league or body that is affiliated with the AFL, including:
 - a. In this instance – AFL Ireland
- (b) an entity or body that is affiliated with (or licensed by) an Affiliated Body or Club.aaà

(Football Body)

Australian Football: players; coaches; officials; spectators; and administrators and all people reasonably connected to the Football Body (**Members**) must comply with the Policy.

2 Introduction

The Football Body acknowledges that Social Media has increasing prevalence in both the professional and private lives of its Members. The Football Body recognises the value in using Social Media to build more meaningful relationships with members, supporters, communities and other relevant stakeholders. Social Media offers the opportunity for people to gather in online communities of shared interest and create, share or consume content in ways that can be beneficial for Australian Football.

3 Purpose & Scope

This *National Social Media Engagement Policy* (**Social Media Policy**) sets out the Football Body's expectations of its Members when engaging with Social Media. Recognising that commonly-held perceptions of "social media" are likely to change from time to time, "Social Media" for the purpose of this Social Media Policy is specifically not limited to certain digital platforms.

However, the Football Body considers each of the following platforms/internet programs/digital interfaces as **Social Media** for the purpose of this Policy:

- a) External and internal social networking sites (eg Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Linked In, TikTok and Snapchat);
- b) Video and photo sharing websites (eg Flickr, YouTube);
- c) Micro-blogging sites (eg Twitter);
- d) Weblogs, including corporate blogs, personal blogs or blogs hosted by traditional media publications (eg. 'comments' or 'your say' feature on the journal.ie etc);

- e) Forums and discussion boards (eg Reddit, Yahoo! Groups or Google Groups);
- f) Online encyclopaedias (eg Wikipedia);
- g) Instant messaging (including WhatsApp, Viber & SMS);
- h) Vod and Podcasting; and
- i) Any other website that allows individual users or companies to use simple publishing tools.

(Social Media)

3 Non-Official Social Media Engagement Risks

The Football Body recognises that Members will from time to time engage with Social Media in a non-official, personal capacity. This Policy does not intend to discourage nor unduly limit personal expression or online activities. However, Members should recognise the risk and damage that may be caused (either directly or indirectly) to the Football Body in certain circumstances.

Some of the risks Members take by engaging in non-official Social Media include, but are not limited to:

- a) Unintentional Social Media content publication to a private audience;
- b) Unintentional Social Media content publication by a 3rd party to a private audience;
- c) Unintentional Social Media content publication to a public audience;
- d) Unintentional Social Media content publication by a 3rd party to a public audience; and
- e) Social Media “hacking”;

It is the expectation of the Football Body that all Members who engage in non-official Social Media are aware of the risks associated with Social Media.

4. Non-Official Social Media Engagement Consequences

It is the expectation of the Football Body that Members understand that the risks of engaging in non-official Social Media listed above, as well as others, may result in the publication of content which, without limitation:

- a) Breaches employment obligations;
- b) Breaches the *National Vilification & Discrimination Policy*;
- c) Damages the brand and reputation of the Football Body, as the case may be;
- d) Misrepresents a personal view as that of AFL Ireland or the Football Body; and

- e) Is criminal in nature or might otherwise give rise to the breach of a civil law.

Members are advised that engaging in Social Media may result in disciplinary action.

5. Official Social Media Engagement by AFL Ireland & Affiliated Bodies

To ensure a consistent and controlled approach, only a select number of representatives of the Football Body are authorised to speak to the media in an official capacity. This also applies to representing the Football Body on Social Media. Before engaging in Social Media as a representative of the Football Body, you must be formally authorised to comment. You may not comment as a representative of AFL Ireland unless you are authorised to do so by the AFL Ireland President or the Executive Committee of AFL Ireland..

Once authorised to comment as a representative of the Football Body, you must:

- a) Liaise with the relevant Committee/Club member to ensure you are adequately prepared;
- b) Disclose you are an employee/contractor of the Football Body, as the case may be, and use only your own identity, or an approved official account;
- c) Disclose and comment only on information classified as public domain information;
- d) Ensure that all content published is accurate and not misleading and complies with all relevant policies and agreed positions;
- e) Comment only on your area of expertise and authority (unless otherwise approved by AFL Ireland)
- f) Ensure comments are respectful of the community in which you are interacting online;
- g) Respect copyright laws and fair use of copyrighted material and attribute work to the original author/source wherever possible;
- h) Adhere to the Terms of Use of the relevant Social Media platform/website, as well as copyright, privacy, defamation, contempt of court, discrimination, harassment and other applicable laws; and
- i) Redirect any questions to the AFL Ireland Executive Committee if you are unsure of the AFL Ireland response/view.

6. Conditions of Official AFL Ireland Social Media Engagement

If you are authorised to comment as a representative of the Football Body you must not publish, or otherwise permit the publication by a 3rd party of, content which, without limitation:

- a) Breaches committee/volunteer obligations;

- b) Damages, or is likely to damage, the brand and reputation of AFL Ireland or the Football Body, as the case may be;
- c) Misrepresents a personal view as that of the Football Body, as the case may be; and
- d) Is criminal in nature or might otherwise give rise to the breach of a civil law.

7. Inappropriate Social Media Engagement

For illustrative purposes, the Football Body is likely to consider the following engagement in Social Media as inappropriate:

- a) Using discriminatory, defamatory, abusive or otherwise objectionable language in content;
- b) Accessing, downloading or transmitting any kind of sexually explicit material, violent and/or graphic images (without medical purpose);
- c) Accessing, downloading or transmitting information on the use and construction of weapons, explosives and/or other tools of violence or terrorism;
- d) Accessing, downloading or transmitting any material deemed to be illegal under Irish law;
- e) Accessing, downloading or transmitting hate speeches and/or racist material;
- f) Breaching the reasonable expectation of privacy of a person;
- g) Attempting to gain unauthorised access to the computing resources of AFL Ireland, Affiliated Bodies or Clubs.
- h) Engagement or interaction in any way with any page/website/feed falsely representing themselves as an affiliated AFL/AFLW page, or any other official AFL Governing Body.

8. Complaints, Investigation & Discipline

If a Member holds a good faith belief that content has been published on Social Media in contravention of this Policy, or which is otherwise inappropriate or unlawful and relates to the Football Body, the Member may make a complaint about the content.¹¹

The President(or General Manager or nominee) of the Football Body may order an investigation into the content. If a Member is reasonably believed to have breached this policy, the matter may be referred to a Disciplinary Hearing.^A

If the AFL Ireland President (or nominee) deems the Social Media activity of any Member to be inappropriate, he or she may take whatever action he considers to be reasonably necessary in the circumstances.