Australian Government
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Conflict of Interest Policy

March 2025



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Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
GPO Box 858 Canberra ACT 2601
Telephone 1800 900 090

Web agriculture.gov.au

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the continuous connection of First Nations Traditional Owners and Custodians to the lands, seas and waters of Australia. We recognise their care for and cultivation of Country. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and recognise their knowledge and contribution to the productivity, innovation and sustainability of Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

Title	Conflict of Interest Policy
Date of Issue	7 March 2025
Issued by	First Assistant Secretary, People, Property and Security Division, Tim Simpson

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Purpose

Overview

1. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (the department) is committed to maintaining the highest standards of integrity and transparency. The Conflict of Interest Policy (the policy) provides a framework for identifying, reporting, managing, and mitigating conflicts of interest (conflicts), ensuring that all departmental activities are conducted impartially and, in the public's best interest.
2. The policy establishes a process for disclosing and addressing any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts, including reporting and managing situations that may compromise impartiality. It ensures the department meets its legislative obligations and supports the department's Statement of Strategic Intent.

Objectives

3. The objectives of this policy are to:
    a. define conflicts of interest, including the different types of conflicts that may arise and provide practical examples and questions to assist in identifying conflicts,
    b. cover conflicts of interests arising in the context of previous employment, outside employment and post-separation employment,
    c. establish clear procedures for reporting, managing, and mitigating conflicts,
    d. outline personnel and manager responsibilities in relation to conflicts, and
    e. uphold public trust by ensuring that conflicts are managed transparently and effectively.

Application

4. This policy applies to:
    a. any person currently or previously employed by the department, including full-time, part-time, ongoing, and non-ongoing employees, and Senior Executive Service (SES) employees, and
    b. any contractor engaged by the department (together referred to as 'personnel' in this Policy).

Policy statement

5. Public trust and confidence in the Australian Public Service (APS) is essential for effective governance. Even perceived conflicts can undermine this trust. The APS Code of Conduct (the Code) requires personnel to take reasonable steps to avoid any conflict, real, potential or perceived, in connection with their employment.
6. Conflicts of interest are a normal part of working for the APS and can usually be effectively managed by assessing and implementing appropriate mitigation strategies.
7. Personnel performing work for, or on behalf of, the department must:
    a. declare all actual, potential, or perceived conflicts, and
    b. comply with management strategies to mitigate risks associated with conflicts.

8. Agency heads and SES employees are subject to additional reporting requirements, including providing an annual written declaration of their own and their immediate family's financial and other material personal interests.

9. For personnel engaged in accordance with the *Public Service Act 1999* (PS Act), this policy constitutes a formal direction in accordance with section 13(5) of the PS Act. As a result, failure to comply with this policy may constitute a breach of the Code.

Definitions of Conflict of Interest

General definition

10. A conflict of interest exists when a public official or other person has a personal interest, or another duty that could affect or be affected by, how the public official or person performs their official functions or duties.

11. Conflicts can include:

    a. An **actual (real) conflict of interest** exists where personnel have a personal interest or competing duty that could affect the way they perform their official functions or duties.

    b. A **potential** conflict of interest where the conflict could exist.

    c. A **perceived (apparent) conflict of interest** exists where a reasonable person might think that personnel have a personal interest, relationship or competing duty that could affect the way they perform their official duties or functions, even though there is no actual conflict of interest.

12. In addition to the general definition, conflicts of interest specific to the department may include:

    a. **Personal or financial interests in agricultural, fisheries, or forestry industries** that may influence regulatory, policy, or program decisions.

    b. **Relationships with contractors or suppliers** who have business dealings with the department.

    c. **Ownership of land** that could be impacted by departmental policies, programs, or decisions.

    d. **Board and advisory roles**, including for profit/not for profit organisations and body corporate positions.

    e. For further guidance and examples, refer to Appendix A: Definitions, Appendix B: Decision Tree, and Appendix C: Practical Application – Case Studies which outlines scenarios specific to the department's operations.

13. Although there is no exhaustive list of interests that require disclosure, a useful test is to consider whether a reasonable person would question whether your private interests might:

    a. influence your behaviour, decisions, and actions at work, and/or

    b. affect how you perform your duties.

14. Additionally, conflicts of interest may arise at various times, or when performing various functions, including:

    a. **Personal:** Involving private relationships or financial interests.

    b. **Activity-based:** Related to specific duties such as recruitment, procurement, or grant processes.

    c. **Departmental:** Concerning the broader functions or responsibilities of the department.

15. Personnel must exercise sound judgment and thoroughly assess whether any personal interest may create a conflict with their role, their activities, or the department's functions.

Identification and disclosure

Obligation to declare

16. All personnel must declare any interests that could be an actual, potential, or perceived conflict in accordance with:

    a. APS Code of Conduct as set out in section 13 of the *Public Service Act 1999*) (Cth)

    b. the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (Cth), and

    c. the Protective Security Policy Framework (PSPF).

s 47E(c); s 47E(d)

s 47E(c); s 47E(d)

s 47E(c); s 47E(d)

Declaration form

30. All personnel must declare conflicts of interest in The Shed.

31. Personnel should consult with their supervisor or contact the Security, Integrity and Assurance Branch via The Shed to address any concerns regarding the assessment of conflicts or the declaration process.

Confidentiality

32. The department will take all reasonable measures to treat information relating to Conflict of Interest declarations confidentially. The department will adopt a 'need to know' approach regarding any conflicts of interest declared.

Management of conflicts

s 47E(c); s 47E(d)

s 47E(c); s 47E(d)

s 47E(c); s 47E(d)

s 47E(c); s 47E(d)

s 47E(c); s 47E(d)

s 47E(c); s 47E(d)

s 47E(c); s 47E(d)

Record keeping

51. The department handles the personal information it collects in accordance with the *Privacy Act 1988*, and the Australian Privacy Principles. Further information can be found on the department's Privacy Policy intranet page.

Related material

Legislation

- the *Public Service Act 1999* (Cth)
- the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (Cth)*
- the Protective Security Policy Framework (PSPF)
- *the Crimes Act 1914 (Cth)*
- *the Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth)*
- *the Public Service Regulations 2023*
- *the Australian Border Force Act 2015 (Cth)*

Internal Policies

- Integrity Framework [insert link when available]
- Social Media Policy
- Gifts and Benefits Policy
- Procurement Policy
- Recruitment Policy
- Secondary Employment and Voluntary Work Policy

Resources

- Conflict of Interest declaration form
- Conflicts of Interest (Australian Public Service Commission)
- The APS Values and Code of Conduct in Practice (Australian Public Service Commission)
- The Commonwealth Procurement Rules (Department of Finance)

Contact

Personnel can contact the Security, Integrity and Assurance branch via The Shed or phone 1800 998 880.

Version control

Version Number	Date of Issue	Author/s	Brief description of change	Next review date
1.0	7 March 2025	Security, Integrity and Assurance	New Policy	March 2027
1.1	17 June 2025	Security, Integrity and Assurance	Definition update and minor edits	March 2027

Appendix A: Definitions

s 47E(c); s 47E(d)

Appendix B: Practical application – Decision tree

s 47E(c); s 47E(d)

Appendix C: Practical application – Case studies

s 47E(c); s 47E(d)

s 47E(c); s 47E(d)

s 47E(c); s 47E(d)

Appendix D: Conflict of Interest assessment matrix

s 47E(c); s 47E(d)

s 47E(c); s 47E(d)

Appendix E: Conflict of Interest due diligence questions

s 47E(c); s 47E(d)

Australian Government
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry



LinkedIn Guidance

LinkedIn is used by individuals and organisations to establish a professional online presence, make connections and promote their work.

The department has a LinkedIn **channel** where we share the work of the department, policy and program messages, and employment opportunities.

DAFF staff are able to establish personal accounts but are under no obligation to do so. We accept that departmental staff may wish to promote their work on LinkedIn.

This can be a valuable way of promoting our department and building stakeholder engagement.

As APS employees, we have obligations for how we conduct ourselves online. It is important that you understand the guidelines around personal and professional use of all social media platforms including LinkedIn—and seek advice where you have questions or concerns.

Posting to LinkedIn

When establishing your presence on LinkedIn and posting or engaging, consider the following:

As a departmental employee, you must comply with the department's **social media policy** and the **APS Code of Conduct**.

Your profile, posts or any engagements **should not infer that you are posting on behalf of the department,** or are an 'official spokesperson' for the department. If unsure contact the Social Media team.

You should **only share department posts** or reference already public information (e.g. a media release or a department webpage), rather than writing about the same topic in your own words.

Posts **should not include confidential or official material** such as department news before it's announced, or any information not in the public domain. Information posted or shared by you, **should not be false or misleading.**

Follow copyright laws.

Anything you post online **can be found easily and quickly by search engines**, and may be taken out of context.

Even if you are posting or sharing content anonymously, **you should assume that your identity and connection to the department** will eventually become known.

You should **actively monitor and moderate your account** to ensure that no potentially defamatory or otherwise offensive comments or replies are being made on your posts. Refer to the Social Media Guidelines for advice on identifying defamatory or otherwise offensive content.

If you think the department should post, share or reply to something, talk to the **Social Media team** in the Communication and Media Branch.

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Risks and issues to be aware of

Most LinkedIn users establish accounts using their full name (as opposed to some other platforms where users often choose an abbreviated name or a pseudonym).

Be aware that when you establish an online presence using your full name, there can be a number of risks. These include being more open to cyber security threats (such as being approached by people working on behalf of foreign governments), and increased interest from third parties including media.

Comments by your friends or acquaintances on your posts may be understood under defamation law as being published by you and you may also be perceived to have endorsed these views, particularly if you 'like', respond or otherwise react to these comments or replies.

There are a number of things you can do when using LinkedIn and other social media platforms to protect yourself and the department. These are mostly just common sense, but to help you in your judgement ask yourself the questions below.

- When considering whether to accept a person's connection request:
  - Do I know this person? If so, how do I know them?
  - If you don't know them, is their organisation one that is relevant to your work, and does it appear to be credible (check their webpage).
- When considering privacy settings and who can view your profile:
  - Do I want my information publicly available?
  - Do I want search engines to be able to find my profile?
- When considering whether to post or share content online:
  - Is this information already publicly available?
  - Is this information that has already been shared by the department's social media accounts? If so, make use of 'sharing' the department's posts.
  - Is this information that I would be comfortable telling my supervisor that I had posted online?
  - Consider your personal safety and that of others – don't share your physical location or that of high-profile officials or visitors, in real-time.
  - Does the post name or identify individuals? Could it harm the reputation of the individual?
  - Is the post controversial in nature or raise issues that people are likely to comment negatively on?
  - Could this information potentially harm the reputation of the department, the APS or the Government?
- When sharing photos and images:
  - Be careful about inadvertently showing confidential or sensitive information on your computer screen, a whiteboard, your bookshelf etc.
  - It's best not to share images of the internal layouts of our offices and other workplaces.
- When managing third party comments and replies on your personal LinkedIn account:
  - Consider disabling comments on high-risk posts prior to, or after publication.
  - Where comments have been left open, it is open to a LinkedIn user to delete comments after they have been published.
  - Users can block users who repeatedly make potentially defamatory or otherwise offensive comments on posts. Blocked users will not be able to see or comment on your posts.

More information

Find out more about the intersection between work and your social media use here:

- **Social media guidelines**
- **Social media tips sheet**
- Read the **APSC's guidance around social media**

There is information and tips about managing cyber security risks on the **Cyber.gov.au** and **Think Before You Link pages**.

If you have further questions around LinkedIn or use of social media, contact the social media team at:

- s 47E(c); s 47E(d)

Australian Government
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Media engagement: instructions for staff

Communication and Media Branch

September 2022



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Introduction

These are mandatory instructions for staff who are dealing with the media.

For the purposes of these instructions, 'media' includes newspapers, magazines and other publications, radio and television organisations as well as online publishers (websites, podcasts, social media platforms).

You must engage with the media in accordance with the:

- APS values, employment principles and Code of Conduct
- DAFF Media tips, Social media policies and guidelines

APS values and code of conduct in practice is a downloadable guide to official conduct for APS employees and agency heads. It outlines the requirements set out in regulation 2.1 of the *Public Service Regulations 1999* concerning the disclosure of information and provides advice for employees making public comment, including online.

Staff responsibilities

You must:

- refer all media inquiries to the media and social media team (media team)
  - direct calls to 02 6272 3232
  - forward emails to media@agriculture.gov.au
- report all contact with the media to your senior executive service (SES) officer and to the media and social media team
- not provide information directly to any journalist, media outlet or publication.

Responding to on-the-spot inquiries

Unless you are the authorised official spokesperson, if you are 'put on the spot' by a journalist you should:

- politely decline to comment
- refer the journalist to the media team
- advise the media and social media team of the contact with the journalist as soon as possible.

Tip

Journalists should always identify themselves and the outlet they work for. If they don't, ask.

Requests for policy advice or commentary

If the question asks for policy advice or commentary, you must direct the journalist to the media team for a response. No matter the question, you must advise the media team of the contact with the journalist as soon as possible.

Official media spokespeople

Only official spokespeople are authorised to provide media comment on behalf of the department.

The media team must authorise all official spokespeople and seek the agreement of the relevant SES officer.

Interviews

Most interviews we grant are handled by subject matter experts at SES level. Executive level and other APS officers may act as official media spokespeople in certain cases.

The process for interviews that require an official spokesperson is:

1) Media team identifies that an issue requires a departmental spokesperson
2) Media team identifies an appropriate spokesperson
3) Media team authorises an official spokesperson in consultation with the relevant SES officer
4) Spokesperson prepares for interview, supported by the media team
5) Media team arranges a transcript of the interview, if required, and coordinates follow-up actions.

Unofficial comment

Any staff member who speaks to the media in a capacity that does not represent the department is considered to be making unofficial comment.

You do not require authorisation to make unofficial comment to the media. However, you should:

- contact the media team prior to media engagement if possible
- contact the media team as soon as possible after making media comment in all other cases.

Being aware of comments that staff have made enables us to anticipate references to the department that may arise in the media.

Types of unofficial comment

Professional

This refers to staff members providing comments or interviews relating to their area of expertise but independent of their work at the department.

For example, a staff member qualified as an entomologist, might be interviewed on scientific work conducted in their field. While the staff member may be employed as an entomologist, the interview is unrelated to their role. In such situations the media team can support the staff member on how to make this distinction clear with the media representative.

Private

This refers to comment made in a private capacity refers that is unrelated to a staff member's profession or role at the department. For example, a staff member might be interviewed as a member of a sporting team or as a musician.

Always bear in mind that you must adhere to the APS Values and Code of Conduct, and that your employment with the department can become known (even if not mentioned in a media article).

Any comments you make should not call into question your ability to be apolitical, impartial and professional at work.

Tip

If you make any media comment, regardless of the context or content, you should keep the media team informed.

Developing media material

The process for developing media material is:

1) Media team, line area or Minister's office identifies that media material is required (e.g. media inquiry response, media release, speech or talking points).
2) Line area or Minister's office refers request to the media team.
3) If required, media team requests content or background material from the line area.
4) Media team drafts media material.
5) Media team provides draft media material to relevant line area SES officer for approval.
6) Once material is approved by relevant SES officer, media team:
   a) seeks Secretary approval for departmental media material, or
   b) sends ministerial media material to Minister's media advisers.
7) Media team issues departmental material that has been approved by the Secretary.

Roles and responsibilities

Table 1 outlines staff roles and responsibilities in relation to this document.

Table 1 Media contact roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Departmental officers	• Provide expert advice to support the development of media responses, media releases and talking points as needed.
Media team	• Serve as the single point of contact for all media issues, including – inquiries – interview requests – requests between the department and ministerial offices. • Coordinate and draft all media materials, including media inquiry responses, media releases, ministerial and event speeches, and talking points. • Authorise and provide necessary support to any officer who acts as an official spokesperson. • Approve the style, tone and voice of all media materials, including media responses, media releases, speeches and talking points. • Approach media with stories. • Manage media monitoring services, including subscriptions.

Role	Responsibilities
Senior executive service (SES)	• Provide expert advice to support the development of media responses, media releases and talking points. • Approve the content of media responses, media releases and talking points. • Provide responses to media inquiries as official departmental spokespeople, where authorised by the media team.

Non-compliance

Employees should be mindful of their obligations under the APS Code of Conduct when making public comment.

Any employee who fails to adhere to the *Media engagement: instructions for staff* when providing information or comment to the media about departmental business may be referred to the Integrity team, People, Property and Security Branch, for appropriate action.

Glossary

Term	Definition
Line area	The team or branch that holds policy or program responsibility and/or subject matter expertise on a particular issue.
Media	Any public communication forum for which a journalist or third party seeks information.
Official spokesperson	A staff member who is authorised to speak to the media on behalf of the department about a given issue.
Unofficial media comment	Unofficial media comment falls into 2 categories: • professional media comment – refers to staff members providing comments or interviews relating to their area of expertise but independent of their work at the department • private media comment – refers to any media comment that is unrelated to a staff member's profession or role at the department.

Version history

Version	Date	Amendment details
1.0	8/12/2015	This version was approved by Executive Management Committee at its meeting on 13 October 2015.
1.1	2/9/2021	Reviewed by media team, circulated for clearance
1.2	30/9/2022	Approved for publishing by Assistant Secretary, Communication and Media Branch

Australian Government
Department of Agriculture and Water Resources

DEPARTMENTAL POLICY

Media management

Purpose of this document

This document provides a high-level outline of the approach the Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (the department) takes to media liaison and managing media issues. All media activity conducted by the department aims to enhance public confidence in, and recognition of, the department; as well as enhancing the department's reputation as a trusted and reliable source of information and advice.

This document should be read in conjunction with the following departmental material, which is also in the Instructional Material Library.

- Guideline: *Media guidelines for staff*
- Guideline: *Use of social media*
- Reference: *Spokesperson framework*

In this document

This document contains the following topics.

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Policy statement

The department must provide public information, where appropriate, about the work we do. Engaging with the media is an important part of fulfilling this responsibility.

The department must participate in public conversations, where appropriate, about our business, to ensure public information is factual, balanced and reflects an understanding of the work, goals and achievements of the department.

In both cases, public confidence in the department and our reputation as a trusted and reliable source of information and advice revolves around our ability to influence public conversation about our work.

When to engage the media

It is particularly important that the department engage with the media on issues where media coverage has a potentially significant effect on public perception of the department.

Key factors that guide the department's decision to engage with the media include:

- the purpose of departmental involvement (for example, to correct the record, protect our reputation, meet our responsibility to the public, or generate public awareness and involvement)
- the credibility of an outlet, platform or individual with the audience they serve
- the size of that audience
- the relationship of the audience to the agriculture portfolio (for example, if the audience represents key stakeholders for the department).

When not to engage the media

Some issues that are outside the scope of the department's media engagement include non-portfolio issues and political commentary.

Objective of this policy

To build public confidence in the department and its reputation through effective media management.

Note: Without strong public confidence and a reputation of good standing, the department's ability to perform its functions is substantially diminished.

The department's commitment

The department is committed to implementing its *Media management* policy through the effective use and management of the following products.

Standard media responses

The following table outlines the department's standard media responses.

Media response	Details
Written response	The vast majority of media enquiries are responded to in writing. Written responses are attributed to a 'departmental spokesperson'.
Off-the-record conversations with journalists to provide background information	Where possible, clear information is provided to ensure that irrelevant or misinformed stories about portfolio business are not published or broadcast.
Interviews with an official spokesperson	Where interviews are recommended, the media team identifies an official spokesperson who could talk credibly on the issue, after considering the audience needs and the nature and scale of the issue.
Outlets are approached to correct errors in stories	Where media outlets publish or broadcast stories that contain errors relating to the department, the media team approaches outlets to correct the errors.

Standard media products

The following table outlines the department's standard media products.

Media product	Rationale
Media releases	The department develops media releases for distribution to a comprehensive list of key media outlets and stakeholders on: • policy initiatives • service delivery developments • market access announcements • successful prosecutions • good news stories • key milestones for the portfolio. Departmental media releases are published to the media centre on the department's website. Ministerial media releases are published on the minister's or assistant minister's website. Media releases will also be tweeted on the department's twitter account.
Talking points	The department develops talking points to anticipate or respond to any portfolio issue that may attract significant media attention.

Media product	Rationale
Media statements and 'on the record' statements	Media statements are intended to allow senior departmental officials to provide information or elaborate on issues receiving media attention—for example, the chief veterinary officer has made statements on Ebola and avian influenza. 'On the record' statements can also provide information to correct the public record on controversial portfolio issues attracting media attention. Media statements are published in the media centre on the department's website; and 'on the record' statements are published to the *on the record* section of the media centre on the department's website. These statements are not distributed; journalists are directed to statements as required.
Tweets	The department tweets good news stories and updates that support key messages. Tweets are used where content is not sufficient to warrant a media release. Tweets are also used to promote and direct people to media releases and other relevant information (e.g. statements, web content etc.)
Ministerial event speeches	The media team drafts speeches for ministerial events that promote the key messages of the department.

Proactive media

Standard media responses and products are largely reactive, which means that media outlets dictate the day-to-day media messaging for the department.

Standard media responses and products only offer the opportunity for general messaging on an infrequent basis to a broad audience. For example, a biosecurity media release distributed to all media outlets will deliver key messages to the Australian public, rather than specific messages to different groups of stakeholders that may be affected.

To address this issue, the department also undertakes proactive media on a case-by-case basis where media interest and resourcing allow, by pitching key stories and messages to select outlets that target specific audiences. This includes outlets that are not considered traditional news sources, for example *Gardening Australia*, ABC's *Catalyst* and relevant blogs.

Proactive media provides the department with an opportunity to set an active agenda for messaging and deliver more frequent messages to targeted audiences.

Related material

The following related material is in the Instructional Material Library.

- Guideline: *Media guidelines for staff*
- Guideline: *Use of social media*
- Reference: *Spokesperson framework*

Document information

The following table contains administrative metadata.

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Version	Date	Amendment details
1.0	08/12/2015	Version approved by Executive Management Committee.

Australian Government
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Media tips



We participate in conversations about our work through the media, where appropriate, to ensure public information is factual, balanced and reflects an understanding of the department's work, goals and achievements.

As APS employees, it is important we all understand the guidelines when dealing with media.

These guidelines are in place for 2 reasons:

- **to protect our reputation**—that is, to ensure material shared in the media is factual, aligned to the department's narrative, and authorised for publication.
- **to protect our staff**—we want to help ensure you don't inadvertently release inappropriate material as outlined above, or become subject to unwanted attention from the media or members of the public.

Remember



You must refer all media inquiries to the media team



Direct calls to 02 6272 3232 (this will divert to a mobile number out of hours) and forward emails to **media@agriculture.gov.au**



Do not provide information directly to any journalist, media outlet or publication



Always assume any information given to a journalist is 'on the record'



If put on the spot by a journalist it is fine to say 'no comment' and refer them to the media team



If a question asks for policy advice or commentary, direct the journalist to the media team



You must advise the media team of the contact with the journalist ASAP, regardless of the question or your response



Engaging with the media in a personal capacity about matters not related to our work is ok (for example, you could be interviewed about your volunteer role in a community organisation)



However, always bear in mind the need to adhere to the **APS Values** and **Code of Conduct**, and that your employment with the department can become known (even if not mentioned in a media article)



Any comments you make should not call into question your ability to be apolitical, impartial and professional at work



The media team is the central point of contact for media inquiries, media releases, talking points, speech notes and handling strategies



If in doubt, contact the media team – they're always happy to assist



Also refer to the Media engagement: instructions for staff and social media guideline documents at **Communication and media services**

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Australian Government
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Personal use of social media policy

Purpose

This policy provides guidance to all employees of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (the department) around the use of social media in an unofficial capacity, including when making public comments online.

Application

This policy applies to all employees. The policy does not apply to independent contractors and consultants, however independent contractors and consultants have similar obligations consistent with their contract of engagement.

Policy and legal framework

This policy should be read in conjunction with the:

- *Public Service Act 1999* (Public Service Act)
- Australian Public Service Code of Conduct
- Australian Public Service Values
- Australian Public Service Employment Principles
- Social media: Guidance for Australian Public Service Employees and Agencies (APSC Guidance)
- ICT Acceptable Use Policy
- PSPF Direction 003-2025 - Online Disclosure of Security Clearance and National Security Information

Principles

Employees are required at all times to behave consistently with:

- the Code of Conduct (the Code) in section 13 of the Public Service Act, and
- the APS Values and Employment Principles.

These obligations extend to employees making public comment in an unofficial capacity.

When engaging in public comment, these requirements include:

- treating people with respect and courtesy, and without harassment.
- dealing appropriately with information, including keeping department information confidential.
- delivering services fairly, effectively, impartially and courteously to the Australian public.
- being sensitive to the diversity of the Australian public.
- taking reasonable steps to avoid conflicts of interest.
- proper use of Australian Government resources.
- upholding the APS Values, Employment Principles and the integrity of the APS.

- not acting in a way that would call into question the employee's ability to be apolitical, impartial and professional in the performance of their duties.

Guidance on making public comments

APS employees must not make public comment that is inconsistent with the requirements outlined in the 'Principles' section of this document, in particular, the requirement to always act consistently with the APS Values of remaining impartial, apolitical, professional and objective.

Information posted or sent online can remain online indefinitely, may be reproduced without any limitations, and may be disseminated beyond the original intended audience who may view it out of context.

The nature of digital footprints can make it easy to identify pseudonyms or anonymous posts. If an employee chooses to post anonymously or with a pseudonym, they should assume that their identity may become apparent and may be linked back to them as an employee and/or the department and consider this in deciding whether a public comment is consistent with the obligations under the Code of Conduct.

Risk factors

The following risk factors should be considered when making public comment in an unofficial capacity:

- Connection between a topic and the employee's work – posting about the department, the government of the day or opposition, political matters or policy issues may be viewed as inherently riskier than other topics.
- Seniority – generally, the more senior an employee, the greater the risk of online behaviour affecting public confidence.
- Expression – the risk to public confidence is greater the more extreme the behaviour and expression including the tone and language used.
- Endorsement – engagement with online content through actions such as 'liking' material could be perceived as endorsement of the content in a similar way as posting the content.

These risk factors have been considered in developing the following guidance around making public comment in a personal capacity.

High risk factors

Subject matter experts

Where an employee makes a public comment as a subject matter expert in fields that relate to their employment with the department, gives rise to a higher risk that their comment will be taken to represent the view of the department or APS.

The department recommends refraining from public comment in these situations. If an employee wishes to make public comment in these situations, the employee should discuss this with their supervisor and seek guidance from the Integrity team.

Employees must not make comments, online or otherwise, that are or could be perceived to be:

- bullying or harassment towards fellow employees and/or managers, clients and other stakeholders.

- made on behalf of the department or the government, rather than an expression of a personal view.
- compromising the employee's capacity to fulfil their duties in an unbiased manner (this applies particularly where comment is made about departmental policies and programs).
- so harsh or extreme in its criticism of the government, a member of parliament from another political party, or their respective policies, that it raises questions about the employee's capacity to work professionally, efficiently or impartially (such commentary does not have to relate to the employee's area of work).
- so strong in its criticism of the department's administration that it could seriously disrupt the workplace; employees are encouraged instead to resolve concerns by informal discussion with their manager or by way of the department's dispute resolution process, including Public Interest Disclosures, if appropriate.
- a personal attack that might reasonably be perceived to relate to their employment.
- criticism of employees and/or managers, clients and other stakeholders that could be perceived as offensive or derogatory.
- compromising public confidence in the agency or the APS.

Before posting online, employees should consider:

- Could this post offend or upset another employee or a member of the public?
- Would it be okay to send the comment in an email to a supervisor or a member of the SES?
- Is the post shared 'in the heat of the moment'?

If the answer is 'yes' to any of these questions, then serious consideration should be given to proceeding with the post. If undecided, then discussing it with a colleague or supervisor may assist in determining whether to post or not.

Statement that posts are done in a private capacity

It is best practice for employees, particularly senior employees, to include a statement on their social media platforms indicating that all posts are shared in a private capacity, i.e. unofficially. However, the presence of this statement may not be sufficient to protect an employee from a finding that they have breached the Code of Conduct if the public comment could or does cause harm to public confidence in the department or APS.

Making official comment

Employees acting in their official capacity may need to provide comment to the media and others in the community about the activities of the department, to explain the operation of a policy or program, or as a media spokesperson of the department. Refer to the department's social media policy for guidance.

Use of social media during work time

The department's ICT Acceptable Use Policy recognises that limited personal use of ICT resources can form part of the normal course of day-to-day events. Generally, 'limited personal use' means it is acceptable to check social media for personal use during an employee's personal time such as during lunch.

Unless authorised by the employee's manager, it is not acceptable to keep social media pages for private use logged on and open through working hours. The use of social media during work time should not be excessive to the point where it has an adverse impact on work output.

Online disclosure of national security information

Under the Protective Security Policy Framework, you must not disclose or allude to your security clearance or access to security classified material on any online platform. Carefully consider the information you share online, such as job titles and/or role descriptions (e.g – LinkedIn profiles), as you may inadvertently suggest access to classified material.

To reduce risk, use generic descriptions and avoid references that imply involvement in sensitive work. If you're unsure, please submit a security request via The Shed.

Managing inappropriate public comment or use of social media

Where inappropriate online behaviour has been alleged and/or identified, it should be referred to the department's Integrity team for appropriate action in accordance with the department's Integrity Policy.

The department's Integrity Branch is able to assist employees and managers regarding online conduct-related matters by contacting integrity@aff.gov.au or 1800 998 880.

Further information

The APSC Ethics Advisory Service can assist employees and managers who wish to discuss and seek advice on the ethical issues that occur from inappropriate public comment by contacting ethics@apsc.gov.au or 02 6202 3737.

Version history

The following table details the published date and amendment details for this document.

Version	Date	Amendment details
1	11/12/2024	This policy document was created in collaboration with the Communication & Media, Legal division, and Integrity team.
2	28/10/2025	This version contains an update to the policy, outlining PSPF advice pertaining to the online disclosure of national security information.

Australian Government
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Secondary Employment and Voluntary Work Policy

March 2025



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Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
GPO Box 858 Canberra ACT 2601
Telephone 1800 900 090

Web agriculture.gov.au

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the continuous connection of First Nations Traditional Owners and Custodians to the lands, seas and waters of Australia. We recognise their care for and cultivation of Country. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and recognise their knowledge and contribution to the productivity, innovation and sustainability of Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

Title	Secondary Employment and Voluntary Work Policy
Date of Issue	7 March 2025
Issued by	First Assistant Secretary, People, Property and Security Division, Tim Simpson

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Purpose

Overview

1. The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (the department) is committed to maintaining the highest standards of integrity and transparency. The Secondary Employment and Voluntary Work Policy (the policy) outlines the application process and reporting obligations for employees seeking to engage in secondary employment or voluntary work while employed by the department.
2. The policy establishes a process for applying for and considering applications for secondary employment or voluntary work, including reporting and managing situations that may compromise an employee's impartiality. The policy supports the department's Statement of Strategic Intent.

Objectives

3. The objectives of the policy are to:
    a. define what constitutes secondary employment and voluntary work,
    b. outline the process for employees seeking to engage in secondary employment or voluntary work outside of their official duties,
    c. outline delegate obligations in relation to considering applications for secondary employment or voluntary work, including ongoing management, and
    d. preserve public confidence in the department's integrity and impartiality by setting clear standards for secondary employment and voluntary work.

Application

4. The policy applies to any person employed by the department whether located in Australia or overseas, including full-time, part-time, ongoing, non-ongoing employees, and SES employees.
5. The policy does not apply to contractors or consultants. However, contractors and consultants must still ensure they manage conflicts of interest in accordance with the department's Conflict of Interest Policy.

Policy statement

6. Public trust and confidence in the Australian Public Service (APS) is essential for effective governance. To maintain this trust, all departmental employees seeking to engage in secondary employment or voluntary work must ensure these activities are approved by the department, and take reasonable steps to avoid any actual, perceived or potential conflict of interest.
7. Employees must:
    a. Seek approval before engaging in any secondary employment or voluntary work and obtain re-approval if there are changes to the nature or scope of these activities.
    b. Comply with management strategies to mitigate any identified risks or conflicts of interest associated with secondary employment or voluntary work.
    c. Comply with directives contained in this policy to ensure the integrity of the department is not adversely impacted by secondary employment or voluntary work activities.
8. For personnel engaged in accordance with the Public Service Act 1999 (PS Act), this policy constitutes a formal direction in accordance with section 13(5) of the PS Act. As a result, failure to comply with this policy may constitute a breach of the Code.

Definitions of secondary employment and voluntary work

Secondary employment

9. **Secondary employment** refers to any paid work that employees engage in outside of their primary role with the department. This can include part-time jobs, consultancy work, freelance assignments, or any other form of employment where financial compensation is received.

10. All secondary employment must be declared. Secondary employment can be defined as either low/medium risk or high risk. While high risk secondary employment is not prohibited, it requires careful consideration and management.

    a. **Low/Medium risk**: Examples include working at a cafe on weekends, selling handicrafts online, or holding a role as an Uber driver.

    b. **High risk**: There are certain industries that have the potential to compromise the security, integrity and reputation of the department. Examples include employment with organisations that are reputed to have criminal affiliations or are known to be frequented by individuals suspected of engaging in criminal activity. Secondary employment within the agriculture, fishery or forestry industries are also considered high risk.

11. Further examples of low/medium risk and high risk secondary employment are outlined at **Appendix B**.

Voluntary work

12. **Voluntary work** refers to any unpaid activities undertaken by employees outside of their official duties, typically in service of a charitable, non-profit, community, or social organisation. While voluntary work is not financially compensated, it is still subject to the same standards of conduct and conflict of interest considerations as paid employment. Examples of voluntary work are outlined in Appendix B.

Non-reportable activities

13. **Non-reportable activities** refer to activities which are part of normal social interactions or arise from societal roles. Examples include but are not limited to helping a friend move house, or canteen duty for a child's sport team, provided these are not performed in work time and do not interfere with a person's primary role. Examples of non-reportable voluntary work are outlined in Appendix B.

Identification and disclosure

Seeking approval

14. All employees must seek approval to undertake secondary employment or voluntary work in accordance with this Policy.

15. The delegate for approving an application for secondary employment or voluntary work is an employee's Executive Level 2 (EL2) manager. Where the person making the declaration is an EL2 or above, the approval delegate is the employee's immediate supervisor.

Application process

Initial application

16. Before applying for secondary employment or voluntary work, employees should discuss their intentions with their delegate to identify any potential conflicts or concerns. Applicants must consider applying for secondary employment or voluntary work approval prior to registering a business, applying for a position or committing to a role.

17. Before engaging in any new secondary employment or voluntary work, employees must first seek approval form the department using the Secondary Employment and Voluntary Work application form in The Shed and submit to their manager for consideration.

18. The employee's manager must assess any potential conflicts of interest, in accordance with the department's Conflict of Interest Policy and discuss any concerns with the employee.

19. If no conflicts of interest, and no adverse impacts to the employee or department are identified, the application will progress to the delegate for consideration.

20. Generally, where a conflict of interest, or potential adverse impact to the employee or department is identified, an application for secondary employment or voluntary work will not be approved.

21. However, in some cases it may be appropriate to implement mitigation strategies in approving an application. Mitigation strategies include but are not limited to:

    a. **Increased supervision**: If the secondary employment or voluntary work involves a related industry or potential overlap, the delegate may increase oversight to ensure there is no impact on the individual's primary duties.

    b. **Restricted access**: In cases where the secondary employment or voluntary work is in a related field, employees may be restricted from accessing sensitive or confidential information relevant to that field to avoid conflicts of interest.

    c. **Task reassignment**: The person's duties may be adjusted to prevent any overlap or influence from the secondary employment on their primary role.

    d. **Limitations on employment**: The delegate may impose time limitations (e.g., hours of secondary employment) to ensure that the secondary employment or voluntary work does not affect the person's performance or availability.

    e. **Relinquishment of conflicting work**: In cases of high-risk conflicts, the person may be asked to relinquish the secondary employment or voluntary work if it cannot be mitigated adequately through other strategies.

22. New starters who are already undertaking secondary employment or voluntary work must submit an application in The Shed within **14 days** of their commencement with the department, regardless of any prior declaration made during the recruitment process.

23. If it is determined the secondary employment or voluntary work must cease, employees, in consultation with their delegate, will agree on a reasonable period to terminate the arrangements.

Change of circumstances

24. If the conditions or circumstances of approved secondary employment or voluntary work change (e.g. changes in duties or the secondary employer establishes a business relationship with the department), employees must notify their delegate prior to the change of circumstances, where possible, and submit a new application through The Shed.

25. If a change in circumstance raises concerns related to work health and safety, performance, or conflicts of interest, the department may withdraw approval of the arrangement.

26. If an employee moves to a different position or gains a new supervisor in the department, they must notify their new supervisor of any existing secondary employment or voluntary work. In some circumstances, particularly where the new role may conflict with the secondary employment of voluntary work, the employee must submit a new application.

Application Form

27. All employees must apply to undertake secondary employment or voluntary work through The Shed.

28. Employees should consult with their manager or contact the Security, Integrity and Assurance (SIA) Branch via The Shed to discuss any concerns regarding secondary employment, voluntary work or the declaration process.

29. It is important that employees do not seek to self-manage conflicts in relation to secondary employment and voluntary work; guidance from the SIA Branch or a delegate is essential to ensure appropriate management.

Confidentiality

30. The department will take all reasonable measures to manage information relating to applications for secondary work or voluntary employment confidentially. The department adopts a 'need to know' approach regarding an employee's information, subject to any action the department may need to take to ensure the safety of the person affected, other employees or mandatory reporting requirements.

Management of secondary employment and voluntary work

s 47E(c); s 47E(d)

s 47E(c); s 47E(d)

s 47E(c); s 47E(d)

Secondary employment or voluntary work while on approved leave

39. Annual leave or long service leave is available to employees to enable a reasonable break from their official duties. If employees wish to undertake secondary employment or voluntary work while on leave, they must discuss this with and seek approval from their delegate. Approval for secondary employment or voluntary work may be given at the delegate's discretion during:

    a. recreation leave,

    b. long service leave,

    c. purchased leave,

    d. parental leave (except during the mandatory absence), and

    e. miscellaneous leave without pay.

Restrictions

40. An employee must not undertake secondary employment or voluntary work while on personal/carers leave. This leave is provided specifically for employees to use when they are suffering from an illness or injury which restricts their ability to perform their duties; or where there is a requirement for them to provide care and support for a member of their immediate family or household who is ill or injured.

41. An employee must not undertake work in any capacity for another APS or Commonwealth agency covered by the *Maternity Leave (Commonwealth Employees) Act 1975* during a period of mandatory absence as provided for by the Act.

42. An employee must not undertake secondary employment or voluntary work where they are on a Strengthening Performance program, a Performance Improvement Plan, a Graduated Return to Work Program or where they are suspended from duty without prior permission from a delegate.

43. Where an employee has approved secondary employment or voluntary work in these circumstances, the delegate may pause or revoke the agreement by writing to the employee and advising them of the reasons for the agreement being paused or revoked.

Responsibilities

Employees

44. Employees must comply with this policy regarding their secondary employment or voluntary work agreement.

45. Employees responsibilities include:

    a. being aware of their obligation to apply for secondary employment or voluntary work and to avoid, declare and manage any conflicts (where possible),

    b. ensuring the number of hours likely to be undertaken in secondary employment or voluntary work is accurate and any updates are resubmitted prior to changes taking affect,

    c. assessing if secondary employment or voluntary work does or might conflict with their official duties,

    d. disclosing any actual, potential or perceived conflicts, and

    e. complying with management plans/mitigations to manage conflicts which can't be avoided.

46. All employees have an obligation to report suspected undeclared secondary employment or voluntary work. Reports must be made to the SIA Branch. All reports will be treated confidentially.

Senior Executive Service Employees

47. There are no additional requirements for SES employees to declare secondary employment or voluntary work that differs from any other employee, except as may be provided in individual employment determinations or contracts.

48. However, in accordance with the Conflict of Interest Policy, there may be some relevant provisions that align between these policies. SES employees are subject to a specific regime that requires them to submit, at least annually, a written declaration of their own and their immediate family's financial and other material personal interests. Further information can be found on the APSC website.

Delegates

49. Delegates must comply with this policy regarding their own secondary employment or voluntary work and support their team in adhering to it by:

    a. promoting awareness,

    b. ensuring employees consider and submit secondary employment or voluntary work applications in accordance with this policy,

c. discussing management strategies for secondary employment or voluntary work applications,

d. proactively monitoring and reviewing mitigation strategies for employees, and

e. monitoring for potential conflicts within their team.

Security, Integrity and Assurance Branch

50. The SIA Branch is responsible for maintaining this policy and supporting material, providing advice to the department on matters contained within this policy, and for conducting assurance activities in relation to secondary employment and voluntary work.

Record keeping

51. The department handles the personal information it collects in accordance with the *Privacy Act 1988*, and the Australian Privacy Principles. Further information can be found on the department's Privacy Policy intranet page.

Related material

Legislation

- *Public Service Act 1999* (Cth)
- *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (Cth)
- *Maternity Leave (Commonwealth Employees) Act 1975*

Internal policies

- Integrity Framework (under development)
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Performance Policy
- Review of Actions Fact Sheet

Resources

- Department Statement of Strategic Intent

Contact

Employees are able to contact the Security, Integrity and Assurance Branch via The Shed or by phone on 1800 998 880.

Version control

Version Number	Date of Issue	Author/s	Brief description of change	Next review date
1.0	7 March 2025	Security, Integrity and Assurance Branch	New Policy	March 2027
1.1	17 June 2025	Security, Integrity and Assurance Branch	Updated references from Lighthouse form to the new form located on The Shed.	March 2027

Appendix A: Definitions

Terms	Definition
APS Code of Conduct	A set of standards outlined in the Public Service Act 1999, requiring employees to avoid conflicts of interest and maintain ethical behaviour.
Conflict of Interest	A situation where employees have a private interest (whether financial or non-financial) or an affiliation which could improperly influence or could be perceived to influence the performance of their official duties and responsibilities. **Note:** These can be actual, perceived or potential conflicts, as outlined in the Conflict of Interest policy.
Delegate	The delegate for approving secondary employment or voluntary work applications is a person's Executive Level 2 (EL2). Where the applicant is an EL2 or above, the approval delegate is the persons immediate supervisor.
Disclosure	The formal process of reporting secondary employment or voluntary work in accordance with policy requirements.
The Shed	The department's system used for formally declaring secondary employment or voluntary work.
Non-reportable activities	Activities that do not require approval, such as helping a friend move house or participating in community events, provided they do not interfere with departmental duties.
Perceived conflict of interest	A *perceived* conflict of interest is where a reasonable member of the public would believe the conflict exists even if this is not actually the case.
Potential conflict of interest	A *potential* conflict of interest is where the conflict could exist.
Employees	Any person employed by the department, including full-time, part-time, ongoing, and non-ongoing employees, and SES employees.
Protective Security Policy Framework (PSPF)	A framework setting out the procedures for handling conflicts of interest and ensuring the protection of Australian Government resources.
Actual conflict of interest	An actual conflict of interest is where there is a material conflict of interest that is or will influence the performance of an employee's official duties and responsibilities.
Secondary employment	Refers to any paid work that employees engage in outside of their primary role within the department. This can include part-time jobs, consultancy work, freelance assignments, or any other form of employment where financial compensation is received.
Voluntary work	Refers to any unpaid activities undertaken by employees outside of their official duties, typically in service of a charitable, non-profit, community, or social organisation.

Appendix B: Examples of secondary employment, voluntary work and non-reportable activities

s 47E(c); s 47E(d)

Appendix C: Practical application

s 47E(c); s 47E(d)

s 47E(c); s 47E(d)

s 47E(c); s 47E(d)

Appendix D: Example assessment consideration checklist for delegates

s 47E(c); s 47E(d)

s 47E(c); s 47E(d)

Australian Government
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Departmental social media policy

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Creating new social media accounts 3
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Policy application

Social media plays an essential role in communicating the work of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (the department). This policy outlines the department's approach to managing its social media presence.

This policy provides the agreed direction on setting up social media channels, publication of content, monitoring social media activity and responding on behalf of the department.

A separate Personal Use of Social Media policy guides the personal use of social media outside of work and outlines the department's expectations of staff when participating on social media platforms as an individual.

Policy framework

This policy is underpinned by the following:

- Australian Public Service (APS) Code of Conduct
- APS Values
- ICT System Security Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Integrity Framework

Who this policy applies to

This policy applies to all ongoing and non-ongoing employees.

What platforms does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to use across all social media channels, including Facebook, LinkedIn, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram and YouTube. This policy extends to any channel which is used as a two-way communication platform with the wider population and accessed through the internet. This policy extends to closed or open social media groups.

When this policy applies

This policy applies to the official use of social media as a communication tool to promote policies, engage with the community or distribute content on behalf of the department. Examples include:

- Establishment of all social media accounts, inclusive of ensuring that appropriate privacy and security settings and protocols are configured and enforced before first use.
    - This includes (but is not limited to) functions such as setting strong and unique passwords across the various accounts and ensuring the department's Multi-Factor Authentication solution has been applied to each individual social media account instance.
- Developing content for departmental social media channels.
- Developing content for departmental representative/spokesperson accounts.
    - Executive LinkedIn posts and content sharing.
    - Employee LinkedIn activities that focus on departmental initiatives.
- Developing content for third-party channels.
    - Affiliate social media channels.
    - Non-departmental government channels.
    - External blogs, news articles and/or forums.

Employees involved in the official use of social media should take reasonable steps to avoid conflicts of interest. Where an employee cannot avoid a conflict, the employee must declare and manage the conflict in line with the department's *Conflicts of Interest* policy.

Management of social media accounts

The department must have a cohesive and consistent approach to its social media presence and messaging to the public to maintain trust and continue to build awareness of our policies and programs. To ensure the department's approach is coordinated and governance-led, the Social Media team within the Communication and Media Branch manages all social media channels for the department.

The Social Media team is responsible for:

- establishing and administrating social media accounts, including managing the passwords for these accounts.
- providing strategic advice on platform-specific trends, content ideation and social media advertising to inform communication strategies.
- providing analysis and evaluation of communication performance to drive content and channel improvements.

- supporting policy and program development and communication initiatives with sentiment-driven reporting and dashboards.
- supporting executive with sentiment-driven reporting and dashboards.
- monitoring and moderating content published on channels using the department's social media monitoring platform, Sprinklr.
- applying social media specific editorial, where necessary, to ensure consistency across channels.
- scheduling and publishing approved content.
- publishing approved replies to questions received through an account.
- developing and implementing channel specific social media strategies for each account.
- publishing a quarterly social media report that covers channel health, benchmarking and key insights.

Business areas within the department are responsible for:

- collaborating with Strategic Communications Account Managers to create content that highlights policies, programs and other initiatives (including advertising campaigns).
- seeking review of draft content (at an EL2 level minimum) with a focus on currency, accuracy and relevance, to ensure completeness and prevent any missing information.
- ensuring that any business team staff members who may be granted direct social media account access do not change, bypass or remove the privacy or security settings configured for the various department social media accounts.

Creating new social media accounts

New official social media accounts must be approved by the Communication and Media Branch to ensure there is a strong content and evaluation strategy in place.

Business areas are required to complete a business case outlining the specific purpose of the proposed account, the alignment of the account with a broader strategy, the audience serviced by the account and an exit strategy for closing the account.

This business case must be approved by, at minimum, the Assistant Secretary of the requesting business area, and supplied to the Social Media team for review and comment, and then provided to the Assistant Secretary, Communication and Media Branch for approval.

If approved, the Social Media team will establish the account and work with the business area and Strategic Communication colleagues to develop a content strategy.

Under no circumstances is a business area to create and manage its own social media account/s.

Channel management

The Social Media team uses a social media management platform which enables the team to post, schedule, edit, reply, and monitor all social media channels. All accounts must be added to this platform to enable the team to monitor activity and view analytics related to the account's performance.

Official social media channels will be managed during core business hours (Between 8:30am – 5pm Monday – Friday). All requests to publish, monitor and or moderate content outside of business hours must be discussed with Social Media team.

Responding to social media comments

The Social Media team will respond to relevant questions received on the department's social media channels using approved content supplied by the business area. As publicly outlined in our 'terms of use', we will not respond to abusive, defamatory, or inappropriate comments. When a comment is threatening, contains identifying information or is aggressive towards other individuals, the Social Media team will hide the comment from public view, where possible.

To support the Social Media team moderate content on the department's official channels, business areas are responsible for the development of policy/program specific FAQ documents. Where possible, genuine questions relating to a business area's work will be answered based on FAQ. Proposed responses can be approved by an EL2 in the relevant business area. If a question is genuine and cannot be answered using an FAQ document, the Social Media team will send the comment to the relevant business owner for response. Responses will be posted within a reasonable amount of time from when a question was first posted. Responses must be approved, at minimum, by an EL2 officer.

Closing social media accounts

The relevant business owner will be consulted before closing a social media account. The Social Media team will be responsible for the closure of a social media account, with the business owner's agreement.

Paid social media posts

Paid social media campaigns must go through the whole-of-government media buy agency, Universal McCann. The Communication and Media Branch is responsible for placing a media buy request. Business areas must contact the relevant strategic communication team to discuss the business need for developing paid social media –refer to the *Australian Government Guidelines on Information and Advertising Campaigns by non-corporate Commonwealth entities*. The strategic communication team will work with the Social Media team to place and monitor paid social media activity.

Version history

The following table details the published date and amendment details for this document.

Version	Date	Amendment details
1	11/12/2024	This document supersedes the social media guide document and the previous social media policy. This document only covers official use of social media.

Australian Government
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Social Media Requirements:

1. **Is social media the most appropriate channel?** Consult with your relevant strategic communications contact in the first instance (see the Social media workflow).
2. **Familiarise yourself with the social media tips, policy and guidelines.**
3. **Refer to the channel guide below** to understand each channel and their requirements.
4. **Ensure the content is: relevant to the audience**, **informative**, **engaging and easy-to-digest**. Keep content as short and sharp as possible. Content must also include a clear call to action.
5. **Complete the relevant image/video request form** or consult with the Graphic Design or Production teams for the creation of a branded social media image/video. Ensure you have the appropriate permissions from the photographer/people in the image/s that you wish to use, and include photographer/copyright credits where applicable (externally sourced images).
6. **Ensure your request is submitted at least 3 business days prior to the date of your first post**.

Note: Please be aware that the social media team owns the style/tone of all social media channels and may need to make edits to ensure the content appropriately aligns with the Social Media Strategy.

If you have any questions, contact us: s 47E(c); s 47E(d) .

Channel guide:

Channel	Style	Character limit	Image/video limitations
Facebook DAFF Biosecurity ABARES	Friendly, factual, engaging, humorous, helpful, inspirational, collaborative, diverse, innovative and informed	5,000 characters	**Videos:** Must be under 2 mins, 15-30 seconds is ideal
LinkedIn DAFF	Factual, engaging, professional, collaborative, diverse and authoritative	1,300 characters	**Videos:** Must be under 2 mins
Instagram DAFF Biosecurity	Friendly, factual, engaging, humorous, helpful, inspirational, collaborative, diverse, innovative and informed	2,200 characters	**Images:** Must be 1440 pixels in width and 754 to 1800 pixels in height **Videos:** Must be under 1 min and under 100mb
X (Twitter) DAFF ABARES	Factual, engaging, diverse, helpful and authoritative	257 characters	**Images:** Must be 1200 pixels in width and 600 to 1200 pixels in height **Videos:** Must be under 2 mins and under 500mb 15-30 seconds is ideal

Australian Government
Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Social media tips

Most department staff use social media and, like other members of the community, we have the right to express ourselves online. As APS employees, we also have obligations for how we conduct ourselves online. It is important that you understand the guidelines around personal and professional use of all social media platforms.



Always assume your identity and/or connection to the department may become known. Uphold the **APS Values and Code of Conduct**, even when posting anonymously.



Security settings may not always keep your posts private—posts and comments can be copied and reproduced elsewhere. It is also worth noting, when Facebook updates its interface, your security settings may revert to default.



The information you are posting should not call into question your (or the department's) ability to be apolitical, impartial and professional at work.



Remember your posts are public (or could easily become public).



Respect other people, their cultures, beliefs and values.



Posts should not be defamatory, vulgar, obscene or threatening.



Posts should not include information that could damage the reputation of the department or the APS.



Any information posted should not be false or misleading.



Follow copyright.



Anything you post online can be found easily and quickly by search engines, and may be taken out of context.



Posts should not include confidential material—such as department news before it's announced or any information not in the public domain.



Share department posts in preference to creating your own versions about the same topic.



If you think the department should post/share/answer something, talk to **central Social Media Team**.



Limit private use of social media at work.



Respect other people's privacy—including that of staff and stakeholders.



You should only post or engage on behalf of the department if you are authorised to do so. If unsure contact **central Social Media Team**.



For more information please refer to the guidance for APS Employees and Agencies.

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