Information and Communication Technology

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

The Lutheran church of Australia (LCA) has prepared guidelines to assist committees, congregations, parishes and agencies to achieve the objectives of the LCA's Information and Communications Technology Policy, namely that

- ICT resources are used effectively across the LCA
- an integrated and reliable ICT platform is in place to meet the needs of the LCA
- the LCA's intellectual property and physical resources and assets are protected
- a safe environment is in place for users of ICT in accordance with scriptural principles and legal obligations.

Guidelines have been prepared covering the following areas
1. Digitally Stored Data
2. Electronic Messaging
3. **Social Media**
4. Internet
5. Discussion Lists and Blogs
6. Hardware
7. Software
8. People Skills
9. Threat Management

LCA agencies1 are encouraged to adopt these guidelines as their procedures for use of ICT, or to develop their own procedures to cover their specific needs.

(from Information and Communication Technology Guidelines)

LCA DISTRICTS AND AGENCIES

Agencies should use social media only where it supports their mission and ministry strategies, and their communication strategy reflects why and how it is be used. Agencies should be aware of not only the benefits of social media but also the cost of human resources required to keep it operating effectively, as well as the potential damage it can cause if it is not utilised with due care.

Users must be trained in the use of social media so that they use it in a responsible and appropriate manner and do not expose the LCA and the agency to liability, litigation or adverse publicity. The LCA's child protection policies in particular, as well as other relevant church policies, should be adhered to at all times.

Unless prior approval has been given by the user's line manager or the responsible officer, users should not use social media for private purposes while using agency-owned computers and/or during working hours.

CONGREGATIONS

Any social media profiles or pages set up in the name of a congregation should have prior approval from the church council and/or pastor. Multiple administrators or password-holders allow for rigorous monitoring of the social media space and ensure the protection of other posters.

In the case of child and youth ministry, it is especially important for staff and volunteers to be vigilant about privacy. Parental consent must be gained to post images or personal details of any person under 18 years of age. It is not advisable for adults to accept minors as 'friends' on social networking sites unless it is a public group or multiple people have access to the login and password details for that account.

GROUP PROFILES

▪ Gain permission from the appropriate authority (eg bishop, pastor, church council).

▪ Write a description of the procedures, roles and how social media supports the agency/district/congregation/group's communication strategy.

▪ Consider multiple administrators or password-holders.

▪ Set boundaries for appropriate and inappropriate use.
  · Comply with copyright legislation – do not post images, music, etc from other sources without permission.
  · Do not breach confidentiality standards or privacy laws.
  · Adhere to anti-discrimination and anti-harassment laws.

▪ Regularly monitor for inappropriate responses from other users.

▪ Do not post images, identify people in captions or tag people in images, without their consent (or the consent of their parent/guardian if they are under 18 years of age).

▪ Be aware of revealing phone numbers, addresses, birthdates, licence plates, information or photographs that indicate a person's identity, status or location.

▪ Do not respond to controversial issues. If there is a post of concern, either delete it or refer it to the appropriate authority.

▪ Use acceptable social networking etiquette.

▪ Clearly outline to all users the consequences of not following the guidelines.

PERSONAL PROFILES

Pastors, lay workers, employees and volunteers are encouraged to use suitable privacy settings to protect themselves. Personal social media pages of pastors, lay workers, employees and volunteers which can be viewed publicly must not contain inappropriate material, profanity or pornography, derogatory or inflammatory information or impersonate/misrepresent someone else.

LCA staff may consider using two profiles on social media: one for personal use and one where fellow staff or those ministered to (eg a pastor and congregation members) may be added as 'friends'. The user's personal email address should be used for the personal profile and the LCA email address for the church profile.

Consider these guidelines when using social media privately:

- Your online behaviour should reflect the same standards of honesty, respect, and consideration that you use face-to-face, and be in accordance with the LCA Standards of Ethical Behaviour.

- Comments related to the LCA should always meet the highest standards of discretion.

- Use a disclaimer if there is a risk that your views do not reflect the views of the LCA and/or your agency or congregation.

- Before posting personal photographs, thought should be given as to whether the images reflect on your professionalism and whether you have the consent of all other people in the photo.