

Social Media Policy

What do we mean by Social Media?

Social media includes the various online/mobile technology tools enabling people to communicate easily via the Internet to share information and resources. That includes text, audio, video, images, podcasts, and other multimedia communications, encompassing blogs, micro-blogs, social networks, social bookmarking, emailing, texting, online file swap and sharing platforms, IP locator services and more.

Social media includes all communication activity on the Internet, smart phones, laptops, tablets, and desktops through Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Google+, LiveGo, MSN, blogs, and any other social media channel... some are launching and others folding, all the time.

Why do we need a Social Media Policy?

The Young Life Australia brand is more than the look & feel of our logo and the various messages that we communicate in brochures, posters, leaflets, newsletters and our website. It's the people who work for us, as they are our day-to-day brand ambassadors.

To protect the organisation, ourselves and the young people we work with, a set of guidelines governing behaviour need to be adhered to, so as not to bring Young Life Australia into disrepute, unintentionally or intentionally. Therefore, how our staff members and volunteers conduct themselves, on and off the job, can reflect either well or poorly on the organisation.

Remember, we are God's representatives in every aspect of our lives, not just the hours where we are working with Young Life Australia or attending church activities.

Personal and Private

It is necessary for all of us to understand that "personal" and "private" are not the same. While communication through social media networks is predominantly a personal matter, this is not the same as being private. In many cases, written conversations inside these networks can be found through search engines such as Bing and Google. Even in cases where only your contacts can see what you write, there is a possibility that one of them will forward what you say or the images you display and distribute, and make them visible to a far wider audience. As a result, personal conversation within social media networks should be considered public rather than private.

In the interests of ensuring that our people understand the complexities of using social media, Young Life Australia has developed a policy that plainly states what our expectations of our staff and volunteers are so there is no risk of accidentally or inadvertently misunderstanding our guidelines and expectations.

If our interactions are done well and with care, social networking communities have the power to make the world a better place. Young Life Australia's social media policy is based on common sense; the basis of the policy is using principles of treating all stakeholders we come into contact with online, the same as if we were interacting with them individually or in groups in person. We treat people morally, ethically, and maturely with each interaction, regardless of if it's online or in person.

The 11 components of Young Life Australia's Social Media Policy.

Act sensibly and even more importantly, think before you tweet, text or post, because like snail mail, often when something is posted, you can't undo it fast enough to prevent it reaching its audience, and social media messages and images can be copied and sent around endlessly.

Ensure that online/mobile device activity does not interfere with your job responsibilities and requirements, or your capacity to carry out your duties to all stakeholders in a timely and productive fashion.

Young people have quickly adapted to the use of social media sites over the last several years. However, these sites can also be used for a wide variety of inappropriate purposes, such as predators trying to obtain personal information on minors. While Young Life Australia is not prohibiting the use of social networking sites, personal websites or weblogs, it is important that the following guidelines are followed in order to secure your safety and the safety of the young people with whom we meet and talk to.

1. Do not attack or ridicule others.

Employees and volunteers of Young Life Australia are expected to maintain acknowledged standards of good conduct in their dealings at all times. Do not make vulgar, hostile, harassing, or offensive comments, posts, tweets, or texts to others, online or through mobile devices, while representing the organisation, to any audience associated with the organisation, or to any people associated with or interacted/impacted by the organisation, whether that is in normal business hours or not. As a general rule of thumb, if you wouldn't say something in the person's presence then don't say it at all.

2. Respect other people's privacy.

All members of management, the board, committees, volunteers, and employees have the right to keep personal opinions, thoughts, beliefs, and emotions private, and employees are prohibited from violating another paid or unpaid Young Life Australia's right to personal privacy through any social media channel. Employees can disagree on occasion, but external blogs or other online social media channels are not to be used to air employee disagreements.

When group texting or emailing a list of people, whether they are known or not, 'Blind Copy' every email address in the list, so as to protect the privacy of each recipient. The exception to this is if people have an official Young Life Australia email address. Think about privacy issues in relation to Facebook 'friend' lists for example. We advise selecting privacy options that do not allow contacts outside your social network to be able to access your friend list and any personal or contact information.

Personally identifiable information should never be requested or provided by staff or young people on a social networking site, personal website or weblog. This type of information can often lead to identity theft as well as an opportunity for predators to find out where individuals live, work and attend school. Personally identifiable information includes but is not limited to the following:

- Name and one or more of address, phone, e-mail address
- Dates of birth
- Driver's license numbers
- Passport numbers

- Health information, data or Medicare information
- Personal financial information; bank account numbers, credit card details etc.

Please contact the Young Life Australia National office should you have questions about other types of personally identifiable information.

3. Respect the organisation's right to privacy

Never discuss, share, post, or distribute any personal, financial, sensitive or any other confidential information about the organisation or its supporters, staff members, volunteers and donors, online or through mobile devices. This rule goes for colleagues, family members, contacts, friends, and members of the media.

If the media contacts you for your comments or a statement in regards to any issue to do with Young Life Australia via any social media channel or otherwise, do not respond before you refer that request to your immediate supervisor or the National Office, who will then advise whether to respond, or will respond to any issue organisationally on your behalf.

4. When sharing your personal thoughts add a disclaimer.

When blogging, posting, tweeting, emailing or texting images or comments expressing opinions about the organisation through a personal or professional account, always add a disclaimer that your commentary is your own personal opinion, and not that of the organisation.

What you may think of as innocent speculation or amusing commentary, others may find confusing, inflammatory, vilifying, or highly offensive. Avoid swearing, intolerant language or controversial images as it reflects not just badly on yourself, but on Young Life Australia too, as you are part of our organisation. Remember that when in doubt... don't post it out! Make sure that your disclaimer is large enough and positioned with prominence so as to be quickly and easily seen. Contact your immediate supervisor or the National Office if you require assistance in writing a suitable disclaimer, or want to check what you write is suitable.

Suitable wording would include: Authors personal opinion. My personal opinion.

5. Act responsibly in your social networking.

Think about the celebrities you follow on Twitter (and the tweets you may do yourself) as well as the Facebook or Google+ groups you 'like' or are active members of. Do not download, forward, or post explicit, pornographic, racist, threatening, bullying or any other type of offensive material.

Also, you should not download large files such as music mp3s, iTunes albums, media player files, films, movie clips, or any other media that is predominantly for personal use, on equipment that is owned or paid for by the organisation, during working hours. Do not use the organisations download accounts for this purpose (for phones, other mobile devices, or computers) during office hours or out of office hours, if the purpose is primarily for personal use.

6. Obtain permission to use content

Another component of acting responsibly is to gain permission to use images, videos, music clips, and articles that you post that feature or come from other people. Written consent is needed for every item you display or distribute that has not come from yourself or National Office (Refer Appendix A for Photo/Video Release). A written release needs to be received and filed from each person appearing in a video, in pictures, who composed music, or who wrote an article or provides testimony.

7. Limit the access rights of those you don't know well.

If you are an Area Manager, field staffer, Area Intern or volunteer, Young Life Australia recommends you not have a minor as a Facebook friend or a Twitter follower. Once they are in your network they can usually post replies, comments, photographs, and links, and it is your reputation that is on the line. If you don't know a young person very well (or even if you think you do), it is best to politely decline a request to become their 'friend', and stick to being their leader instead. Be wary of 'friend of friend' exposure risk, and adjust your privacy settings accordingly, to prevent 'friend' information skimming, hacking, and the risk of obscene posting.

Instead, it is advised to create a Young Life Area Facebook page and/or Area Club group, where young people who you know as a mentor, can have a safe place to interact and communicate regarding Young Life Australia that is separate from your own personal social media.

We do however acknowledge that this is not always possible or practical. If you are going to have young people as friends on your social media platform, then we do require that you become friends with your Area Manager/supervisor and always include them in messages you send to young people. If you are found to have inappropriate content on your social media pages or are conducting private message conversations without your Area Manager/supervisor knowing, you will be asked to clean up your page immediately or cease to have private communications. Failure to comply could mean that you are suspended from ministry until you comply with the request.

Additionally, to message young people using self-destructing messages is prohibited and noncompliance will result in disciplinary action.

8. Stay neutral.

Don't get involved or aligned in a social media sense with political parties, initiatives, causes, sects, or movements, or post/send inflammatory remarks about other groups that may oppose those causes. Promoting their agendas alienates those who don't agree with your point of view, can be incorrectly viewed as being endorsed by Young Life Australia, and using your Young Life Australia role for this purpose is strictly forbidden.

9. Observe the 'same gender' rule.

In the same way that Young Life Australia prohibits individuals from being alone in a car with a minor at Young Life Australia events or activities, you must not communicate alone through social media with an individual from the opposite sex. Extreme caution and wise judgment should be used and conversations involving topics of an intimate nature should never take place within online private chatrooms or private messages.

It is recommended that the following guidelines should be adhered to when engaging with young people on social media sites:

- If possible, do not have a young person you are working with as a 'friend' on your personal social media site, use the official area page
- **Restrict usage and communication to between 8.00am-9.30pm when communicating with young people**
- Use of private or group messages is permitted but always have another leader included in the message
- If the messages become concerning in nature (at risk behaviours or environments disclosed) refer the issue to the Area Manager/supervisor to be dealt with together. If you need to meet with the young person concerned do so in a public space at an appropriate hour.

10. Ensure correct language and colours are used.

For a Young Life Area Facebook page or Flickr site etc., ensure that correct organisational colours are used, and ensure appropriate language is used across all of your social media. We need to avoid using words that create confusion, like "kids", as those who don't know us may assume we work primarily with kindy or primary aged children, not teenagers. Also avoid using words such as "passion" "yearning" and "kids" in the same sentence, as this can lead to ridicule or misunderstanding. For hints and guidelines, refer to the YLA Brand Communication Guidebook.

Due caution must be exercised when using the Young Life Australia name or logo on social networking sites because doing so can lead people to believe the site contains "official" statements by the organisation rather than the thoughts and opinions of the site owner. The following guidelines should be followed if you want to use the Young Life Australia name or logo on a social networking site:

1. The use of the Young Life Australia name or logo is only approved on "Facebook" because many of the other social networking sites have problems with inappropriate content, SPAM, etc.
2. When using the Young Life Australia name or logo, please use a "Facebook Page" rather than a group or personal page. To set up a new page, go to Facebook's site and select "Brand or Product" and then "Non-Profit" or "Religious Organisation" from the drop-down list.

If you plan to use the Young Life Australia name or logo, please follow the "Young Life Australia" Facebook page as a sample. The parts of the example that are required are:

- a) When naming your Facebook page or communications tool, please include your area (e.g., Stillwater Young Life or Young Life Stillwater). In order to differentiate between the Young Life Australia Facebook page and various mission unit Facebook pages and communications. No other Young Life Facebook page or communications tool should be named just "Young Life" or "Young Life Australia." This also applies to events that you may be hosting/advertising.
- b) Use of a group photo (with permissions obtained) as the profile picture best expresses the heart of Young Life Australia. However, if you wish to use the Young Life Australia logo as the profile picture, we recommend that you contact the communications department for guidance on logo use.
- c) The main "Website link" in the "Information" section must be to the main Young Life Australia website.
- d) In the "General Information" section, in addition to whatever information you provide about your area, club, etc. also post this disclaimer:

(Due to the nature of social network sites, on which content can be provided by a variety of individuals, it is important for visitors to this page to understand that the views expressed on this site do not necessarily reflect the views of Young Life Australia.)

11. Regularly check your social media channels.

Get into the habit of checking that all your social media channels are free of comments, images and links to child pornography, explicit material, hate groups, graphic violence, extremist organisation and other disgusting or illegal material, as well as Trojan viruses or information skimming scams. Remove offensive posts and block offenders who do so. Ensure all posts/tweets/images are consistent with Young Life Australia values. Check at least every couple of days.

Non-compliance to the Social Media Policy has consequences.

What you do outside your Young Life Australia hours is your own business, however, certain activities, including the inappropriate behaviours described above, can affect job performance – yours, or another employee, or the organisation. Thus, significant breaches of this social media policy occurring outside regular business hours may still be considered a breach of this policy.

If these guidelines are not followed by any employee or volunteer, there will be consequences. Failure to comply may result in disciplinary action, an official warning, and loss of social media privileges, instant dismissal, and/or civil or criminal legal action depending on the severity and/or frequency of the breach/es. Every employee and volunteer is expected to fully understand and sign and date their agreement to abide by this social media usage policy, as part of their ongoing role with Young Life Australia.