

Social Media Protocol

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD.....	1
INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE.....	2
WHAT PLATFORMS AND ACTIVITIES ARE COVERED?	2
WHO IS COVERED BY THIS PROTOCOL?	3
EXPECTATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES	3
HOW THIS PROTOCOL APPLIES.....	4
UNDERSTANDING THE STANDARDS THAT APPLY	5
SPECIFIC STANDARDS FOR HIGH VISIBILITY WORKERS.....	6
GENERAL STANDARDS FOR ALL EMPLOYEES AND WORKERS	6
ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE	7
PERSONAL LIABILITY	8
PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION	8
ADHERENCE WITH THE PROTOCOL.....	8
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES.....	8
FEEDBACK.....	9

FOREWORD

At SBS, our mission is to reflect the incredible diversity of contemporary Australia and to serve the public with integrity, inclusivity, and fairness. Social media plays a powerful role in that mission - it enables deeper conversations, stronger community connection, and the sharing of meaningful stories and perspectives.

This Social Media Protocol supports that connection. It is designed to offer clarity, consistency and guidance. As representatives of a public media service, SBS employees and workers hold a unique position of trust. The public expects SBS to remain independent, impartial and respectful of all views. How employees and workers engage online, both personally and professionally, can influence how the organisation is perceived and its ability to meet that expectation.

The Social Media Protocol provides a framework to help navigate social media use responsibly and with care. It recognises the evolving nature of digital platforms and the many different roles SBS people hold - some with a greater level of visibility or editorial influence than others. Its purpose is to protect SBS's reputation and to protect and support employees and workers as individuals, helping them to avoid unintended consequences while still allowing space for appropriate self-expression.

Many SBS employees and workers use social media to celebrate their work, engage with communities, or share aspects of their identity and that is welcomed. The Social Media Protocol encourages employees and workers to exercise sound judgement, to consider the potential impacts of engaging with or posting content, and to always seek advice when unsure. Always talk to a manager if there are any questions or concerns.

This document reflects SBS's values and our commitment to creating a respectful and supportive working environment. By understanding and applying these principles, employees and workers can help safeguard the trust audiences place in SBS and ensure the organisation continues to serve all Australians with fairness and integrity.

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The SBS Code of Conduct is the overarching policy which sets the standards and responsibilities for working at SBS. This Protocol is part of the policy framework which underpins the SBS Code of Conduct and provides further detail for everyone covered by it to understand their responsibilities when using social media in a personal capacity. It also provides guidance to support your personal social media use in a way that is in line with your obligations under the SBS Code of Conduct, the SBS Values, and to protect SBS's reputation by not compromising or undermining it.

For all current employees and workers, it is your responsibility to adhere to this Protocol at all times.

Managers are not expected to continuously monitor social media platforms to ensure employees and workers are complying with this Protocol. Managers are required to address issues appropriately if they arise and to ensure that all team members understand their obligations under the Protocol, especially contractors and new recruits.

WHAT PLATFORMS AND ACTIVITIES ARE COVERED?

Social media' is defined as any online platform (including in-language platforms) that allows users to create and share content, such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, X, LinkedIn, as well as in-language platforms including WeChat, Weibo, Douyin, and Xiaohongshu. This Protocol applies to a person's personal use or activity on social media including any shared or created material posted on social media.

Staff should exercise care when using private messaging services (e.g. WhatsApp, Messenger etc), recognising that messages may be copied or screenshot and subsequently made public.

'Post' in this policy refers to any shared or created material posted on social media, and any engagement with another post which can include a comment, like, hashtag, or share.

This Protocol does not apply to SBS branded social media accounts e.g. SBS Australia on Instagram, SBS News on TikTok, NITV on Facebook. The SBS Code of Practice applies to content that is produced for SBS branded social media accounts.

WHO IS COVERED BY THIS PROTOCOL?

WHO'S COVERED?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applies to all SBS staff, including contractors, freelancers and stringers.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Casual staff are covered during engagement and around program broadcasts.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes commissioned program talent through contract provisions.

This Protocol applies to everyone working for or on behalf of SBS who is subject to the SBS Code of Conduct. This includes **employees** (permanent, temporary and casual employees, working full time and part time), and non-employee **workers** (including contractors, talent, consultants and labour-hire employees), SBS Board members, SBS employees and workers engaged on a temporary or irregular basis (such as casuals). All are required to comply with the Protocol for the duration of their engagement with SBS and any other time the SBS Code of Conduct otherwise applies to them.

EXPECTATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual accountability: You are responsible for your social media conduct, not your manager.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure awareness: Ensure all team members understand the Protocol, and how it applies to them. This includes the responsibility for managers to ensure their team members are aware if they are classified as high visibility workers, and where specific standards apply.

Everybody who works for SBS is responsible for maintaining the organisation's reputation for integrity, independence, and impartiality including through your personal social media activity.

Many people use social media in their personal lives, but SBS does not expect you to post on your personal social media accounts for work purposes. We recognise that you may do so to support your SBS work, and for other professional purposes.

While there is no obligation for program talent to post on behalf of SBS, they may occasionally be asked to post when it aligns with SBS's brand values.

SBS recognises that people who work for SBS have a range of opinions and perspectives, and this Protocol is not intended to prevent you from holding or expressing your views. However, as a public media service, SBS must be - and must be seen to be - independent of political, commercial and other influences. Impartiality - not showing prejudice or bias - is critical to SBS's delivery of its Charter which requires SBS to inform, educate and entertain all Australians and in doing so, reflect Australia's multicultural society.

It is important that every person who works for SBS understands the risks and potential impact of their personal social media use on SBS's reputation, the trust of audiences, and the ability for SBS to fulfil its unique and important role for all Australians.

HOW THIS PROTOCOL APPLIES

SBS takes into consideration the responsibility of individuals to uphold SBS's independence and impartiality in how this Protocol is applied, and these are categorised in two ways:

1. SPECIFIC STANDARDS

These apply to SBS employees and workers who are considered to be 'high visibility workers' because of the greater ability for their personal social media use to undermine public trust in SBS's independence and impartiality. 'High visibility workers' are employees and workers who have a high public profile and/or greater capacity for editorial control and decision making.

These include, but are not limited to:

- The Managing Director, Division Directors, the SBS Ombudsman and Board members.
- Those involved in the production of news and current affairs including journalists, producers, editors and presenters, SBS Audio broadcasters and producers including on SBS-run social media profiles as well as stringers and correspondents depending on the nature of their engagement.
- Managers with editorial responsibilities and/or the capacity to influence or significantly impact the direction and content of SBS's editorial output, including senior leaders and those in roles with a direct input and influence on the content SBS creates.
- On-air talent, noting that specific circumstances apply to particular roles:
 - *Engaged on a program on a short-term basis* e.g. Eurovision hosts, FIFA World Cup commentators, Big Backyard Quiz talent. Specific standards apply for duration of employment or engagement, as well as at least two weeks prior to broadcast, for the duration of

the program premiere period, and for at least two weeks following its conclusion. (Duration may be extended depending on the nature of the role and will be identified in the employment/engagement contract.)

- Engagement over an extended period but on-air for specific programs throughout the contracted period e.g. for Tour de France commentators/field reporters, specific standards apply at least two weeks prior to broadcast, for the duration of the program premiere period, and for at least two weeks following its conclusion. (Duration may be extended depending on the nature of the role and will be identified in the employment/engagement contract.)

Presenters on SBS entertainment, food and other lifestyle programs may have more flexibility in tone and approach but are still expected to uphold SBS values and avoid social media activity that could impact SBS's reputation for independence and integrity.

- Managers and heads of departments/teams who are decision makers outside of editorial roles, who can significantly influence decisions relating to the investment and outlay of SBS funds e.g. Technology, Workplace and Property Services etc.

2. GENERAL STANDARDS

These apply to all SBS employees and workers. Your personal obligations under the SBS Code of Conduct always apply, and individuals are expected to act in a way that aligns with SBS Values and does not bring SBS into disrepute. These standards apply whether or not the individual identifies on their personal social media accounts that they work for SBS.

UNDERSTANDING THE STANDARDS THAT APPLY

POSTING GUIDELINES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content consideration: Avoid posts that could harm SBS's reputation, independence and impartiality. High visibility workers should be particularly cautious.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endorsements: No reviews or endorsements of businesses, products or services that could give rise to a conflict of interest.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Privacy: No sharing of SBS's confidential information or photos of colleagues without consent.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If in doubt, ask: If you are unsure, always check in with a manager before you post or engage with social media content.
SOCIAL MEDIA HYGIENE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handling tags by politicians/public figures: Carefully consider the impact and refer upwards before engaging with tags from politicians and other public figures to avoid perceptions of bias.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical posts: Where possible and feasible. review and remove any particularly sensitive historical posts.

SPECIFIC STANDARDS FOR HIGH VISIBILITY WORKERS

These standards apply during the time periods referred to in 'How this Protocol Applies'.

- Do not post material that could give the public reason to doubt your and SBS's professional independence, impartiality and integrity. This could include publishing news material or commentary on a topical issue.
- Do not share your personal position on political, contentious and divisive issues e.g. how you voted or intend to vote in an election or referendum, endorsement or criticism of public policy issues such as immigration, greenhouse gas emission targets, international issues and conflicts, or support for political parties or campaigns for any such cause. Doing so can call your impartiality into question.
- Take care when engaging with such content on social media e.g. liking or sharing content, and ensure you add appropriate context such a comment of your own to maintain balance and distance (see examples below). Also carefully consider other engagement e.g. joining threads, and who you follow.
- If you want to post about current issues, and you are unsure whether posting on a topic could have an impact on your or SBS's independence, impartiality or integrity, it's recommended you share SBS's coverage of the matter e.g. share an SBS News article. Always seek advice of a manager if in doubt.
- Treat your posts on social media as you would in producing content for an SBS platform. Language must be accurate, balanced and impartial.
- If you are tagged by others on social media e.g. by politicians or public figures, you can take steps to manage and limit this in the future. [Click here](#) for guidance on handling tagging.

GENERAL STANDARDS FOR ALL EMPLOYEES AND WORKERS

These standards apply to all SBS employees and workers, including 'high visibility workers':

- Treat everyone with respect, fairness and courtesy.
- Be authentic, truthful and transparent, particularly if you are posting material about SBS.
- Do not attack or harass others. Do not vilify, discriminate, threaten, humiliate, be abusive, aggressive or offensive (such as using obscene or coarse language).
- Exercise care and caution when engaging in discussion and debate and always do so in a respectful and professional way. Do not conduct yourself in a way that could reflect negatively on SBS.
- Take particular care when commenting on or engaging in topics that can be contentious or potentially divisive, or which have the potential to have a perceived impact on SBS's independence and impartiality.
- Do not post material or comment on behalf of SBS without appropriate authorisation, including material that could be interpreted as an official statement on behalf of SBS. This includes breaking news stories being reported by SBS, before they are published/broadcast by SBS.

- Do not use the SBS logo or other branding associated with SBS without appropriate authorisation.
- Keep internal meeting and work discussions private, and do not disclose confidential or personal information obtained through SBS.
- Respect the privacy of people who work for SBS or are connected to SBS e.g. attendees at community events. Do not post photos of people without their permission, and do not criticise other employees or workers.
- Do not endorse any commercial product or service or any other interests that could give rise to a conflict of interest. This includes publicly reviewing or endorsing restaurants, hotels, or other businesses that could undermine your ability to fulfil your role or otherwise compromise SBS e.g. producing a news report on those businesses or being part of a tender process involving those businesses.
- Do not share material or links which you have not reviewed.
- Do not reveal personal details of another person without their consent (doxing) unless you are reposting or sharing a news story from an SBS account e.g. where such information is provided as part of a public interest news story.
- Exercise sound judgement at the time of sharing or posting something on social media.
- Always consider if you would be comfortable with what you are posting being published or broadcast, and how the post may reflect on SBS's independence and impartiality.
- Where possible, focus on reviewing and, if needed, removing older posts on your personal social media accounts that may no longer be relevant or appropriate. New recruits are encouraged to check their profiles for any particularly sensitive or outdated posts during onboarding.

Whichever standards applies to you in your employment with SBS, if you are ever unsure or have questions about posting or engaging with social media content and how it aligns with your responsibilities under this Protocol, raise the matter with your manager before posting or engaging with content. **If in doubt, always ask.**

ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE

SBS will, from time to time, provide specific guidance to you on particular subjects, organisational projects or significant events. This guidance is designed to support further awareness and understanding of the nuances involved with specific subjects, community sentiment and public expectation. At all times, any guidance is underpinned by the principles outlined in this Protocol, and the SBS Code of Conduct.

For guidance or queries relating to engaging in campaigns, participation at protests, or other activity in a personal capacity, the standards and responsibilities outlined in the SBS Code of Conduct apply.

The safety and wellbeing of our people is our highest priority. If you are being targeted, harassed or threatened on social media because of your role or in relation to your work with SBS, seek advice from your manager and SBS Security in the first instance so appropriate support and assistance can be provided. Managers may escalate matters of a serious nature to the SBS Safety Team for additional support and guidance.

PERSONAL LIABILITY

SBS does not control and is not legally responsible for material that you post on your personal social media accounts. As such, SBS is not responsible for what happens on these accounts, and you are legally responsible for your own personal social media profiles. Individuals should carefully consider their personal liability for their social media activity.

PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION

Disclaimers on social media profiles e.g. a statement along the lines of “the views presented here are my personal views and not the views of SBS”, offer a helpful reminder for audiences and indicate your account is not an official SBS-run and controlled profile. However, disclaimers do not protect you from scrutiny and disciplinary action if your social media activity has the potential to bring SBS into disrepute. Even if you don't identify that you work for SBS on your personal social media profiles, you could be reasonably identified by a member of the public as being a representative of SBS.

ADHERENCE WITH THE PROTOCOL

In enforcing this Protocol, SBS will assess your actions and behaviour in line with the SBS Code of Conduct. Breaches of the SBS Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action, including termination of your employment or termination of your engagement.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- SBS Code of Conduct
- [SBS Values](#)
- [SBS Website Network Terms and Conditions](#)
- [SBS Privacy Policy](#)

FEEDBACK

Social media is very dynamic, and this Protocol is reviewed regularly. Questions about applying the Protocol should be directed to your Manager. If you have questions about the Protocol itself, or any feedback, contact the SBS Head of Social Media.