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SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

QUALITY AREA 7: LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE MANAGEMENT

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- Links to Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011: 168, 170, 181
- Links to National Quality Standards: 4.2, 7.1.2, 7.3.5

Introduction

Social media offers the opportunity for people to gather in online communities of shared interest and create, share or consume content.

Globally the interest and participation in social media is growing at phenomenal rates. This interest also extends to businesses that are recognising that social media offers new opportunities to engage in conversations with customers and other communities with shared interests.¹

Woden Early Childhood Centre (WECC) embraces social media as an important tool of business engagement. WECC is also aware that educators use social media in a personal capacity as a way to reach out and share information and views.

Goals – What are we going to do?

With the rapid growth and application of social media, WECC recognises the need to have a policy which ensures that educators, who use social media either as part of their job or in a personal capacity, have guidance as to WECC's expectations with regards to their social media engagement.

The '3 Rs of social media engagement' (the 3Rs) were designed to protect the interests of educators, families and WECC. In brief, the 3 Rs ask that when engaging in social media educators be clear about who they are representing, that they take responsibility for ensuring that any references to WECC are factually correct and accurate and do not breach confidentiality requirements, and that they show respect for the individuals and families with which they interact.

It is important to note that this policy does not apply to educator's personal use of social media platforms where the educator makes no reference to WECC-related issues.

Given the rapid development and uptake of social media and its growing relevance to corporate activity, this policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains relevant and applicable.

If educators require clarification about aspects of this policy and how it applies to their own circumstances, they should contact the Nominated Supervisor or Centre Director in the first instance.

Strategies – How will it be done?

WECC appreciates the value in using social media to build more meaningful relationships with families, communities and other relevant stakeholders. If educators are officially asked to represent WECC in social media, or if they are discussing WECC or WECC business-related issues in their personal use of social media platforms, they are required to follow this policy.

Social media tools

Social media tools include:

- social networking sites eg Facebook, MySpace, Bebo, Friendster
- video and photo sharing websites eg Flickr, YouTube
- micro-blogging sites eg Twitter
- weblogs, including corporate blogs, personal blogs or blogs hosted by traditional media publications
- forums and discussion boards such as Whirlpool, Yahoo! Groups or Google Groups
- online encyclopaedias such as Wikipedia
- any other web sites that allow individual users or companies to use simple publishing tools.

The 3 Rs

WECC's 3 Rs are Representation, Responsibility and Respect.

The 3 Rs apply when:

- educators are authorised to represent WECC on social media platforms and are using a social media platform for business purposes. Further information is outlined below.
- educators choose to make references to WECC, its educators, families, and/or any other individual when using a social media platform in a personal capacity. Further information is outlined below.

This social media policy does not apply to personal use of social media platforms where educators make no reference to WECC or WECC- related issues.

Social media engagement for business purposes

Before anyone can become an authorised WECC representative on any social media platform, they must have approval from the Nominated Supervisor or Director.

This section outlines how the 3 Rs apply if educators are authorised to represent WECC as part of their job's responsibilities.

Representation

Educators are required to:

- disclose that they are a WECC educator and be clear about what they are representing and what their role and accountabilities are
- disclose only publicly available information. They must not comment on or disclose confidential WECC information (such as information about children attending WECC and their families, financial information, business performance, business plans, imminent departure of other educators). If any clarification is required about what WECC information is in the public domain, refer to material such as the website (www.wodenchildcare.com.au).

Responsibility

Educators are required to:

- ensure that any content published is factually accurate and complies with relevant WECC policies, particularly those relating to confidentiality and disclosure
- ensure they are not the first to make an announcement about WECC unless they have received the appropriate clearances and approvals
- only offer information, support or comments on general topics
- ensure they do not post material that is obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, discriminatory or hateful to another person or entity, including WECC, its educators, its families, its committee, or any other business-related individuals or organisations
- ensure they do not disclose other people's personal information in social media venues, and comply with the policies noted in the Related policies / documents section of this policy.

Respect

Educators are required to:

- be respectful of all individuals with which they interact online
- be polite and respectful of others' opinions, even in times of heated discussion and debate
- adhere to the Terms Of Use, and seek to conform to the cultural and behavioural norms, of the social media platform being used. It is the educators' responsibility to be aware of and familiarise themselves with these
- respect copyright, privacy, financial disclosure and other applicable laws when publishing on social media platforms. Educators should check with the Nominated Supervisor or Director if they are not certain about what can be reproduced or disclosed on social media platforms.

Other uses of social media platforms

This section outlines how WECC's 3 Rs are applied if educators choose to make references to WECC, its educators or services, its competitors, and/or other business related individuals or organisations when they are using a social media platform in a personal capacity. It is important in these circumstances that readers of educators' posts do not misconstrue these personal comments as representing an official WECC position.

Representation

Educators are required to:

- identify themselves as WECC educators if they refer to WECC, its educators and families, or other business-related individuals or organisations
- ensure they do not imply in any way that they are authorised to speak on WECC's behalf
- ensure they do not knowingly use the identity of another WECC educator (including their name or variation of their name)
- be mindful during social media engagements of the importance of not damaging WECC's reputation and/or bringing WECC into disrepute
- disclose only publicly available information. They must not comment on or disclose confidential WECC information (such as financial information or the imminent departure of employees). If any clarification is required about what WECC information is in the public domain, refer to material such as the website (www.wodenchildcare.com.au).
- not include WECC's logos or trademarks in their postings.

Responsibility

Educators are personally responsible for the content of their posts online. In this context, they have a responsibility to ensure that:

- any information about WECC and its services that they provide is informed and factually accurate. If they wish to express opinions it must be stated they are the educator's personal opinions
- if they are offering their personal perspective on a matter related to WECC, they must be mindful that their commentary and opinion does not cause damage, either real or perceived, to WECC.

Further, educators are required to:

- use a disclaimer to ensure that their stated views and opinions are understood to be their own and not those of WECC. A disclaimer is required when an educator:
 - refers to the work done by WECC
 - comments on any WECC-related issue
 - provides a link to the WECC website.
- use a permanent disclaimer if they are referring regularly to WECC. For irregular WECC references, a disclaimer need only be used on a case by case basis. An example of a disclaimer is "The views expressed in this post are mine only and do not necessarily reflect the views of Woden Early Childhood Centre."
- reference only publicly available information such as that on the www.wodenchildcare.com.au website or in the WECC Family Handbook
- ensure they are not the first to make a WECC announcement
- ensure they do not post material that is obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, discriminatory or hateful to another person or entity, including about WECC, its educators, its families or other business-related individuals or organisations.

Respect

Educators are required to:

- be respectful of all individuals and communities with which they interact online
- be polite and respectful of other opinions, even in times of heated discussion and debate
- adhere to the Terms Of Use, and seek to conform to the cultural and behavioural norms, of the social media platform being used. It is the educators' responsibility to be aware of and familiarise themselves with these
- respect copyright, privacy, financial disclosure and other applicable laws when publishing on social media platforms. Educators should check with the Nominated Supervisor or Director if they are not certain about what can be reproduced or disclosed on social media platforms.

Breach of policy

As is the case with all of WECC's policies, if educators do not comply with this policy they may face disciplinary action.

This disciplinary action may involve a verbal or written warning or, in serious cases, termination of their employment or engagement with WECC.

WECC may seek to recover from the educator any costs incurred as a result of a breach of this policy.

Educators may also be personally liable for any breakings of the law.

Related policies / documents

- Acceptable use of computers, internet and email
- Computer use
- Confidentiality
- Privacy and confidentiality statement
- Privacy online.

Statutory legislation and considerations

- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Australian Privacy Principles

Sources and references

- <http://exchange.telstra.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/telstra-3rs-policy-2012.pdf>

Authorisation

Jessica York
President
2014-15 WECC Management Committee