



# **Social Media Policy**

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## 1. Introduction

Social media gives individuals, groups, organisations and businesses the opportunity to instantly share information with online communities. Blogs, forums, social networking and video sharing sites are the most popular types of social media sites, however, any forum which allows a user to upload and share information is considered part of the social media space. It is also important to note that information that is shared need not be written; it could take the form of an image or audio visual material.

Equestrian Australia (EA) supports the use of social media as a timely and effective method of communication. In addition to engaging with members of the equestrian community, social media can help the organisation reach members of the broader public and traditional media.

EA proactively seeks positive media coverage and does so for the benefit of its athletes and members. Traditionally this media coverage has been through TV, radio and print media outlets however the rise of social media has widened this landscape. Given these changes, all EA members and employees have the opportunity to act as ambassadors for the organisation, simply by maintaining an online presence.

Whilst social media provides great opportunity to raise equestrian's profile and reach new audiences, it also has the potential to harm the reputation of the organisation, its athletes, members and stakeholders. It is crucial therefore that all EA members and employees are aware of the implications of using social media.

The purpose of this document is to provide members and employees of Equestrian Australia with guiding principles for using social media. EA encourages anyone bound by this policy (refer to section 2 – Policy Application) to use social media within the parameters outlined in this policy.

Please note, this policy should be read in conjunction with the [EA Member Protection Policy](#) and Codes of Conduct contained within the EA Member Protection Policy.

## 2. Policy Application

This policy applies to all members of EA, employees, officers (including Board of Directors & National Sport Committee Members), administrators, volunteers, national squad athletes, coaches, officials (including Veterinarian officials), team managers, state associations and associated interested persons who have some form of 'duty' on behalf of EA.

Parents and carers of participating members should refer to EA's Member Protection Policy for the Code of Conduct relevant to parents and guardians of participating members.

All forms of social media activity are covered under this policy, including, but not limited to:

- Creating and maintaining social or business networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace or LinkedIn.

- Sharing audio-visual content on sites including Flickr, Instagram and Pinterest (photo sharing) and YouTube and Vimeo (video sharing)
- Authoring and commenting on blogs or forums
- Editing a Wikipedia page

### 3. Guiding principles

Persons bound by this policy should be mindful that information shared on social media appears in public so careful consideration should be given to content before it is posted. Never forget that information shared within online communities could have implications for the sport and those associated with it.

Information which is shared online can be difficult to retract. A representative might be able to remove his/her original comments however the very nature of social media encourages a person to share information which makes it difficult to know where the information they post finishes up.

Persons bound by this policy should assume that all posts and information they share via social media can be traced back to them.

Adhering to these guidelines will ensure the reputation of EA, its athletes, coaches, officials, employees, volunteers and stakeholders is protected.

- Persons bound by this policy should ensure that comments made on social media abide by EA's Code of Conduct and do not contravene EA's Member Protection Policy, specifically comments should:
  - *Respect the rights, dignity and worth of others*
  - *Refrain from any form of harassment of others*
  - *Retrain from any behaviour that may bring EA, its member associations or affiliated clubs into disrepute. Members are advised to view the EA Member Protection Policy and Codes of Conduct in conjunction with this document. Any comments which are made on social media which contravene the EA Member Protection Policy will be dealt with in accordance with the process outlined in the EA Member Protection Policy.*
- Comments which are contrary to the spirit and integrity of sport will not be tolerated.
- Persons bound by this policy who share information online should consider themselves a spokesperson for the organisation and must never reveal confidential or sensitive information that could jeopardise EA's relationships with its commercial or government partners.
- Personal sites, blogs and accounts that have an EA 'look and feel' and could be perceived as being EA or one of its disciplines is strictly prohibited.
- EA Officers, including national sport committees and national sport committee members are not permitted to administer discipline specific accounts. Information that discipline committees and committee members wish to share with EA subscribers must come through EA's national office and its authorised EA social media accounts. State sport committees should refer to their state branch for rules specific to their state.

**Please note:** athletes, coaches, officials and other representatives that are selected on other teams and participate in major events such as the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games should also adhere to the guidelines imposed by the governing bodies of those organisations.

#### **4. Breach**

If a person bound by this policy fails to follow these guidelines EA has the right to issue this individual with a take-down notice. An individual who is found to not comply with a take-down notice will face disciplinary action.

Repeated breaches of this policy could lead to disciplinary action. EA also has the right to administer sanctions and take legal action.

#### **5. Reporting a breach**

Individuals who wish to report an alleged breach of the EA Social Media Policy should follow the complaints procedure outlined in the [Member Protection Policy](#). In addition the complaint should be made in writing and include evidence of the alleged breach.

Complaints should be forwarded to an Equestrian Australia Member Protection Information Officer ([list available here](#)). The complaint will be handled in accordance with the complaints process outlined in the EA Member Protection Policy.

Please note non-EA members may report a breach however EA will only respond to alleged breaches by an EA member or those listed under section 2 – policy application.

#### **6. Legislation**

As with any form of public communication, online communication can also be subject to legislation. Persons bound by this policy should be mindful that unsubstantiated claims, false statements, defamatory, offensive and threatening comments could lead to prosecution.

#### **7. Amendments/Interpretation**

These Guidelines may be amended by EA as it deems appropriate. The EA Board will be the ultimate authority with respect to the interpretation and implementation of these Guidelines.

#### **8. Conclusion**

EA understands that social media is a new method of communication and as such encourages all persons bound by this policy to seek clarification from the EA Commercial Team if they are unsure what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate content.