

21 September 2017

## Ministry of Health to develop Social Media Policy – a win for staff

The PSA attended a briefing on 18 September 2017 about the realignment of the Strategic Communications and Engagement Branch.

The new structure has been approved by the Secretary following a Change Management Plan and consultation process. This appears to be one of the few areas in the public sector experiencing an increase in staffing resources.

The PSA noted that it had been decided to convert a new Principal Media Adviser position from a contract to an ongoing role.

While this is welcome news, it needs to be replicated across the Ministry to reduce the current overuse of contractors.

The PSA's Industrial Officer for the Ministry continues to be available to discuss issues of concern about the realignment with members.

The PSA will also be making further representations to ensure that external advertising of vacant positions is a last resort.

The PSA made a submission during the consultation period and requested "that priority is given to developing a comprehensive social media policy supported by guidelines and training for staff across the Ministry".

The PSA had previously raised the necessity of a social media policy for the Ministry at a meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee.

We were originally advised that the Code of Conduct was adequate.

The Executive Director of Strategic Communications and Engagement advised that a social media policy would now be developed and gave a commitment to consultation with the PSA.

The Ministry conceded that it was not possible to have such a strong focus on the social media in the new structure without a supporting policy framework.

As the Ministry does not have a social media policy as this point in time, the PSA has some practical suggestions to pass on to members following a presentation at the recent PSA Women's Conference.

We recognise that our members in the Ministry are dealing with sensitive information on a daily basis and are likely to be conscientious users of social media.

However, there is no harm in considering a few simple steps to protect yourself:

- » There is no general right to privacy in Australia when it comes to social media. Employers may be able to take disciplinary action against employees if online activities have an impact on the employment relationship
- » Be careful about making comments about your agency, the government, its policies or co-workers on social media, particularly with an "open" social media account or where you are "friends" with co-workers
- » Check social media privacy settings. You might want to consider having them set at the highest possible level and avoid having your account accessible by the public at large.



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- » Be careful “liking” or “re-tweeting” comments which have negative impact on your employer’s reputation. They may imply agreement.
- » If you have open social media, think about how the photos you post may be perceived by your current employers or prospective employers.\*\*\*

\*\*\*Advice provided to PSA members by Maurice Blackburn Lawyers at PSA Women’s Conference on 13 September 2017.

PSA members have access to advice, support and representation, either via the PSA’s Member Support Centre (ph 1300 772 679) or by contacting your local delegates, the PSA’s Industrial Officer or Senior Organiser.

**Julie Westacott** - PSA delegate  
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Help maintain a strong union voice. Ask your colleagues to stand with you by joining the PSA.

