

CHAPTER 3

THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY YOUTH IN DEFENCE AND DEFENCE YOUTH PROGRAMS

INTRODUCTION

6.3.1 The use of social media has become an integral component of modern communication, education and day to day social interaction. Social media is used extensively by youth who are more comfortable and savvy with the use of social media than previous generations. While the appropriate use of social media can be a positive experience, misuse of social media, such as bullying and grooming can have a serious and lasting adverse effect on the health and reputations of individuals and organisations.

6.3.2 Social media and online environments refer to technological devices and platforms including social network services such as:

- a. Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat
- b. blogs, chat rooms, video and telephone conferencing sites
- c. gaming
- d. online health, education and other services
- e. apps, clouds, and sharing sites.

6.3.3 For the purposes of this policy, social media also refers to the practices and social relationships that are formed through these online platforms.

6.3.4 By ensuring the safe use of social media, Defence personnel, non-Defence personnel and youth participating in Defence and Defence Youth Programs can ensure youth are protected from abuse and sexual exploitation.

POLICY INTENT

6.3.5 The intent of this policy is to protect youth from being abused and sexually exploited within Defence and Defence Youth Programs by ensuring adults and youth are equipped and informed with the knowledge and skills to safely use social media.

POLICY PRINCIPLES

6.3.6 **Principle 1.** Youth within Defence and Defence Youth Programs know and understand their obligations concerning the use of official and personal/private social media.

6.3.7 **Principle 2.** Youth are aware of the dangers that may be associated with participating in social media.

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6.3.8 **Principle 3.** Defence and Non-Defence adults within Defence and Defence Youth Programs are aware of their obligations towards interacting with youth on social media.

POLICY PRACTICE AND MEASURES

6.3.9 Social media use, especially among young people, poses a particular risk to youth safety. All Defence personnel and non-Defence personnel have a duty to be aware and vigilant and to take appropriate action, including reporting where it is suspected that a young person is at risk of becoming a victim of an offence.

Principle 1

6.3.10 The Defence social media policy contained in Chapter 7 of the [Media and Communication Policy](#) identifies three types of social media profile:

- a. **Official organisational.** Approved profiles operated by Defence personnel for Defence purposes, pertaining to a Group or Service, or related to a Defence activity or organisation.
- b. **Official positional.** Approved profiles operated by Defence personnel for a Defence purpose, pertaining to a position and independent of the incumbent.
- c. **Personal/private.** Operated by Defence personnel for non-Defence related positions, organisations and activities, not associated with their service or employment and undertaken outside of formal working hours.

OFFICIAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

6.3.11 Youth within Defence and Defence Youth Programs will have very little or no reason to operate an official organisational or official positional profile (refer [Media and Communication Policy](#)).

PRIVATE/PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

6.3.12 Youth within Defence and Defence Youth Programs are to abide by the Personal/Private Social Media Profiles policy in Chapter 7 of the [Defence Media and Communication Policy](#).

6.3.13 Using social media to air grievances/complaints is inappropriate as there may be negative or unintended consequences. The inappropriate use of social media is considered unacceptable and will constitute a breach of the relevant Defence organisation's code of conduct.

Principle 2

6.3.14 Everything posted online is stored, even if deleted from a user's account. Emails and private messages are stored by the platform's host providers. Every device that accesses the internet has its own Internet Protocol (IP) address that can be traced back to the user.

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6.3.15 Dangers associated with using social media, for example cyberbullying, grooming and access to pornography, may be amplified for youth. All youth in Defence and Defence Youth Programs have an individual responsibility for their safety and to carefully consider the nature of their social activity media.

6.3.16 **Cyberbullying.** Cyberbullying is the use of information and communication technologies for deliberate, hostile behaviour directed at an individual with an intention to harm, belittle, harass, insult or molest. Cyberbullying can include:

- a. sending offensive, abusive or insulting texts or emails to another individual
- b. taking or sharing offensive, obscene or indecent imagery of or pertaining to another individual
- c. posting offensive, abusive or insulting messages about another individual excluding the individual from online forums
- d. assuming the identity of another individual and representing them in a negative manner or a manner that may damage their reputation and relationship with others
- e. posting provocative, offensive, extraneous or off-topic messages in an online community, such as a forum, chat room or blog.

6.3.17 The *Criminal Code Act 1995*, provides for an offence of ‘using a carriage service to menace, harass or cause offence’ and ‘using a carriage service to make a threat’. For the purposes of this section “carriage service” has the same meaning as in the *Telecommunications Act 1997*.

6.3.18 **Grooming and Pornography.** Grooming is the use of manipulative and controlling techniques on a vulnerable individual in a range of interpersonal and social settings, in order to establish trust or normalise sexually harmful behaviour with the overall aim of facilitating exploitation and reducing the likelihood of exposure of the exploitation.

6.3.19 Grooming is an offence regardless of whether it is conducted in the physical or online environment.

6.3.20 Taking, sharing or posting sexualised photographs or videos of yourself or other people under the age of consent is a crime under child pornography laws.

6.3.21 Grooming or taking, sharing or posting sexualised photographs or videos of youth who are over the age of 18 but subject to special care provisions due to their participation in a Defence Youth Program is an offence subject to disciplinary and/or administrative action.

6.3.22 Informed consent of youth and their parent/guardian must be obtained before taking images of youth, and only imagery that depicts youth in an appropriate manner should be created.

Principle 3

6.3.23 All adult Defence personnel and non-Defence personnel in Defence and Defence Youth Programs have both an individual and collective responsibility for youth protection. These responsibilities include being a positive role model and minimising the risk of harm to others using social media.

6.3.24 Adults in youth-related work positions are to keep social media contact with youth to official business only and limit on-line contact to groups and general announcements.

6.3.25 Adults have a duty of care in managing appropriate boundaries. Where a Defence Youth Program requires contact with a young person, written approval should first be sought from the parent/guardian. Written approval can range from ad hoc approval for a specific case to a general permission provided annually (or for a shorter period).

6.3.26 Defence and non-Defence personnel must not use social media to initiate contact with youth. This includes outside work, or voluntary roles such as babysitting, sports coaching, house-sitting, or tutoring.

REPORTING

6.3.27 Defence personnel and non-Defence personnel, who become aware, or suspect abuse or neglect involving a young person has occurred or is occurring has a duty to report it directly to the relevant state or territory Child and Youth Protection Authority or Police, and then to their line management / chain of command in accordance with the Youth Protection Complaint and Event/Incident Management policy (refer Section 3, Chapter 3).

6.3.28 Contact details for state and territory child protection authorities relating to making a report can be found on the YOUTHHQ website.

RECORD KEEPING

6.3.29 The official use of social media creates official records. There is a legal requirement to implement appropriate records management practices and privacy protection, as for any other Commonwealth record.

6.3.30 For guidance on records management in Defence, refer to:

- a. [Defence Records Management Policy Manual \(RECMAN\)](#)
- b. Defence Youth Protection Documentation, Records and Privacy (Section 1 Chapter 2).

Accountable Officer: Chief of Joint Capabilities (CJC)

Policy Owner: Head Joint Support Services Division (HJSSD)