

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET ESTIMATES 2012-13

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Australian National Audit Office
Outcome/Program:
Topic: Social Media

Senator: Ryan

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Question:

1. Has there been any changes to department and agency social media or protocols about staff access and usage of Youtube; online social media, such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter; and access to online discussions forums and blogs since May 2012 Budget Estimates? If yes, please explain and provide copies of any advice that has been issued.
2. Does the department/agency monitor usage of social media?
 - a) If yes, provide details of the usage (for example details could include average hours per employee, hours when useage peaks)
 - b) If no, will the department/agency monitor usage in the future?
3. Does social media impact on employee productivity? Provide details (details could include increased internet usage in general or increased internet usage in standard business hours)

Answer:

1. There have been no changes to ANAO staff access to appropriate social media sites since May 2012. In August 2012, the ANAO released a Social Media Policy to guide staff in their use of social media. This was developed in line with guidance received from the Australian Public Service Commission.
2. The use of Social Media is monitored within the agency in accordance with ANAO policies and procedures. Monitoring is not conducted for individual sites, but by Category. Social Media use falls into two categories, Blogs and Forums and Personal and Dating. Over a one month period between mid October and mid November 2012, Blogs and Forums accounted for 5.4 GB (this would include work related access) and Personals and Dating accounted for 789.3 MB of downloads across the ANAO. This

is low in comparison with News Sites which accounted for 33.2 GB and Search Engines which accounted for 22.9 GB of downloads in the same period. Given that use is relatively low, we do not track additional data such as hours of use and usage peaks.

3. Given the low usage of Social Media across the ANAO, as outlined above, it is not considered to adversely impact staff productivity within the ANAO.

Australian National Audit Office

Social Media Policy 2012-2013

Objective

The objective of this policy is to provide guidance for managers and staff on the use of social media at work and outside of work.

Context

Recent revisions to the Australian Public Service Commission's (APSC) guidance on participating in online media have led to the development of new guidance for APS employees and Agency Heads. The revised circular is designed to help APS employees understand the issues to take into account when considering making public comment, including online, and to help inform agency policies in this regard. The ANAO's Social Media policy has been developed in consultation with this circular to provide staff with guidance when making public comment or participating online. For further information on the APSC's circular relating to the social media and online participation of APS staff please refer to: <http://www.apsc.gov.au/publications-and-media/current-circulars-and-advice/2012/circular-20121>

Employees of the ANAO should use good judgement about what material appears online, and in what context. Staff should also be aware that their activities online could breach the APS Values and Code of Conduct. The APS Values and Code of Conduct can be accessed from: <http://www.apsc.gov.au/aps-employment-policy-and-advice/aps-values-and-code-of-conduct>

It is quite acceptable for APS employees to take part in the political life of their communities. The APS Values stipulate that the APS is, among other things, 'apolitical, performing its functions in an impartial and professional manner', but this does not mean that APS employees must be apolitical in their private affairs. Rather, it means that employees should avoid behaving in a way that suggests they cannot act apolitically or impartially in their work.

For further information on APS employees participating in political activities please refer to: <http://www.apsc.gov.au/publications-and-media/current-publications/aps-values-and-code-of-conduct-in-practice/aps-employees-as-citizens>

Social Media and the Workplace

The growth in social media sites and tools has opened opportunities for much greater engagement between citizens and the Australian Government, and gives public servants the ability to contribute to the debate as citizens themselves.

Social media sites make it easy to share information but while this convenience is their selling point, employees need to be more careful than usual in their use of these sites.

The use of social media sites by public servants is governed by the Australian Public Service (APS) values and Code of Conduct. All ANAO employees are expected to maintain the

same high standards of conduct and behaviour online as would be expected elsewhere. This includes:

- *being apolitical, impartial and professional;*
- *behaving with respect and courtesy, and without harassment;*
- *dealing appropriately with information, recognising that some information must remain confidential;*
- *being sensitive to the diversity of the Australian public;*
- *taking reasonable steps to avoid conflicts of interest;*
- *making proper use of Commonwealth resources; and*
- *upholding the APS Values and the integrity and good reputation of the APS.*

What is Social Media?

Social media is any online media platform that provides content for users and also allows users to participate in the creation or development of the content in some way. Some of the more popular types of social media include:

- **Social Networking sites:** Facebook is probably the most well-known. Others include Linked-In, Myspace and YouTube.
- **Blogs:** are a discussion or information site published on the internet consisting of posts typically displayed in reverse chronological order. Blogs are usually the work of a single individual, or occasionally a small group, and often are themed on a single subject.
- **Wikis:** A Web site developed collaboratively by a community of users, allowing any user to add and edit content. The most common examples include Wikipedia and govdex.
- **Discussion forums:** An online message board or discussion site where people can hold conversations in the form of posted messages.
- **Microblogs:** Like blogs, these are discussion sites published on the internet. A microblog differs from a traditional blog in that its content is typically smaller in size. Microblogs allow users to exchange small elements of content such as short sentences, individual images, or video links. The most well-known example is Twitter.

Accessing Social Media at Work.

The ANAO provides staff and contractors access to a computer and ICT in accordance with the ICT usage policy. Access to social media such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter is incidental to this provision and personal use is only allowed if it does not impact on formal duties and all relevant policies, procedures and guidelines are followed. The relevant information is contained within the ANAO's Protective Security Document Framework and can be found at the following link:

http://auditcentral/Topics/Corporate/Security0/Protective%20Security%20Framework%20Documentation/SEC_2%200_ICT%20ANAO%20ICT%20Security%20Policy.pdf

If staff need to use social media sites for official and personal/professional reasons they should use separate official and personal/professional profiles. This will make it easier to participate in online social media by differentiating between their identity as a citizen and their identity as an employee and spokesperson of the ANAO.

What is the difference between *official, professional and personal* use?

Participating in social media can be a very effective way to communicate information and maintain professional relationships. All ANAO staff should be aware of how they access and contribute to social media and in what capacity. Participation in social media usually falls into two categories: official and unofficial.

Participating in social media in an official capacity

Official use is when comment is made as an official spokesperson for the ANAO and ANAO employees must seek SES clearance in order to do so. An example could include posting a factual and impartial answer to a comment incorrectly describing an audit finding and then, with the answer, providing a link to the correct information or audit report. In the case of official comment, this would normally be done by providing an introductory line establishing the position (e.g. I am the Executive Director/Audit Manager responsible for this audit) and using a profile linked to an ANAO email address.

When responding via social media to these comments ANAO employees as well as contractors and consultants covered under the *Auditor-General Act* remain bound by the APS Values and Code of Conduct not to disclose certain information without authority. They are also required to abide by the ANAO's policies relating to clearance of material for public release.

Staff must also have authorisation from their SES Officer before publishing any wider information relating to the ANAO, especially any comment that:

- *commits the ANAO or the Australian Government to any action or initiative;*
- *attempts to speak, or could be seen as speaking, on behalf of the ANAO or the Australian Government;*
- *relates to controversial, sensitive, confidential or political matters;*
- *could be interpreted as a personal political view or political advocacy; or*
- *could bring the ANAO or the APS into disrepute.*

Of course, matters that are subject to handling restrictions (Sensitive, DLM, etc) or that are security classified cannot be discussed or mentioned online.

Participating in social media in an unofficial capacity

Professional

Professional use is when staff provide comment personally but as an experienced person in their particular field. For example, an accountant working in AASG might want to leave a comment about an accounting issue, which is not related to the ANAO or government policy, on the CPA President's blog. This would normally be done using a profile that was connected to a personal email address not an ANAO email address.

In this case it's important that ANAO employees notify their manager of any comment that they propose to make that might reasonably reflect on their employment within the ANAO or the broader APS or could result in a conflict of interest. It is also important for ANAO employees to make it clear when making public comments in those circumstances that they are not representing the ANAO or Australian Government.

Private

Private use is when staff comment on a matter in neither of the above capacities, e.g. discussing the performance of their favourite football team. This would normally be done with a profile linked to a personal email address. Staff commenting in a private capacity should not identify themselves as employees of the ANAO. Furthermore, the ANAO encourages staff not to disclose their employment on their personal facebook pages. Such disclosures could lead to confusion as to whether or not comments made on their personal site could be considered in a personal/professional or official capacity.

Principles for unofficial use

Staff should be careful not to comment on their personal site in a manner that could be misunderstood to be an official comment or reflect in a negative manner on their employment within the ANAO or broader APS. ANAO employees should also not rely on a sites security settings for a guarantee of privacy to make inappropriate comments.

Staff also need to be aware that commenting on the personal, social or medical situation of colleagues or clients in a derogatory or inappropriate manner is unacceptable and could be construed as bullying and harassment.

ANAO employees must still uphold the APS Values and Code of Conduct even when posting with an alias if any clear link can be made to their employment with the ANAO, even if they do not directly identify themselves as an ANAO or APS employee. For this reason, staff should be mindful of the *Public Service Act*.

When considering making comment in an unofficial capacity, employees may wish to reflect on the following questions:

- Could the comments reasonably be expected to cause the agency's clients and other stakeholders, including members of Parliament—whether members of the Government, the Opposition, independents, or other parties—to lose confidence in the employee's ability to work in an impartial and professional manner?
- Would comment of this kind, without proper justification, be likely to lower or undermine the reputation of the individual agency or of the APS as a whole?

- Are these comments in line with how the community in general expects the public service to operate and behave?
- Are these comments lawful? For example, do they comply with anti-discrimination legislation and laws relating to defamation?

Inappropriate public comment by APS employees may result in sanctions under the *Public Service Act*.¹

Social media and “Social Engineering”

Social engineering, “*the act of manipulating people into performing actions or divulging confidential information*” predates social media and the Internet. With limited technical knowledge and a little bit of data, other social media users can gain access to confidential or personal information with relative ease. It is always prudent that ANAO employees consider the following when using social media sites:

- **Check your account and privacy settings** – make sure you know who can access any postings you make before you post them. You should also check that you are not revealing more personal information about yourself than is necessary.
- **Review your posts** – especially before adding them to a site to ensure you have not revealed more than you should.
- **Consider any ‘Friends’ requests carefully** – in particular from people you do not know. You don’t want to reveal more information than you should or end up with less than professional updates or comments from others on your profile whether personal or professional.

Frequently Asked Questions:

I already use Facebook and/or other social media sites, but don’t want to create an official profile or discuss work-related matters online. Do I need to change my existing social media profiles?

No - As long as you don’t make any comments on your existing personal profile that are, or could be perceived to be in an official capacity for the ANAO or broader APS.

I’m thinking about using online social media for an ANAO related issue. Do I need my manager’s authorisation first?

Yes - You will need official permission from your SES Officer if you wish to discuss matters which are sensitive or not already in the public domain. You will also need permission before posting anything online which could be interpreted as an official statement or commitment to some course of action from the ANAO or the Australian Government. You should always exercise careful judgement before posting details about your role within the ANAO.

¹ For further information on the APSC’s circular relating to the social media and online participation of APS staff please refer to: <http://www.apsc.gov.au/publications-and-media/current-circulars-and-advices/2012/circular-20121>

You are reminded however, that any information subject to handling restrictions as a result of its security classification cannot be discussed or mentioned online.

The ANAO does not wish to limit your participation in online discussions, including those related to work, but it is important that you consider with due care and judgement the impact your online activities could have on the ANAO and the broader APS. If in doubt, always ask your manager.

Can I comment on another agency's blog or a news website?

Yes – You must remember to consider the distinction between your identity and views as a private citizen and your role as an ANAO employee. It is important that you do not post information that could be interpreted, or seen as an official position or statement on behalf of the ANAO unless you have sought and gained prior permission from your SES officer. Where appropriate, and only if you have permission to comment in an official capacity you should declare your position as an ANAO employee.

Even if you are participating as a private citizen, you are still subject to the standards of behaviour expected of all APS employees under the APS Values and Code of Conduct.

Can I comment on work from another area of the ANAO or work I am doing with another area of ANAO?

No - If you have permission to make an official statement or comment you should only do so on areas of work that are within your immediate responsibility. While you may have an interest in other ANAO service groups or projects, it is best that any comments are made by those groups or the assigned representative themselves.

You can comment on work you are doing with another ANAO service group but you should only do so after consulting with the relevant representative and receiving prior approval from them to do so.

Can I include ANAO documents on my Facebook page?

No - It's important that your professional or personal Facebook or other social media profile is clearly marked as such and not able to be perceived as an official source of ANAO information. You can, however, include links or direct other posters to documents hosted on the ANAO's official website which are publicly available.

Will my use of Facebook, and other social media at work be monitored?

Yes - If you access these social media sites from your work station your access to and use of these sites, like all internet access from work, is governed by the ANAO's Protective Security Document Framework. You can view the document here:

http://auditcentral/Topics/Corporate/Security0/Protective%20Security%20Framework%20Documentation/SEC_2%200_ICT%20ANAO%20ICT%20Security%20Policy.pdf

For further information about the ANAO's social media policy please contact the Executive Director of the Corporate Management Branch.