

# MARIST YOUTH MINISTRY



## SOCIAL NETWORKING POLICY

This policy document is validated for use in the Marist Brothers' **Province of Australia**

**Brother Michael Green FMS**  
*Executive Director for Marist Ministries*

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## **1- POLICY STATEMENT**

Marist Youth Ministry (MYM) believes that evangelisation is at the heart of its Mission. Affirming the words of the Apostle Paul, “Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel” (1Cor 9:16), MYM, a ministry of the Marist Brothers Province of Australia (hereafter ‘the Province’), has used different means of communication in order to ‘make Jesus Christ known and loved’. MYM understands that the use of technology should be pursued in a manner that allows growth in faith and in communion with others. Across all areas of the social networking endeavour, care should be taken by MYM employees and volunteers to ensure that the innate dignity of each person is upheld and that it is used in a manner that is life giving, safe, responsible, and upholds legislative frameworks.

## **2- DEFINITION**

Social media is defined as media designed to be disseminated through social interaction, using highly accessible and scalable publishing techniques. Social media use web-based technologies to transform and broadcast media monologues into social media dialogues. Examples include but are not limited to LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, MySpace, Vimeo, Tumblr and Instagram.

Both in professional and institutional roles, employees need to follow the same behavioural standards online as they would in real life. The same laws, professional expectations, and guidelines for interacting with students, children, young people and adults, media, and other ministries or churches apply online as in the real world. Employees and volunteers of MYM, acting in the name of Marist Brothers are liable for anything they post to social media sites.

## **3- OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES**

**Marist Youth Ministry recognises that** social media offers both opportunities and challenges to its life and mission.<sup>1</sup> These can be grouped into three primary categories:

- a) Visibility
- b) Community
- c) Accountability

### **a) Visibility**

MYM recognises that because of the high volume of content and sites, and the dynamics of search engines and computer networking, social media requires constant input and monitoring to make the online presence of MYM effective. MYM has set internal expectations at both national and regional levels regarding how often posts will be made as set under the guidelines below. It is the responsibility of the MYM Regional Coordinators and Remar Coordinator to monitor sites relating to their particular area of ministry.

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<sup>1</sup> These principles are based on the Social Media Guidelines by the United States Bishops Conference.

## **b) Community**

MYM recognises that Social Media does not substitute face-to-face gatherings. It can support communities in a myriad of ways: connecting people with similar interests, sharing information about in-person events, providing ways for people to engage in dialogue, etc.

## **c) Accountability**

MYM recognises that social media requires accountability and responsibility. Users of social media expect MYM site administrators (MYM Staff and Volunteers) to allow dialogue, to provide information, and to acknowledge mistakes.

## **4- GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The Guiding principles concerning the dynamic between use of public social media profiles and personal profiles include:<sup>2</sup>

- a) **Nature of the information:** The sharing of information on sites should be of appropriate materials for faith formation, evangelization or catechesis. Social-Networking sites can be ideal for promotion of MYM events or activities and for sharing worship resources in a wide range of formats, be it photos, video, text or sound.
- b) **Child Protection:** When using an online communication, the MYM Child Protection Policy must be adhered to; and any contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults must be done through MYM's formal agreed channels of communications and must be for work related reasons.
- c) **Maintain Professional Boundaries:** This means that all communication about all aspects of MYM and on behalf of MYM should be professional communication in the social networking environment.
- d) **Public nature of communication:**<sup>3</sup> When communicating with children and young people and vulnerable adults, one must avoid doing so privately. This places a dynamic where both worker/volunteer and child are at risk, because the relation could be perceived as inappropriate. If unavoidable, a carbon copy (cc) of the email must be sent to the Ministry Leader.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This has been adapted from the Social-Networking Protocol for the Catholic Church in Australia, released by the Bishops Commission for Mission and Faith Formation, a Commission of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference.

<sup>3</sup> This refers to Social Networking and emailing.

<sup>4</sup> This may be the MYM regional Coordinator or the Remar Coordinator or the National Coordinator depending on the scenario.

## 5- PROTOCOLS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA SITES INCLUDING PERSONAL SITES

### a) **Communication guidelines Public sites such as MySpace or Facebook, Vimeo, Tumblr and Instagram:**

- i. All Communication using social media must be in line with the MYM staff Code of Conduct as well as the Social Media Guide listed in Point 6. The Guide covers practical examples relating to the use of Facebook.
- ii. MYM staff and volunteers who set up public pages under the name of MYM must also be aware of the privacy settings and the number of options for setting up a profile on Facebook or MySpace. Pages must be set up as 'Religious Organisations' and members or coordinators of the Official Group should be clearly identified. The page must have multiple administrators. For each region this includes the MYM and or Coordinator, regional assistants and interns.
- iii. In regards to the use of Facebook: Each MYM region including Remar must create a public profile on Facebook in the form of a 'Like' page. Administrators, when making comments can do so in the name of MYM or Remar. The idea of a 'Like' page ensures that all staff and volunteers acting on the page are displayed as a public figure –with a photo and information about MYM work and ministry. Those wanting to interact with the ministry can choose to like the page. This can avoid some of the tensions which can come with accepting or denying 'friend' requests.
- iv. Personal profile must not be seen as being used to act on behalf of MYM. All official ministry work must be done through the public pages. In practice, this means that MYM staff and volunteers must not accept 'friend' requests from young people they meet during the course of their ministry, if they are not personal friends with them. This does not prevent workers from having their own personal profiles; it simply places a clear line between personal and work. This can also remove any ambiguity about friendship relationships or ministry relationships.
- v. The MYM regional Coordinators and the Remar Coordinators are responsible for the ongoing monitoring of the Regional Youth ministry pages and profiles. The National Coordinator is also responsible for overall monitoring of MYM online presence. Commentaries appearing on social networking sites of an inappropriate or offensive nature or which could be interpreted as bullying should be immediately removed and reported to the relevant Coordinator.

- vi. Privacy should be of the utmost importance, and care should be taken to protect people, especially youth, from their personal information being displayed on a social networking site. This particularly refers to phone numbers and email addresses.

**b) Using photographs and images when using online communication**

- i. The use of photographs or videos should be carefully monitored, and permissions should be sought from all who appear in photographs or videos before being posted or tagged. While in some public contexts, it can be assumed that people know they are being photographed to go on a website or a Facebook page; other situations might not be so obvious. Material should always be appropriate, and the sharing of embarrassing or offensive photos or videos should always be avoided.
- ii. Personal images of children and young people must never be used or uploaded without written parental consent who need to be aware that their images will be used for MYM promotion. And one must avoid using full names or personal contact details when posting or publishing images of children.
- iii. One-on-one photo session with children and young people must always be supervised.

**c) Texting**

- i. Texting is an essential daily way of communicating. Workers and volunteers must be careful when emailing and texting not to use language and symbols that can be misinterpreted. For instance, consider how 'love' and 'XXX' might be perceived and misinterpreted.

## 6- SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDE – PRACTICAL COMPONENT

### Part I: Integrity of Personal Profiles on Facebook

While MYM has a number of ‘like’ pages set up for the ministry purposes, as a staff member or volunteer with MYM, you need to be aware of the public perceptions which you create by the information posted on your personal profiles and timelines. The following guidelines have been developed to assist you in this.

- a) When posting on a personal page on any social media, updates should generally be positive and uplifting.
- b) Social media should not be seen as a space to “rant” about issues in a negative manner.
- c) Great care should be taken when uploading photos, or when being tagged in photos, to ensure that nothing that is uploaded compromises or brings into disrepute the vision and mission of MYM. There is a “Timeline review” option on Facebook, which prevents anything from being posted before it can be reviewed by the user. You are strongly encouraged to use this service.
- d) Most social media sites allow your friends (which may include people you minister to) to see all of your activity, not just what you do on your own page. For this reason, particular care should be taken when:
  - a) Liking statuses, photos and videos posted by another person, or a page; and
  - b) Commenting on statuses, photos and videos posted by another person, or a page.
- e) Commenting or liking these things will often show up in the News Feed of your friends to say “[insert your name] has liked this photo” and sometimes these posts are not reflective of our ministry.

### Part II: Ensuring consistency with the regional MYM ‘like’ page.

All members of the team have equal status as managers of the MYM page. This means we can all create posts, send messages and create adverts for the page, as well as seeing the pages insights. Most importantly, this also allows us to invite our personal friends to like our page, which is vital in helping us to build our audience and reach.

#### a) Using the page with your personal account

- i. Every time you go to the MYM page, the first thing you need to check is that you are switched back to using Facebook as yourself. At the top of the page, just under the Facebook toolbar, there should be a link that says “You are currently using Facebook as Marist Youth Ministry – Use Facebook as [your name]”. Always click to use Facebook as yourself.
- ii. This will not affect your ability to still use the page as a manager and invite friends and see insights etc. The advantage of using Facebook as “yourself” even

when on the page is that when you like and comment on the things on the page, they will come up on your friends' news feed as your activity. This is an extremely effective way of getting reach on our posts, because they will see the post you have commented on or liked even if they do not like the page themselves. Sharing relevant posts is also strongly encouraged. The only exceptions to these guidelines are when you are posting.

**b) Posting as Marist Youth Ministry**

- i. If you want to post to the timeline of MYM, do not use your personal account, but post as the page. If you post as your personal account, it will not stay on the timeline, but will get shunned to the sidebox called "Recent Posts by Others". We are going to leave it so people cannot post directly to our timeline, because often spammers will get in, and then the page will just look messy. We also want our page to be a heaven for proper grammar and punctuation, and other people will often ruin that.
- ii. Posts as MYM must ALWAYS be accompanied by a: photo, video or link to an event. Text only posts by pages are the Black Holes of Social Media. The more concise the better, and the "See More..." button, is another Black Hole, unless you are posting a full URL link.
- iii. Posts should be fun, humorous and quirky but must always be appropriate. Always share your post from your personal account once you have posted from the page. Leaving a bit of time between posting and sharing can be effective to get more reach.

**c) Commenting as Marist Youth Ministry**

- i. The only time that the page account should be used to comment on anything is if a practical or logistical detail is asked on the page. Eg. If someone asks what time Mass + Dinner is, then you would reply using the Marist Youth Ministry account. Otherwise if you are commenting, use your personal account making in clear that you are not acting on behalf of MYM.

**d) What to Post?**

- i. Posting on the MYM page should maintain a balance of informative and fun. Posts that are only information (eg. Links to events etc.) should always be written and delivered in a fun and entertaining way, with the sole purpose of attracting "likes". Beware of trying too hard when posting fun things, because we don't want our page overloaded with memes and the like. If in doubt, wait 2 hours. If you still think it's funny, then you can post it. DO NOT post any negative humour or any clichéd internet trends (ie Harlem Shake etc.)

- ii. When it comes to event pages created through the MYM profile, it's always beneficial to follow up attendees when they say that are coming. A simple like, and a brief welcome is all that is needed here. This may be done under your name, and not "Marist Youth Ministry" to ensure it's still personable.

**e) When to Post?**

- i. From our experience this year, the best time to post information to the page is generally between 6-9pm during the week to ensure the highest amount of views and interaction with the page.

**Part III: Special Note**

While the above guidelines are quite specific to Facebook, the principles pertaining to appropriate posts and public perceptions are applicable to other social networking platforms.

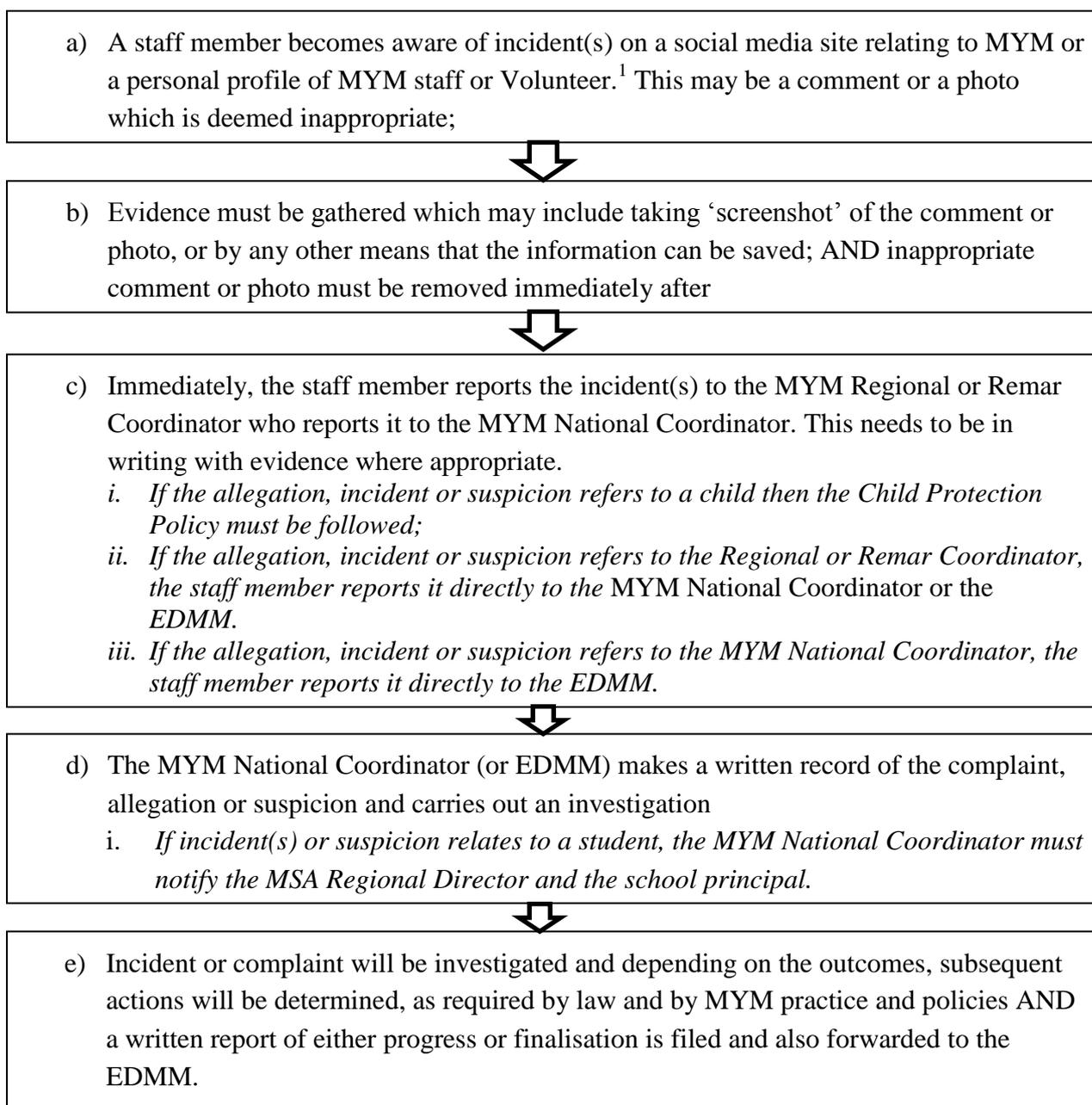
**7- TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

The terms and conditions outlined in this document apply to staff members and volunteers accessing and using social media platforms for work-related purposes and for personal purposes where it is connected to, or impacts, a staff member's employment with MYM.

- a) **Work-related Purposes:** Staff members must be expressly authorised by MYM to use social media platforms on behalf of the organisation. MYM reserves the right to request certain subjects be avoided, decline to use certain social media platforms and remove inappropriate comments from them.
- b) **Personal Purposes:** Whether staff members are using their own systems and devices or that of their employer, they must exercise caution when using social media platforms for personal purposes to ensure such usage will not damage the relationship between the staff member and MYM; or damage MYM's or the Province's interests in any capacity or be incompatible with the staff member's duties as an employee. Where this occurs, the staff member may be subject to disciplinary action, including termination of employment. Conduct that could damage the relationship includes but is not limited to, derogatory, offensive or discriminatory statements or comments about managers, other employees or MYM generally.

## 8- REPORTING

In the case of a breach of this policy or in the case inappropriate comment or allegation, incident or suspicion will be investigated and may result in disciplinary action, including termination of employment and/or criminal prosecution. The following steps must be followed when an incident is detected:



## 9- FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information about the processes outlined in this document can be sought from Nehme Khattar - MYM National Coordinator on 02 9218 4000.

## APPENDIX 1: DEFINITIONS

### **Web 2.0:**

The term “Web 2.0” is commonly associated with Web applications that facilitate interactive information sharing. A Web 2.0 site allows its users to interact with other users, to change website content, to provide reaction to content, to share the site’s content with others, or to filter content being provided by the site creator. This is in contrast with non-interactive websites, where users are limited to the passive viewing of information that is provided to them. \* Example: Amazon.com’s inclusion of users’ reviews and offering of recommendations based on the consumer’s past use of the site make it a Web 2.0 site.

### **Blog:**

A blog (a contraction of the term “web log”) is a type of website, usually maintained by an individual, with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse-chronological order. “Blog” can also be used as a verb, meaning to maintain or add content to a blog. \* Examples: There are many types of blogs on sites throughout the Internet. They are common for celebrities, writers, journalists, etc. WordPress is one of the more popular tools used to create blogs.

### **Micro-blog:**

This form of multimedia blogging allows users to send brief text updates or to publish micromedia such as photos or audio clips, to be viewed either by anyone or by a restricted group, which can be chosen by the user. These messages can be submitted by a variety of means, including text messaging, instant messaging, e-mail, digital audio, or through a Web interface. The content of a micro-blog differs from a traditional blog in that it is typically smaller in actual size and aggregate file size. A single entry could consist of a single sentence or fragment, an image, or a ten-second video. \* Example: Twitter is a form of micro-blogging in which entries are limited to 140 characters.

### **Social network:**

A social network is a Web 2.0 site that is entirely driven by content of its members. Individuals are allowed flexibility in privacy settings; in posting text, photos, video, links, and other information; and in level of interaction with other members. \* Examples: Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace, Twitter, YouTube, and Flickr are often included in lists of social networking sites, although sometimes

### **Ministry website: 3**

An Internet website/tool created by employees, clerics, and volunteers for the sole purpose of conducting diocesan/affiliate business.

### **Personal website:**

A social network page, blog, or any Internet website/tool created by employees, clerics, and volunteers primarily to share personal communication with friends and associates.