

# PARENT ADMINISTERED SOCIAL MEDIA AND MESSAGING GROUPS

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## INTENT

Townsville Catholic Education (TCE) acknowledges that parents and carers often establish their own social media or messaging groups (for example Facebook or WhatsApp) to connect with one another, in addition to official school communication channels.

While TCE will always promote and prioritise official school Facebook pages and communication platforms as the primary source of information, TCE recognises that parent-administered groups exist and play a role in parent connection and community building.

The purpose of this guideline is to provide clear expectations for parents and carers who create or administer Social Media or Messaging groups associated with TCE schools. These guidelines aim to support respectful and constructive online engagement, safeguard the wellbeing and privacy of students and staff, and protect the reputation and integrity of TCE school communities in line with the values of Catholic education.

## SCOPE

This guideline applies to:

- Social media or messaging groups created and administered by parents or carers
- Groups that reference, relate to, or are associated with a Townsville Catholic Education school, class or year level
- Parent-run groups established for specific purposes, including the buying and selling of school uniforms

This guideline does not apply to:

- Official Townsville Catholic Education or school-managed social media accounts
- Formal school communication channels or complaint processes.

This guideline should be read in conjunction with Townsville Catholic Education's Parent Code of Conduct and Management of Complaints Procedure.

## INTRODUCTION

Many parents and carers choose to use social media or messaging groups (such as Facebook or WhatsApp) to share information, coordinate activities and build social connections within school communities. When used appropriately, these groups can be a positive addition to school life.

However, as these groups are public or semi-public forums, inappropriate or poorly managed content may negatively impact the wellbeing, safety and reputation of individuals or the broader school community. This guideline provides principles and expectations to support responsible use and administration of parent-run Facebook groups.

Where a school becomes aware that a parent-administered Facebook group has been established that relates to the school, the principal (or delegate) should provide the group administrator with a copy of these guidelines and encourage their alignment with them. Schools may also share this guideline with the broader parent community through newsletters, websites and other communication channels to support awareness of respectful online engagement.

## **GUIDELINES**

### **Status of Parent-Administered Groups**

Parent-administered social media or messaging groups are not official communication channels of Townsville Catholic Education or its schools.

All parent-administered groups must include a clear disclaimer such as:

*"This is a parent-run social media group. It is not an official Townsville Catholic Education or school communication channel. Views expressed here are those of individuals and do not represent the school or Townsville Catholic Education."*

Schools and Townsville Catholic Education staff do not moderate, monitor or respond to content posted in parent-administered social media and messaging groups.

### **Naming of Groups**

To avoid confusion within the school community:

1. Group names must not rely solely on the school name.
2. The purpose of the group must be clearly identified (e.g parent and carers, year level or class group, uniforms buy/sell)
3. Group names must not imply endorsement, approval or management by TCE or the school.
4. School or TCE logos, crests or branding must not be used as profile or cover images.

### **Group Administrators**

The group creator is responsible for the administration and moderation of the group.

1. Administrators have the ability to add or remove members, approve content and manage group settings.
2. It is recommended that administrators are individuals who are willing to actively monitor the group and support respectful and constructive communication.
3. Where the school becomes aware of a parent-administered group, administrators may be provided with a copy of these guidelines by the school principal (or delegate)
4. Administrators are encouraged to establish and clearly publish group rules aligned with this guideline.
5. Administrators should be familiar with the relevant platform's community standards (for example Facebook Community Standards) as well as this guideline.

### **Expectations for Content and Conduct**

Parent-administered groups are expected to:

- Promote respectful, constructive and positive communication
- Share general, non-sensitive information about school activities and community events
- Support a sense of belonging and mutual respect

## **Staff Members who are also Parents or Carers**

Staff members who are also parents or carers of students may choose to join parent-administered Facebook groups in their personal capacity.

Where a staff member participates in a parent-administered groups:

- They do so strictly as a parent, not as a representative of the school or Townsville Catholic Education.
- Any comments made by staff members are personal views and must not be interpreted as official school or TCE positions.
- They must not respond to complaints, concerns or queries about the school, staff or students.
- They must not disclose, discuss or comment on confidential or sensitive school or TCE information.

Participation by staff members in parent-administered groups does not constitute school engagement, endorsement or official communication.

## **Role of Schools and TCE**

Schools and Townsville Catholic Education do not establish, administer, promote, endorse, moderate or participate in parent-administered Facebook groups.

Schools will not:

- Provide parent or carer contact details to support the creation or management of parent-run Facebook groups.
- Add parents or carers to Facebook groups on behalf of administrators.
- Share links to parent-administered groups via newsletters, official social media pages, or other school communication channels.
- Nominate or approve group administrators

This ensures compliance with privacy obligations and maintains clear boundaries between official school communication and parent-run forums.

Before posting, members should consider whether:

- The content is relevant and helpful
- It is respectful and appropriate
- It could cause harm, distress or misunderstanding

Anonymous posts are not permitted. All posts and comments must be made using a member's identifiable profile to support transparency, accountability and respectful communication.

Parents and carers are expected to model respectful and responsible online behaviour at all times.

# **PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

## **Staff and Students**

1. Staff and students must not be named in posts or comments
2. Information that could identify a child's location or personal circumstances must not be shared.
3. The privacy preferences of families and staff must be respected at all times.

## **Images and Photographs**

1. Parents may share images of their own child.
2. If other children appear in an image, consent must be obtained from their parent or carer prior to posting.
3. Staff or students must not be tagged, named or identified without consent.
4. Care must be taken to ensure images and backgrounds reflect the school community appropriately.

This aligns with Townsville Catholic Education's Privacy and Confidentiality obligations.

## Managing Inappropriate Content

If negative, derogatory or inappropriate content is posted, administrators should:

1. Refrain from engaging publicly with the content.
2. Take a screenshot or copy of the content for records.
3. Remove or delete the content promptly to prevent further harm or escalation.
4. Block or remove the offending user where appropriate.
5. Report the content to Facebook.
6. Inform the school principal if the content relates to the school, staff or students.

## Raising Complaints or Concerns

Parent-administered Facebook groups are not the forum for raising complaints regarding:

- School operations
- Staff conduct or performance
- Student matters

Concerns should be addressed through the appropriate channels:

1. Directly with the school principal
2. If unresolved, through Townsville Catholic Education's established [complaints process](#).

Raising complaints on social media does not guarantee awareness or response by the school. Schools may refer parents back to this guideline when concerns are raised via social media.

## Legal and Safety Concerns

Administrators and members should be aware that:

1. Online content can significantly impact the reputation and wellbeing of individuals and school communities.
2. Inappropriate content may constitute a criminal offence.
3. Defamatory statements may result in legal action under the *Defamation Act 2005 (Qld)*.
4. Content that menaces, harasses or causes offence may breach the *Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth)*.

School staff may seek union support or independent legal advice if online content seriously impacts their reputation or wellbeing.

## Community Standards

1. All group content must comply with the relevant platform's Community Standards and Terms of Service (For example Facebook Community Standards)
2. Content that breaches these community standards may be removed.
3. Repeated breaches may result in the restriction or disabling of the group.

## Breach of Guidelines

Where content or behaviour associated with a parent-administered Facebook group has a significant impact on staff, students or the school community, Townsville Catholic Education may take action in accordance with relevant TCE policies, procedures and guidelines. This may include referral to relevant conduct, complaints or legal processes.

## REFERENCES

- [Townsville Catholic Education Social Media Guidelines](#)
- [Facebook Community Standards and Terms of Service](#)
- [Criminal Code Act 1995 \(Cth\)](#)
- [Defamation Act 2005 \(Qld\)](#)
- [Management of Complaints Procedure](#)
- [Parent Code of Conduct](#)