



## COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

### Rationale

St Patrick's College is a Catholic secondary school for boys located in Ballarat, Victoria. The College's teachings are based upon the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the charism of Edmund Rice, founder of the Christian Brothers. This philosophy arose from Edmund's reading and interpretation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and being mindful of the moral, social and political realities of his day.

This charism is reflected in the current practices of the College. St Patrick's College maintains an inclusive enrolment policy, is generally considered to be a low fee school and offers a broad range of curricular and co-curricular options to cater for boys with a range of learning and developmental needs. The College recognises that it educates boys in partnership with families and that open, honest and transparent communications are the foundation of building and maintaining positive relationships between home and school that will maximise learning outcomes for all boys.

This commitment is reflected in the College's 2012-2014 Strategic Plan and the following excerpts from the College Mission Statement.

#### *Communication*

*We recognise the family as the primary educators of our students and collaborate with parents for the development of their sons.*

*We communicate effectively with all members of our community of students, staff, families, clergy and Old Collegians and the wider society.*

### Scriptural Context

'Let your yes be yes and your no be no'. Letter of St James 5:12

### Policy Statement

The College will communicate effectively with all members of our community of students, staff, families, Christian Brothers, Clergy and Old Collegians and the wider society using a range of traditional and emerging information and communication technologies (ICT).

The College will at all times communicate in an open, honest and transparent manner in line with the vision, mission and values of the College and in adherence with National Privacy principles as established in the Commonwealth Privacy Act, 2001.

Students and staff will show restraint when utilising social media via the College's ICT system and will communicate in line with the mission and values of the College. The College will reserve the right to review staff usage of the ICT network and to take disciplinary action should usage contravene the law, the mission of the College or result in a reduction in staff productivity.

All social media communications must comply with the College's Privacy Policy which is based upon National Privacy principles as established in the Commonwealth Privacy Act, 2001.

## **Guidelines**

1. The College will communicate in an effective and timely manner with stakeholders of the College using traditional and emerging information and communication technologies that are accessible to members of the community.
2. New methods of ICT will be analysed and evaluated by the College's Public Relations and Marketing Committee and recommendations made to the College Board. New ICT media will only be supported if they increase access to information whilst providing safeguards relating to content in line with the College's vision, mission and values statements.
3. The College will utilise cost effective ICT media provided that they can guarantee the integrity of information and that they can ensure information will be received and comprehended by members of the College community.
4. Communications from staff employed by the College which incorporate the College name, crest or logo, and which purport to be communications of the College, must be approved by the Headmaster or his delegated representative prior to transmission.
5. Communications from members of staff should follow guidelines as established in the College's 2004 Style Guide.
6. A regular newsletter will be produced to inform the College community of current and approaching events, developments in College life, developments in education that affect the College, and the nature of the College's mission.
7. The College will produce an Annual Report to EREA and an annual report for the College community.
8. An annual magazine will be produced and made available to students and other key stakeholders as an historical record of the school year.
9. The College will develop and maintain positive relationships with all sections of the media to promote, recognise and celebrate the achievements of students, staff, Old Collegians and other members of the College community.

- 9.1 Guidelines for dealing with the media:
  - 9.1.1 Staff members are not to speak directly with the media on behalf of the College without the prior approval of the Headmaster or his delegated representative. The Director of Community Development must also be notified when staff are contacted by members of the media.
  - 9.1.2 Media statements may not contain information on the College generally, or students or staff individually, that contravenes the College's policy on the handling of confidential information.
  - 9.1.3 Media statements that contain personal information on students or staff that has not been approved by the individual student or staff member must be approved by Headmaster or his delegated representative prior to issue.
  - 9.1.4 Staff members of the College have the right to refuse to be filmed, photographed or interviewed by representatives of the media or by the College for distribution to the media. Unless a student has opted not to have images available when completing the Confirmation of Details Form during the enrolment process, all students are expected to be available to be filmed, photographed or interviewed by representatives of the media or by the College for distribution to the media.
- 9.2 Visits to College by Members of the Media
  - 9.2.1 The Development Office should be advised of all visits by media representatives to St Patrick's College. Whenever possible, Development Office staff will ensure media representatives are greeted professionally and assisted during their visit.
- 9.3 Approval of Written Media Statements
  - 9.3.1 Written media statements on College activities or issues must be approved by the Headmaster or his delegated representative prior to distribution.
- 9.4 Issuing of Written Media Statements
  - 9.4.1 Written media statements may only be issued when the necessary approvals have been obtained.
  - 9.4.2 All written media statements using the St Patrick's College name and/or logo must be issued through the Development Office.
  - 9.4.3 To maintain open and honest communication with the media, the College will not provide comment to the media 'off the record'.
10. All communications from the College will adhere with National Privacy principles as established in the Commonwealth Privacy Act, 2001.

## Social Media Guidelines

1. These social media guidelines apply to all employees, staff, Board members and volunteers utilising the College's ICT network or engaging in activities that relate to the operations of the College.
2. Social media tools are defined in this policy as all online media which allow user participation and interaction. Some common examples are:
  - social networking sites, e.g. Facebook, MySpace, Bebo, Friendster
  - video and photo sharing web sites, e.g. Flickr, YouTube, Blip.tv
  - micro-blogging and activity stream sites, e.g. Twitter, Jaiku, Yammer
  - blogs and blogging platforms, e.g. WordPress, Blogger, Tumblr
  - forums and discussion boards, e.g. Trove Forum, Yahoo! Groups, Google Groups
  - online encyclopaedias, e.g. Wikipedia
  - any other web sites that allow individual users or companies to use simple publishing tools, e.g. wikis
3. Inappropriate usage of social media could take the form of:
  - Breach of the College's mission and values as outlined in the 2012-2014 Strategic Plan.
  - Plagiarism or breach of copyright when using or repurposing material.
  - Excessive time used browsing social media applications leading to a significant decline in productivity.
  - Inappropriate use of language or images that portray the College in a poor light.
  - Actions that bring the brand and reputation of the College into disrepute.
  - Representing themselves as someone else either within the College or outside of the College.
  - Making promises or statements regarding the College's operations which are misleading, fraudulent or false.
  - Disclosing personal information relating to students, staff or volunteers, or official information which is confidential or commercial-in-confidence.
  - Use of social media to defame, bully or discredit another individual, group or organisation. In such cases victims will be encouraged to exercise their full legal rights in relation to breaches of relevant laws.
  - Conducting private business.
  - Using discriminatory, defamatory, abusive or otherwise objectionable language in content.
  - Accessing, downloading or transmitting any kind of sexually explicit material, violent images including graphic images of blood or gore (without medical purpose).
  - Accessing, downloading or transmitting information on the use and construction of weapons, explosives and other tools of violence or terrorism.
  - Accessing, downloading or transmitting any material deemed to be illegal under Victorian or Australian Commonwealth law.

- Accessing, downloading or transmitting hate speeches and overt racism; material extolling the inherent or moral superiority or inferiority of a particular race, ethnic group, or sexual orientation; racial epithets; or religious bigotry.
  - Compromising the privacy of any person.
  - Attempting to gain unauthorised access to the computing resources of other organisations.
  - Disruption of the integrity of the College's data or information services.
4. Staff, students and volunteers making official use of social media must:
- read, understand, and comply with the College's Electronic Usage Policy.
  - recognise that the Electronic Usage Policy also applies to social media: Users **must not** access inappropriate material on the Internet via a web browser or other software tool.
  - avoid any statement that might bring the College into disrepute.
  - not commit the College to any action or initiative without appropriate authority.
  - not disclose official information unless authorised to do so or unless it is already in the public domain.
  - be aware of laws covering libel, defamation, privacy and the protection of intellectual property.
  - be apolitical, impartial and professional, and avoid any statements that might be interpreted as being in contravention of the teachings of the Catholic Church.

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**Status of Policy:** Ratified by the College Board, May 2012

**Review:** 2015