



AACBT

AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION
FOR COGNITIVE AND
BEHAVIOUR THERAPY

Policy Title:	Social Media		
Policy Number:	AACBT-POL-10	Process Owner:	Board
Authorised by:	National President		
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General disclaimer

On 8 September 2021, the High Court ruled that a publisher can be held responsible for defamatory comments readers leave on its Facebook pages.¹

This decision may mean anyone who runs a social media page can theoretically be sued over disparaging comments posted by readers or random group members — even if the publisher isn't aware of the comment.

The case focused on Facebook, but the implications are not Facebook-specific. It can apply equally to Twitter, LinkedIn, and other social media too. The ruling may mean if AACBT posts something to a social media platform and encourage or invite third party comments, we could be liable for any comments that follow.

We, therefore, have put the following measures in place to ensure that AACBT can continue to engage with its social media readership in a manner that is legally sound, transparent, and does not stifle public and social debate.

Within this document, AACBT is referred to as “We”, “Us”, “Our”.

Definitions

Ban/block: restricting a user's access to AACBT's profile, posts, and the comments section on social media platforms.

Closed (comment section): Restricting comments on a post from any user other than AACBT.

Comment/s: words or images shared in the comments section of a post.

Delete: removing a post or comment fully from the social media platform.

Hidden: making a comment unviewable by anyone other than the user and the social media admin.

Platform: the individual social media website.

Post: a link, image, or text posted to AACBT's social media platforms by a AACBT staff member or volunteer.

Social media: unless a platform is named, social media refers to Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn.

User: a third-party social media profile that is not owned by AACBT. This can be an individual user or a page.

¹ <https://eresources.hcourt.gov.au/downloadPdf/2021/HCA/27>



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Banned words and phrases

On both Facebook and Instagram AACBT has the option to submit a list of words and phrases that are automatically screened by the platform. User comments that use these words (e.g., highly offensive terms) will be automatically hidden by the platform.

Monitoring comments, removal of defamatory and offensive comments, and closing the comments section

AACBT's Executive Officer will monitor social media comments periodically, checking for highly offensive or defamatory comments, or comments that incite harm/violence (see definitions below, these three terms will now be replaced with the umbrella term 'antisocial').

- **Highly offensive comment:** A comment that uses language in a way that could cause offence to a reasonable person. We are guided by key industry standards, such as Australian Press Council standards², and widely accepted human rights laws such as those enshrined in the Racial Discrimination Act³.
- **Defamatory comment:** A comment that lowers a person in the estimation of others.
- **A comment that incites harm/violence:** A comment that causes or intends to cause (someone) to act in an angry, harmful, or violent way.

A comment will be hidden or deleted by the Executive Officer if it is deemed to be antisocial. In some instances, whole comment threads may be hidden or deleted, even if some comments are allowable, because the thread itself is deemed to be encouraging antisocial engagement.

From time to time, the Executive Officer will close the comments section on posts that are deemed to potentially facilitate antisocial comments. Where a post is deemed as at low risk of this, the comments section may remain open.

When a comments section is closed, a link to this social media policy will always be attached.

Note: AACBT is committed to the moderation of our social media comments, however, it is reasonable that the Executive Officer will not be monitoring comments continuously. They will check all comments at a minimum of once per weekday, but if an antisocial comment is posted by a user in between periods of moderation, it is reasonable to assume that the Executive Officer had no knowledge of this comment and did/will do their best to address the comment in line with AACBT's social media policy when they become aware of the antisocial comment.

Posting controversial content

As a result of a recent High Court ruling which holds the publisher responsible for defamatory comments made on a publisher's post by third-party users, AACBT reserves the right to close all comments on certain posts that we believe are particularly likely to result in defamatory comments.

Banning or blocking users

AACBT reserves the right to block or ban a user from our social media platforms if they engage with AACBT's posts or other users' comments in a manner that is deemed antisocial.

² <https://www.presscouncil.org.au/standards/>

³ <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/race-discrimination/publications/guide-racial-hatred-act>



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When a user is blocked or banned the Executive Officer must provide the Director (Website and Social Media) with an example of their antisocial behaviour. The user does not need to be issued a warning before being blocked or banned, nor do they need to be informed that this has taken place. The Executive Officer or Director (Website and Social Media) can reinstate or unblock a user at their own discretion but are under no obligation to do so.

Conflict resolution

If a user feels that they or another user has been defamed, made to feel unsafe, or offended by anything that AACBT has posted on social media, or by a comment from another user that AACBT has not moderated, the user's first port of call should be the Director (Website and Social Media) at socialmedia@aacbt.org.au.

AACBT will endeavour to address the situation as quickly as possible in accordance with our social media policy. Legal recourse should not be taken by the user until the Director (Website and Social Media) has been contacted and a reasonable amount of response time given.

This policy

This social media policy will be accessible via AACBT's webpage under at About & Contact / Social media.

The policy will be reviewed annually or when there is an additional cause to do so. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this policy, please contact the Director (Website and Social Media) at socialmedia@aacbt.org.au.