Recommendation 1 (Unified strategy)

Defence should consider establishing a Digital Executive Oversight Committee (DEOC) or similar. DEOC will provide executive sponsorship and guidance to ensure that Defence’s social media strategies and tactics are aligned.

It would be beneficial to Defence if DEOC were chaired by a senior member of the organisation. That would add gravitas to the group’s practical and inspirational leadership roles.

The committee should have a balanced representation from across Defence, including Communications and Media Branch, ICT, Human Resources, the Defence Community Organisation and Intelligence.

While strategy and direction would be centralised to DEOC, resourcing should remain locally based in order to address the unique needs of the individual Services. Should Defence attempt to centrally coordinate all social media activities, it would run the risk of creating approval bottlenecks that could undermine the speed and authenticity of the conversation and engagement. Organising social media requires a hybrid approach to management, with top-down leadership influencing medium- and long-term strategy and policy, but decentralised day-to-day execution.

DEOC would ensure that efforts in social media are focused on, but not limited to:

- assessments of social media and strategy development
- cost–benefit analyses
- expenditure and resourcing control
- best practice documentation and dissemination
- the education of senior personnel
- the setting of Defence’s social media education agenda
- establishing and maintaining a register of all official and associated social media sites.
Recommendation 2 (Policy)

All policies relating to the use of social media, the internet or cyber-activities should be reviewed. Services guidelines should also be reviewed to ensure that they are consistent with the overall social media policy and engagement principles.

Although the Services have different individual requirements, they should collaborate to ensure broad consistency in their guidelines. This could be coordinated by DEOC.

Clear social media guidelines should be brought to the attention of individuals at the point of engagement with Defence in social media.

A policy identification decision tree or process should be developed to help members navigate to relevant information without expecting them to have a full understanding of all policies.

Recommendation 3 (Education)

Defence should consider reviewing social media training and the way it is prioritised and delivered in order to ensure consistency. The review should include relevant resources, guidelines and support mechanisms.

Education and training should be tailored to different stakeholder groups according to their requirements and level of understanding of social media. For example:

- Executive-level training should focus on education about the opportunities and risks associated with social media, as well as on opportunities to contribute to DEOC.
- Middle managers should be equipped with the skills and knowledge to support and help implement social media practices within their local areas.
- Personnel should be trained about the use social media to ensure responsible representation of themselves and Defence, and about how they should access relevant policy and guidelines.

The training should align with the updated policy and a single vision defined by DEOC to ensure that a balanced education is delivered.

All training materials should demonstrate how the central and local policies interlink and should also emphasise overarching ground rules, such as security and Defence values. All training should be well defined, with actionable take-outs, use sound examples, and place limited reliance on the application of ‘common sense’.

Once social media have been defined and inconsistencies in policy and education have been resolved, Defence may wish to develop a platform-neutral decision tree or guide to help personnel locate the social media policy section appropriate to their situation. The guidance should provide high-level guidance to personnel, rather than guidelines for every scenario that might arise.

Social media education and support should go beyond Defence personnel to include friends and families.
Recommendation 4 (Resourcing)

Human and software resources should be defined and provided to support the understanding and management of social media in Defence.

Resources could include incremental specialised personnel, software to monitor, measure and understand online activity, and engagement and moderating tools. DEOC should administer centralised expenditure for resources and monitoring and moderation software, as this process will benefit a number of areas of Defence.

Recommendation 5 (Channel/content plan)

Defence should investigate the benefits of aligning content strategies across official social media.

Local social media teams should define and share content strategies and consider predefined plans, such as a five-day calendar of events for each working week. Defence and Defence Force Recruiting should continue the ‘test and learn’ methodology within official Defence social media presences. Further consideration should be given to the effects of immediately deferring recruitment enquiries made in the social media space.

Recommendation 6 (Crisis management)

Defence should develop a social media crisis plan that aligns with existing PR, marketing and brand communication plans.

Although crisis management is usually reactive, a plan could be developed in conjunction with key stakeholders to consider proactive strategies as well. As part of the plan, Defence should define what constitutes a crisis and identify specific types of breach and the best responses to them. A triage system for assessing risks according to probability and severity could be used, which would help to mitigate problems in the social media space before they become crises.

During a crisis, Defence should adopt a more assertive and faster paced process, as outlined in the introduction to Section 4 of this report. Personnel tasked with managing social media should receive special training in how to respond to a crisis quickly and flexibly. Fast-tracked approval processes should be implemented to enable them to address the crisis in good time. Other personnel will also require guidance on how to react.

High-level documentation on the specialist practices, processes and procedures currently used in crisis response management should be prepared, in order to align a similar process for social media.
Recommendation 7 (Brand)

Defence should maintain its current brand direction of ‘people first’ in its social media activities.

This review was tasked to define a brand strategy to enhance Defence’s brands in social media. The review team believes that the brand direction of ‘people first’ currently being used in Defence is the ideal method for engaging in social media. The pursuit of that underlying principle should continue.