

A Federal Election is due by late May 2019. PM&C have released an update of their [Guidance on Caretaker Conventions](#) and it is timely to update our advice to CPSU members about their involvement in Federal Election campaign activities and their responsibilities as public servants.

Guidelines give green light to get involved. Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) Guidelines state: “APS employees may participate in political activities as part of normal community affairs. They may also join, or hold office in, political parties.” The only exception is for staff working in the Australian Electoral Commission. However, “If an APS employee is involved in political campaigning, they should make it clear they are not undertaking these activities as part of their official duties.”

Stay safe and smart: In practise, this means you should not campaign during work time, use work resources for campaigning, or behave in a way that might infer that your political campaigning is a part of your official duties or that your employer supports your political views. For example, you shouldn't hand out election campaign material or wear clothing with political messages while at work.

Your time, your rights: You are free to do any of the following in your own time:

Community activities:

- ✓ attend political rallies or functions
- ✓ display campaign posters on your property
- ✓ letterboxing, door-knocking and other volunteer campaign work
- ✓ handing out how-to-votes on election day

Your workplace activities:

- ✓ attend union meetings
- ✓ discuss union issues with colleagues
- ✓ receive and read union information & emails

Social media: Under APSC guidelines APS employees may make public comment in an unofficial capacity, so long as it is “lawful and the employee makes it clear they are expressing their own views.” You should avoid making comment on policies that are directly related to the agency you work in. The APSC also advises staff to avoid making comments that:

- could reasonably be perceived to be made on behalf of their agency or the Government
- could compromise an employee's capacity to fulfil their duties in an unbiased manner
- could compromise public confidence in the agency or the APS
- could be seen as gratuitous attacks on your employer, the Government, Members of Parliament etc.

Should I use my real name? The guidelines say that employees must still uphold the APS Values, “even when material is posted anonymously, or using an alias or pseudonym.” As a general rule we advise members to remove any information about where they work or who they work for from their social media profiles.

So what can I do online? In an unofficial capacity and in your own time, members should feel free to ‘like’ and ‘share’ posts which are not offensive (racist, violent, sexual and defamatory) and are in line with the APS Code of Conduct. Social media conventions take comments on other people's posts as a direct personal comment by you and the policy also applies to these.

Paid campaign work: Under APS guidelines, employees wishing to take leave to work on a campaign should obtain approval from their agency head.

Need more? If you feel you are being unfairly treated at work in relation to expressing your democratic rights, or simply require clarification, please contact the CPSU immediately on 1300 137 636.

More information on the APSC guidelines <http://www.apsc.gov.au/publications-and-media/current-publications/values-and-conduct/employees-as-citizens>

For more information on the CPSU campaign for services, jobs and conditions at work, call us on 1300 137 636 or visit www.cpsu.org.au