

POL 0050: Elected Member Social Media

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for the use of social media by Elected Members when engaging with the community in both a private and public capacity.

Scope

The Council is committed to engaging with Esperance communities, and enhancing existing communication and information circulation. Social media has become an essential part of daily life and method of communication. The use of social media by the Shire and the Elected Members can enhance communication, engagement and collaboration with our community.

The intent of this Policy is to ensure that social media engagement by Elected Members are thoughtful, well-reasoned and responsible, suited to their professional position and standing in the community and aligns with the adopted policies of the Council.

Definitions

Code of Conduct: refers to the Code of Conduct - Council Members, Committee Members and Candidates.

The Guide: refers to the Elected Member Use of Social Media Guide document.

Shire: refers to the Shire of Esperance as an organisation/governing body.

Social Media: includes all of the means by which information in the form of text, still and video images, sound files, data or preferences are communicated to an audience of more than one via the internet. Some examples of popular social media are -

1. Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+)
2. Blog posts including video and podcasts
3. Video hosts (e.g. YouTube, Vimeo)
4. Image sharing sites (e.g. Flickr, Instagram and Pinterest)
5. Text or voice chat
6. Forums or discussion groups Geolocation based media (e.g. Foursquare)
7. Wikis and online collaborations (e.g. Wikipedia)

Practice

Social media, can play an important role in the public forum and can offer a means for public discussion around council and community issues.. Social media can help remove barriers in engaging wide sectors of the community and enhance existing communications and information circulation.

One of the roles of Elected Members is to facilitate communications between the community and Council. Where social media encourages short and attention-grabbing statements, the community expects thoughtful, well-reasoned and responsible

communications from its representatives. The existing expectations around professional conduct such as those contained in the Code of Conduct, Elected Member Use of Social Media Guide and Local Government Act 1995 apply.

As part of Elected Members induction into Council, a training session will be convened to provide advice to all Elected Members on the best practice use of social media in their role.

The Guide should be read in conjunction with the Code of Conduct and form part of Council's policies, codes and decisions. A breach of this Guide may be considered a breach of the Code.

Elected Members must not make 'improper use of office' to cause detriment to the Shire or another local government. Standards for Elected Members include the requirement to avoid damage to the reputation of the Shire and the legal fidelity to the Council. It is important to ensure the language and approach used online is consistent with what the community would expect from an Elected Member and meets the requirements of the Code of Conduct.

Recordkeeping

Social media posts and comments from the Shire of Esperance and Elected Members are classified as official public records. It is a statutory requirement for the Shire to monitor relevant social media posts and retain them in the Shire's document management system for record keeping purposes, as per the *State Records Act 2002*

Use of Social Media During Local Government Elections

During a Local Government election period social media may fall into the category of 'election material'. Election material is any material which is published in any format which is intended to affect the result of the election.

All election material must contain the name and the address of the person who authorises the material. Therefore, any social media which may in some way comment on Candidates or Council during an election campaign must meet the requirements of the Local Government (Elections) Regulations 1997 and associated Regulations. Elected Members and Candidates should familiarise themselves with these requirements. If in doubt, act on the side of caution and refrain from using social media to make comment. Advice can be obtained from the Office of the CEO or Electoral Commissioner's delegate.

.....End.....

Document Information

Responsible Position	Manager Marketing and Communications
Risk Rating	High

Referencing Documents

- *Local Government Act 1995*
- *Local Government (Elections) Regulations 1997*
- *Code of Conduct - Council Members, Committee Members and Candidates*

- *Elected Member Use of Social Media Guide*

Revision History

Date	Version	CM Reference	Reason for Change	Resolution #	Next Review
Aug 2021	1	D21/28773	New policy	O0821-143	Aug 2023
Jan 2022	2	D21/28773[v2]	Biennial review, no change	O0122-012	Jan 2024
Jan 2024	3	D21/28773[v3]	Removed Guidelines from policy and created the Elected Member Use of Social Media Guide which is now referenced, minor rewording.	O0124-004	Jan 2026