

Strategic Outcome Supported: 12 – A well respected, professionally run organisation.

OBJECTIVE

1. To ensure that authorised representatives of the Shire demonstrate a professional and trustworthy public image when undertaking official communications; and
2. To ensure that all forms of communication are consistent, uniform and accurate, whilst also mitigating reputational and compliance related risks to the Shire.

SCOPE

3. This policy applies to all official statements made on behalf of the Shire by Elected Members and authorised employees. It defines:
 - a. Who is authorised to speak on behalf of, or otherwise represent, the Shire, as well as their responsibilities and obligations in making public statements or media releases;
 - b. The platforms and channels that the official statements will be shared to; and
 - c. How media enquiries and other forms of engagement from the media are managed and responded to.

DEFINITIONS

4. **Authorised Representative** means an individual or designated party who is permitted to speak on behalf of, or otherwise represent, the Shire in official communications.
5. **CEO** means Chief Executive Officer of the Shire.
6. **Community** is used when generally referring to all members of the public in the Shire, and is not limited to key groups of stakeholders.
7. **Elected Member** means a person who holds the office of Councillor on the Shire Council in accordance the *Local Government Act 1995*.
8. **Employee** means a person who is employed by the Shire, including external providers such as contractors and consultants.
9. **Official Communications** are formal messages or statements issued on behalf of the Shire that convey official information or relate to public business – this includes (but is not limited to) general public statements, media releases, community notices and announcements, and any comments or responses to a formal enquiry.
10. **Stakeholders** are key community members and/or groups including (but not limited to) families, residents and ratepayers of particular localities, local businesses and organisations, community groups, tourists and visitors, volunteers, and government agencies.
11. **Shire** means Shire of Donnybrook Balingup.

POLICY STATEMENTS

Official Communications

12. The purpose of the Shire's official communications include:
 - a. Distributing public notices and/or sharing important information required to be publicly available, such as by law or per policy;
 - b. Spreading awareness, providing education, and sharing information that is of interest and benefit to the community, regardless of if required by law or per policy;
 - c. Promotion of the Shire's services, facilities and/or events;
 - d. Community engagement activities and consultation opportunities;
 - e. Speaking on behalf of, or otherwise representing the Shire, when –
 - i. Receiving and/or responding to media enquiries or other similar requests for information, official statements, etc.; and
 - ii. Public speaking and formal speeches at events, ceremonies, etc.
 - f. Receiving and responding to feedback, ideas, comments, compliments, and complaints from the community and stakeholders; and
 - g. Conducting activities per the Shire's Community Engagement Framework to assist in achieving the goals outlined in Council's key strategic documents.
13. The Shire website (www.donnybrook-balingup.wa.gov.au) is the primary source of information and is where all official communications will be shared, where possible.
14. The Shire will use a combination of different communication modes to suit the type of information to be shared and the requirements of the community and/or the relevant stakeholders, including (but not limited to):
 - a. Advertising and promotional materials;
 - b. Radio (local, regional and state-wide as required);
 - c. Media releases prepared for the Shire President or otherwise authorised representative (such as the CEO), to promote specific Shire positions;
 - d. The Shire's official social media platforms; and
 - e. Community newsletters, letter drops, and other modes of communication undertaken by the Shire Administration at the discretion of the CEO.

Media Enquiries, Requests for Comment & Public Statements

15. The *Local Government Act 1995* outlines the following:
 - a. Only the Shire President may speak on behalf of the Shire, and represents the local government in official communications.

- b. Where the Shire President is unavailable, the Deputy Shire President may act as the official representative and represents the local government in official communications as the Shire President would.
 - c. The CEO may speak on behalf of the Shire where authorised to do so by the Shire President and/or in accordance with legislation.
16. All enquiries for an official comment or response from the Shire, whether made to an individual Elected Member or employee, must be directed to the CEO or a person authorised by the CEO.
 17. Information will be coordinated to support the Shire President or CEO (where authorised) to make an official response on behalf of the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup.
 18. It is respectful and courteous to the Shire President for any other authorised individuals to refrain from commenting publicly, particularly on recent decisions or contemporary issues, until such time as the Shire President has had opportunity to speak on behalf of the Shire or otherwise advise if a comment will be made.

Elected Members, Shire Employees & Other Authorised Representatives

19. Elected Members (excluding the Shire President) are not permitted to speak on behalf of Council unless authorised by the Shire President, and may only make comments to the media in a personal capacity.
20. All Elected Members (including the Shire President) and Shire employees must comply with the relevant adopted Code of Conduct. These communications must not:
 - a. Bring the Shire into disrepute;
 - b. Compromise the person's effectiveness in their role with the Shire;
 - c. Imply the Shire's endorsement of personal views, whether their own or someone else's;
 - d. Imply the Elected Member or employee is speaking on behalf of the Shire (unless otherwise authorised to do so); and/or
 - e. Disclose confidential information without authorisation.

Emergency Management & Public Safety

21. The Shire will utilise the following channels to advise of Emergency Management communications with the public:
 - a. Website; and/or
 - b. Social Media; and/or
 - c. Email.

DELEGATION AND AUTHORISATION

22. Nil.

LEGISLATION

- Local Government Act 1995
- State Records Act 2000

APPENDIX

23. Nil.

GOVERNANCE

Related Policy(s):

- Council Policy: Social Media (EXE/CP-13)
- Council Policy: Records Management (ADM/CP-1)
- Council Policy: Community Engagement Framework (COMD/CP-3)
- Administration Policy: Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban SMS Communications (EMERG/AP-1)

Related Procedure(s):

- Code of Conduct for Elected Members, Committee Members and Candidates
- Code of Conduct for Employees, Contactors & Volunteers

Revision Requirements and Version Control:

Responsible Department(s):	Executive			
Review to be conducted by:	Media & Communications Officer			
Revision Frequency:	<input type="checkbox"/> Annual (1yr)	<input type="checkbox"/> Biennial (2yr)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Triennial (3yr)	
Current Version Date:	25/02/2026	Next Due:	02/2029	
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