

**STRATEGIC OUTCOME SUPPORTED: 12 - A well respected, professionally run organisation.**

## **1. OBJECTIVE**

- 1.1. This policy details legislative obligations and establishes protocols applicable to the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup's official communications with the community, to ensure Shire of Donnybrook Balingup is professionally and accurately represented and to maximise a positive public perception of the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup.

## **2. SCOPE**

- 2.1. This policy scope applies to:
  - a. Communications initiated or responded to by the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup with our community; and
  - b. Elected Members when making comment in either their Shire of Donnybrook Balingup role or in a personal capacity about matters relevant to the Shire; and
  - c. Employees, contractors and consultants working for the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup.

## **3. DEFINITIONS**

- 3.1. NIL

## **4. POLICY STATEMENT**

### **Official Communications**

- 4.1. The purposes of the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup's official communications include:
  - a. Sharing information required by law to be publicly available.
  - b. Sharing information that is of interest and benefit to the Community.
  - c. Promoting Shire of Donnybrook Balingup events and services.
  - d. Promoting Public Notices and community consultation / engagement opportunities.
  - e. Answering questions and responding to requests for information relevant to the role of the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup.
  - f. Receiving and responding to community feedback, ideas, comments, compliments and complaints.
- 4.2. The Shire of Donnybrook Balingup's official communications will be consistent with relevant legislation, policies, standards and the positions adopted by the Council. Communications will always be respectful and professional.

- 4.3. The Shire of Donnybrook Balingup will use a combination of different communication modes to suit the type of information to be communicated and the requirements of the community or specific audience, including:
- a. Website; and
  - b. Advertising and promotional materials; and
  - c. Radio (local, regional and state-wide as required); and
  - d. Media releases prepared for the Shire President / CEO, to promote specific Shire of Donnybrook Balingup positions; and
  - e. Social media; and
  - f. Community newsletters, letter drops, and other modes of communications undertaken by the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup's Administration at the discretion of the CEO.

**Speaking on behalf of the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup**

- 4.4. The Shire President is the official spokesperson for the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup, representing the Local Government in official communications, including speeches, comment, print, electronic and social media. In accordance with s.2.8(1)(d) of the *Local Government Act 1995*.
- 4.5. Where the Shire President is unavailable, the Deputy Shire President may act as the spokesperson in accordance with s.2.9 and s.5.34 of the *Local Government Act 1995*.
- 4.6. The CEO may speak on behalf of the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup, where authorised to do so by the Shire President in accordance with s.5.41(f) of the *Local Government Act 1995*.
- 4.7. The provisions of the *Local Government Act 1995* essentially direct that only the Shire President, or the CEO if authorised, may speak on behalf of the Local Government. It is respectful and courteous to the Shire President 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 of Donnybrook Balingup.
- 4.8. Communications by Elected Members and employees, whether undertaken in an authorised official capacity or as a personal communication, must not:
- a. Bring the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup into disrepute; or
  - b. Compromise the person's effectiveness in their role with the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup; or
  - c. Imply the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup's endorsement of personal views
  - d. Imply the Elected Member or employee is speaking on behalf of the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup, unless authorised to do so; or
  - e. Disclose, without authorisation, confidential information.

- 4.9. Social media accounts or unsecured website forums must not be used to transact meetings which relate to the official business of the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup.
- 4.10. Elected member communications must comply with the Code of Conduct for Elected Members, Committee Members and Candidates.

### **Responding to Media Enquiries**

- 4.11. All enquiries from the Media for an official Shire of Donnybrook Balingup comment, whether made to an individual Elected Member or employee, must be directed to the CEO or a person authorised by the CEO. 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.
- 4.12. Elected Members may make comments to the media in a personal capacity – refer to clause 4.25 below.

### **Website**

- 4.13. The Shire of Donnybrook Balingup will maintain an official website, as our community's on-line resource to access to the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup's official communications.

### **Social Media**

- 4.14. The Shire of Donnybrook Balingup uses social media to facilitate interactive information sharing and to provide responsive feedback to our community. Social media will not however, be used by the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup to communicate or respond to matters that are complex or relate to a person's or entity's private affairs.
- 4.15. The Shire of Donnybrook Balingup maintains the following social media accounts:
  - a. Social networks, for example Facebook, LinkedIn; and
  - b. Media Sharing networks, for example Instagram and YouTube; and
  - c. Micro-blogging networks, for example Twitter.
- 4.16. The Shire of Donnybrook Balingup may also post and contribute to social media hosted by others, so as to ensure that the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup's strategic objectives are appropriately represented and promoted.
- 4.17. The Shire of Donnybrook Balingup actively seeks ideas, questions and feedback from our community however, we expect participants to behave in a respectful manner. The Shire of Donnybrook Balingup will moderate its social media accounts to address and where necessary delete content deemed to be:
  - a. Offensive, abusive, defamatory, objectionable, inaccurate, false or misleading; or
  - b. Promotional, soliciting or commercial in nature; or
  - c. Unlawful or incites others to break the law; or

- d. Information which may compromise individual or community safety or security; or
- e. Repetitive material copied and pasted or duplicated; or
- f. Content that promotes or opposes any person campaigning for election to the Council, appointment to official office, or any ballot; or
- g. Content that violates intellectual property rights or the legal ownership of interests or another party; or
- h. Any other inappropriate content or comments at the discretion of the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup.

4.18. Where a third-party contributor to a Shire of Donnybrook Balingup's social media account is identified as posting content, which is deleted in accordance with the above, the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup may at its complete discretion block that contributor for a specific period of time or permanently.

#### **Shire President Social Media Official Accounts**

4.19. The Shire of Donnybrook Balingup supports the Shire President in using official social media account/s to assist the Shire President in fulfilling their role under s 2.8 of the *Local Government Act 1995*, to speak on behalf of the Local Government. The content will be administered and moderated in accordance with this policy. These official Shire of Donnybrook Balingup accounts must not be used by the Shire President for personal communications.

#### **Use of Social Media in Emergency Management and Response**

- 4.20. The Shire of Donnybrook Balingup will use the following channels to communicate and advise our community regarding Emergency Management:
- a. Facebook; and/or
  - b. Website; and/or
  - c. Email.

#### **Record Keeping and Freedom of Information**

- 4.21. Official communications undertaken on behalf of the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup, including on the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup's Social Media accounts and third-party social media accounts must be created and retained as local government records in accordance with the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup's Record Keeping Plan and the *State Records Act 2000*. These records are also subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1992*.
- 4.22. Elected Member communications that relate to their role as a Elected Member are subject to the requirements of the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup's Record Keeping Plan and the *State Records Act 2000*. Elected Members are responsible for transferring these records to the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup's administration. Elected Member records are also subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1992*.

### **Personal Communications**

4.23. Personal communications and statements made privately; in conversation, written, recorded emailed, texted or posted in personal social media, have the potential to be made public, whether intended or not. On the basis that personal or private communications may be shared or become public at some point in the future, Elected Members and employees should ensure that their personal or private communications do not breach the requirements of this policy, the Code of Conduct for Elected Members, Committee Members and Candidates, or the Code of Conduct for Employees.

### **Elected Member Statements on Shire Matters**

4.24. An Elected Member may choose to make a personal statement publicly on a matter related to the business of the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup.

4.25. Any public statement made by an Elected Member, whether made in a personal capacity or in their Local Government representative capacity, must:

- a. Clearly state that the comment or content is a personal view only, which does not necessarily represent the views of Shire of Donnybrook Balingup; and
- b. Be made with reasonable care and diligence; and
- c. Be lawful, including avoiding contravention of; copyright, defamation, discrimination or harassment laws; and
- d. Be factually correct; and
- e. Avoid damage to the reputation of the local government; and
- f. Not reflect adversely on a decision of the Council; and
- g. Not reflect adversely on the character or actions of another Elected Member or Employee; and
- h. Maintain a respectful and positive tone and not use offensive or objectionable expressions in reference to any Elected Member, Employee or community member.

4.26. An Elected Member who is approached by the media for a personal statement may request the assistance of the CEO.

4.27. Comments which become public, and which breach this policy, or the Code of Conduct for Elected Members, Committee Members and Candidates may constitute a minor breach of the *Local Government Act 1995* and may be referred for investigation.

## **5. DELEGATION AND AUTHORISATION**

5.1. NIL

# COUNCIL POLICY EXE/CP-9 COMMUNICATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA



## 6. LEGISLATION

- 6.1. *Local Government Act 1995*
- 6.2. *State Records Act 2000*
- 6.3. Code of Conduct for Elected Members, Committee Members and Candidates
- 6.4. Code of Conduct for Employees

## 7. POLICY VERSION

<b>Related Policies:</b>	Records Management		
<b>Related Procedure:</b>	Social Media		
<b>Responsible Department:</b>	Executive Services		
<b>Reviewer:</b>	Communications Officer		
<b>Review Frequency:</b>	Biennial	<b>Next Due:</b>	2023
<b>Version Date:</b>	21/12/21	<b>Synergy #:</b>	NPP8027
<b>Policy Version Details</b>			
<b>Initial Adoption Date:</b>	24/04/2019	<b>Decision Reference:</b>	38/19
<b>Version Synopsis:</b>	Creation of policy		
<b>Version Decision Date:</b>	21/12/21	<b>Decision Reference:</b>	213/21
<b>Version Synopsis:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Removed policy number 2.49 and added new policy ID; and</li> <li>• Removed references to <i>Local Government (Rules of Conduct) Regulations 2007</i></li> <li>• Included references to the Code of Conduct for Elected Members, Committee Members and Candidates and Employee's Code of Conduct</li> <li>• Removed Council delegation 1.1 as this is no longer relevant.</li> <li>• Added Employees, contractors and consultants working for the Shire of Donnybrook Balingup to the Scope.</li> </ul>		