

POL 0050: Elected Member Social Media

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to guide Elected Members in their use of social media to ensure communication with the community is professional, respectful, and aligned with the values and standards of the Shire of Esperance.

It promotes responsible use of social media that upholds the integrity of Council, supports transparency, and fosters positive engagement with the community.

Scope

This policy applies to all Elected Members of the Shire of Esperance when using social media in any capacity that may identify them as a Council Member or relate to their role.

Social media is an important tool for communication, engagement, and collaboration with the community. The Council recognises its value in strengthening transparency, accessibility, and connection between Elected Members and the public.

This policy ensures that all social media use by Elected Members is thoughtful, respectful, well-reasoned, and responsible, reflecting their professional position and community standing, and remaining consistent with the Code of Conduct and adopted Council policies.

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 any online platform that enables users to create and share information. Some examples of social media are –

- a. Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+)
- b. Blog posts including video and podcasts
- c. Video hosts (e.g. YouTube, Vimeo)
- d. Image sharing sites (e.g. Flickr, Instagram and Pinterest)
- e. Text or voice chat
- f. Forums or discussion groups
- g. Geolocation based media (e.g. Discord)
- h. Wikis and online collaborations (e.g. Wikipedia)

Practice

Social media is a powerful way for Elected Members to connect with the community, share information, and encourage participation in local issues. It can break down barriers, increase transparency, and strengthen public discussion about Council matters.

However, with this opportunity comes responsibility. The community expects Elected Members to communicate in a way that is thoughtful, respectful, well-reasoned, and responsible, regardless of the platform used. While social media often encourages short or informal posts, the same professional standards apply online as they do in person or within Council Chambers.

All Elected Members must comply with the Code of Conduct and the *Local Government Act 1995* when engaging on social media. The Elected Member Use of Social Media Guide provides a practical framework that sets out clear expectations for respectful communication, confidentiality, and integrity in public comment.

As part of the Elected Member induction process, a training session will be provided to outline best practice for social media use and reinforce responsibilities under this Policy. The Guide should be read in conjunction with the Code of Conduct and forms part of Council's broader governance framework.

A breach of this Policy or the Guide may be considered a breach of the Code of Conduct. Members are expected to ensure that all online communication reflects the dignity of their role, maintains public trust, and protects the reputation of both Council and the Shire of Esperance.

Recordkeeping

Social media posts and comments made by 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 local government elections, social media posts may be considered '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 home 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 understand these rules. If in doubt, act on the side of caution and refrain from using social media to make comment. Advice can be obtained from the WA Electoral Commissioner's delegate or the WA Electoral Commission website.

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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
Dec 2025	4	D21/28773[v4]	Rewrite purpose and scope sections. Amend Social Media definition. Rewrite practice section, with minor amendments to recordkeeping and local government elections sections.	O1225-098	Dec 2027