

POLICY TITLE:	MEDIA POLICY
POLICY NUMBER:	P28
CATEGORY:	COUNCIL POLICY
CLASSIFICATION:	GOVERNANCE
STRATEGIC PLAN REFERENCE:	GENERALLY TO ACT AT ALL TIMES IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE
STATUS: Draft	
Council Resolution	

Date Approved: 20 jUNE 2015		Approved By: Moved: Cr Shenagh Gamble Seconded: Cr Brad Irvine Vote: AIF	Councillors – resolution no. 2015/195	Date for review:	Next Council Election
Date Approved:		Approved By:		Date for review:	
Date Approved:		Approved By:		Date for review:	
Date Approved:		Approved By:		Date for review:	

WAGAIT SHIRE MEDIA POLICY

(Including Social Media)



PURPOSE

This document details Wagait Shire Council's (Council) procedures and directives regarding the use of and interaction with media and social media by elected members.

Council recognises the importance of the media in keeping the community informed, getting feedback on important issues and ensuring Council operates in a transparent and open way.

This policy acknowledges the important news gathering role of traditional media as well as the growing role of social media.

The objective of this Policy is to provide guidance to elected members and the media as to who is authorised to speak to the media, parameters on what can be released to the media and when.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The procedural statement and directive in this document adhere to:

- Effective two-way communication with the community and other stakeholders that helps Council achieve its broader objectives in providing municipal services
- Timely and accurate dissemination of information that the community needs to understand Council's role and services
- Professional and accountable media relations that ensures the media is able to do its job effectively while not compromising Council's legal and ethical responsibilities
- Coordinating risk management practices
- Ensuring appropriate accountability by users
- Targeted and cost-effective communication, thereby minimising cost to Council.

DEFINITIONS

Traditional media may include (but is not limited to):

- Printed (newspapers, newsletters, magazines)
- Broadcast (radio, digital radio)
- Online (online news sites, blogs)
- Televised (TV news, programs)

Social Media may include (but is not limited to):

- social networking sites (eg Facebook, Myspace, LinkedIn, Bebo, Yammer)
- video and photo sharing websites (eg Flickr, Youtube)
- blogs, including corporate blogs and personal blogs
- blogs hosted by media outlets (eg 'comments' or 'your say' features)
- micro-blogging (e.g. Twitter)
- wikis and online collaborations (eg Wikipedia)
- forums, discussion boards and groups (eg Google groups, Whirlpool)
- vod and podcasting
- online multiplayer gaming platforms (eg World of Warcraft, Second life)
- instant messaging (including SMS)
- geo-spatial tagging (Foursquare)

PROCEDURAL STATEMENTS

Exceptions:

- There are no exceptions to this procedural statement and directive.

Applicability:

- This procedural statement and directive applies to all Council employees, elected members and contractors.

Procedures:

- Pursuant to *Section 43 of the Local Government Act*, the role of the President is to speak on behalf of Council as Council's principal representative. The President will be the principal spokesperson for Council's issues. Should the President be unavailable the Chief Executive Officer is the spokesperson or will designate an appropriate senior Council officer. The Vice-President may also be the spokesperson in that absence.
- Elected members are under no obligation to seek permission from, or to advise the Chief Executive Officer or the designated officer of any attempt to gain media attention for themselves. However elected members are requested to inform the Chief Executive Officer or the designated officer out of professional courtesy.
- Issues of an operational nature should be directed to the Chief Executive Officer in the first instance. All comments made via the media (traditional and social) are in the public domain, thus sound judgement and professionalism should be exercised when engaging with media. Comments must comply with all relevant Council policies and values.
- Views expressed by elected members should be clearly identified as their own, either personal or professional. Comments should be in line with relevant Council policies and not at any time bring the reputation of Council into disrepute.

Business related use of all media:

- As a general principle, only the President or the Chief Executive Officer make official comments on behalf of Council to the media (both traditional media and social media).
- All media statements and official comment made on behalf of Council shall reflect the decisions made by Council as stated in its adopted resolutions or the positions taken by Council as articulated in its strategic and policy documents.
- Personal comments are not represented as the view of Council and this should be identified.

Personal use of social media:

- Elected members need to be aware that as Community representative their personal or professional site may be viewed as a public site, especially when reference to the elected member's position is present. Therefore when expressing a personal view this should be identified and care taken not to show disrespect for the Council, its decisions, decision making process or other elected members and staff.

Social Media material:

- The Council's website remains the Council's primary and predominant online presence.

Elected members using social media must:

- Only disclose and discuss publicly available information.
- Ensure postings should be professional and designed to aid in the dissemination and promotion of Council information to public.
- Ensure that all content published is accurate and not misleading and complies with Council's Codes of Conduct for elected members, policies and Portable Storage Device and confidentiality pursuant to the *Local Government Act*;
- Avoid the use of Council images (such as photo, video, logos and so on) unless it is a promotional poster or item. If an image is used it should be low resolution and not contravene council's or the owners copyright.
- be polite and respectful to all people with whom they interact; and
- adhere to the Terms of Use of the relevant social media platform/website, as well as copyright, privacy, defamation, contempt of court, discrimination, harassment and other applicable laws,

Those using social media must not:

- Post material that is offensive, disrespectful of colleagues, obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, bullying, discriminatory, hateful, racist, sexist, infringes

copyright, constitutes a contempt of court, breaches a Court suppression order, or is otherwise unlawful;

- Use the identity or likeness of another elected member or employee of Council;
- Use or disclose any confidential information obtained in their capacity as an elected member;
- Make any comment or post any material that might otherwise cause damage to a colleague or to Council's reputation or bring it in any way into disrepute.

Reasonable/ unreasonable use of Social Media:

- Use of media or social media during the conduct of Council meetings is not permitted.
- Council resources shall not be used to access or post any material that is fraudulent, harassing, threatening, bullying, embarrassing, sexually explicit, profane, obscene, racist, sexist, intimidating, defamatory or otherwise inappropriate or unlawful.

Legal consequences:

- Council may be held liable for statements made by an authorised elected member commenting in an official capacity on behalf of Council, no matter the media platform.

Failure to Comply:

- Failure to comply with these procedures may result in disciplinary action and the recovery of any costs incurred by the Wagait Shire Council.

LEGISLATION BASE

Local Government Act and

Privacy Act

6. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

Codes of Conduct for Elected Members

7. ASSOCIATED FORMS/RECORD KEEPING

Nil

Note: *Portable Storage Device (PSD): a portable device designed to store digital data. In this document the term includes any laptop computer, small external device such as a USB stick, digital camera, mobile phone or any other portable device that contains identifiable information.*