

# Council Policy (WCC.016)

## Media and Communications

**Responsible Officer:**

General Manager

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June 2024



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# 1 Purpose

This policy aims to provide a clear expectation of how Council engages with the community and media agencies within the scope of information sharing and promoting the interests of Council and the community.

# 2 Objectives

This policy seeks to clarify the roles and responsibilities of Councillors and staff regarding Media and Communications.

# 3 Scope

This policy applies to:

- All elected members of the West Coast Council (Councillors).
- West Coast Council Workers as defined in this policy (full time, part time, temporary and casual).

# 4 Definitions

**Administrator:** The person(s) delegated by the General Manager to create or manage Council websites or Social Media sites.

**Communication device:** Any device used for any communication purpose by a Worker or Councillor may include but is not limited to telephone (both landline and mobile devices), computers, walkie-talkies, radios, copiers, facsimiles, or equivalent of all the preceding and their respective hardware, software and applications including email, electronic data, internet services and social media.

**Confidential Information:** The information that is confidential to a person or Council, which means that it is not the public domain.

**Corporate Use:** Any use of a communication device that is required for work purposes.

**Council:** West Coast Council.

**Councillor:** An elected member of Council known as a Councillor as defined under Section 3 of the *Local Government Act 1993* (TAS).

**Council-owned Communication devices:** Any communication device owned or supplied by the Council.

**Cyber bullying:** The act of using social media and online technologies to act out repeated, unreasonable and unwelcome behaviour directed towards an individual or group that creates a risk to health and safety. Bullying on social media can include, but is not limited to:

- Posting critical or abusive comments.
- Posting photos or comments relating to a colleague's behaviour.
- Deliberately excluding a colleague from a group of colleagues on a social media page or pages.

**Defamation:** The publication of a false statement (for other communications) that is likely to harm an individual or Council reputation. A defamation statement is deemed to be published if it is read, seen or heard by at least one third party who can understand its defamatory meaning. Statements on internet sites are 'published' where they are accessed or downloaded and are subject to defamation laws.

**Infringing Workplace Behaviour:** Any act or omission which amounts to a breach of any Council policy, contractual obligation or misconduct at common law.

**Media:** Incorporates print, radio and television outlets.

**Moderator:** A person who has been given permission to post on behalf of Council and to moderate the content on that Council site.

**Moderate:** To monitor content on behalf of Council.

**Offensive:** Upsetting, insulting or irritating, causing anger, resentment or moral outrage. Additionally, content that is unpleasant or disagreeable to the senses, causing disgust or physical repugnance.

**Personal Use:** Any use that is not Corporate use.

**Post/Posting:** To place information to users on a social media site.

**Publishing/Publication:** To publicly distribute or communicate words or images in print, electronically or verbally. This includes email, internet and social media activity.

**Reasonable/Personal Use:** Use of Council owned resources which does not impact Council financially or upon business operations.

**Social Media:** Online platforms that promote social and professional networking and sharing of information. Social media is not limited to text commentary or statements, it can also involve audio, multimedia pictures, movies and photos. Social media includes:

- Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Myspace, LinkedIn, Bebo, Yammer).
- Video and phone sharing websites (e.g. Flickr, YouTube, Instagram).
- Blogs, including corporate blogs and personal blogs (e.g. Twitter).
- Wikis and online collaboration (e.g. Wikipedia).
- Forums, discussion boards and groups (e.g. Google groups, Whirlpool, Reddit), podcasting.
- Instant messaging (including SMS, Facebook Messenger).
- Any successor or equivalent to the above.

**Technology:** The range of resources, devices and tools used for the management and sharing of information, such as computer hardware and software, storage devices, internet, email, social media and mobile phone (including 'apps'). It also includes emerging and future technologies.

**Use:** To deploy, create, store, communicate, transmit or access any material, information, images or the like by a communication device.

**User:** A member of the general public who may view with any of Council's social media sites.

**Worker:** A person, other than a Councillor, who carries out work in any capacity for Council, including:

- An employee.
- A contractor or subcontractor.
- An employee of a labour hire company who has been assigned to work at Council.
- An apprentice or trainee.
- A student gaining work experience.
- A volunteer.

**Workplace:** A place where work is carried out for Council.

## 5 Policy

This policy should be read and reviewed in conjunction with the WCC Community Engagement Policy.

### 5.1 Roles and Responsibilities

The following table sets out the roles and responsibilities, applicable to those this policy applies to:

Mayor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Act as a spokesperson on behalf of Council.</li> <li>• Should clarify when communicating a view that is their own rather than speaking on behalf of Council.</li> <li>• Comply with terms of use for any Council issued information technology.</li> </ul>
General Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Act as a spokesperson on behalf of Council as per delegation from the Mayor.</li> <li>• Should clarify when communicating a view that is their own rather than speaking on behalf of Council.</li> <li>• Should ensure responsibilities/delegations in relation to social media are clearly defined and act as a source of advice to the Mayor.</li> <li>• Control use of Council branding.</li> </ul>
Elected Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should seek advice from the Mayor or General Manager and be sure not to speak on behalf of the Council unless delegated.</li> <li>• Comply with terms of use for any Council issued information technology.</li> <li>• Should clarify when communicating a view that is their own rather than speaking on behalf of Council.</li> </ul>
Workers (as defined by this policy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interact with media or post information on websites or other forum on behalf of Council only as delegated by the General Manager.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should seek advice from the General Manager or their Manager when unsure of their delegation or authority.</li> <li>• Comply with terms of use for any Council issued information technology.</li> </ul>
Administrator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake the role of administrator for Council's social media sites as delegated.</li> <li>• Establish, review and apply principles of moderating according to established hours rules.</li> <li>• Write, post and share content.</li> <li>• Ensure post content is accurate and not misleading in any way.</li> </ul>

## 6 Corporate Use of Social Media

Social media will be used by West Coast Council as a communication tool appropriate to the message(s) being conveyed.

The General Manager will determine which social media, or other media channels Council regularly uses. Additionally, the Mayor will determine which media channels they utilise as a spokesperson for Council. Workers or Councillors interested in commencing a Council site via social media should speak with the Mayor or General Manager, to begin the approval process and explore social media options. A Worker or Councillor must not register or use social media for work purposes without consent from the General Manager (Worker) or Mayor (Councillor).

Corporate use of social media:

- Will adhere to Council's style guide as set by Council, with Council's logo displayed as appropriate on Council's corporate social media sites.
- Will only disclose information which is classified as suitable for the public domain and which is accurate, authorised and aligned with Council strategies, policies, decisions, and relevant legislation.
- Will uphold the values of the Council by acting with responsiveness, leadership, unity of purpose, partnership, consistency, respect and trust.
- Will avoid political bias.
- Will take steps to avoid real or potential conflicts of interest.
- Will not establish fictitious names or identities deliberately intended to deceive, mislead or lie.

Social media posts, must not:

- Use copyright or ownership protected materials without appropriate approvals and referencing.
- Be discriminatory, defamatory, or encourage law breaking.
- Compromise Councillor, Worker or IT system safety.
- Air personal campaigns.

Council reserves the right to remove content that is illegal or offensive material. Council also reserves the right to remove a person from their site if that person



repeatedly posts illegal and /or offensive material.

Where a complaint has been made to Council Workers or users, pertaining to content on Council operated platforms, considerations should be given to the Communications nominated person in consultation with the General Manager and the department that provided the original content.

Council will monitor its corporate social media sites regularly to establish whether the current content is factual, accurate, posts are relevant, up to date or and if new information needs uploading.

Council may use the following channels for communicating information and events to the community.

- Radio – advertisements, live read outs, interviews, segments such as Mayor on Air.
- Council Website.
- Newspaper.
- Social Media – Facebook, LinkedIn.
- Email to subscribers (via email platform).
- Text Messages to Subscribers.
- Community Notice Boards.
- Council Visy Boards.
- Community Organisations Newsletters.

Council will not use social media to communicate or disclose detail, deliberation or determination in relation to individual matters that must follow legislative, regulatory, permit or approval process, a public notification process, or judicial appeal or review process, including but not limited to:

- Building control and compliance.
- Disposal of public land.
- Land use planning processes, assessment and determination of a permit application, appeals and enforcement action.
- Parking infringements.
- Animal control.
- Public health, including for environmental nuisances, food premises and immunisation.
- Fire hazard abatement.
- Tender processes.

Council may choose to use social media to provide generic advice in relation to any obligation it is required to observe or enforce, or any process which may be necessary under legislation.

**Monitoring:** Council staff or contractors cannot monitor nor access content on Councillor devices without the permission of the relevant Councillor or Councillors collectively.

**Resourcing and Training:** This policy will form part of the induction process for all individuals to whom it applies. Council will provide all persons covered by this Policy with appropriate instructions, so they are aware of their responsibilities and obligations under the policy.

Managers/supervisors are required to promote this Policy within their area of responsibility and ensure any potential breaches are identified and acted upon appropriately.

## 7 Use of Personal Social Media

Council recognises Councillors and Workers may use social media and post online content in their personal lives. This Policy does not intend to discourage or unduly limit personal expression or online activities. Workers should however refer to other relevant policies and individual contracts for further guidance or discuss with their manager.

## 8 Legislation and Related Documents

This policy should be read in conjunction with the West Coast Council Policy on Community Engagement.

*Local Government Act 1993 (TAS)*

*Local Government (General) Regulations 2015*

*Fair Work Act 2009*

*Commonwealth Criminal Code Act 1995*

*Tasmanian Criminal Code 1924*

*Personal Information Protection Act 2004*

*Copyright Act 1968*

*Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (TAS)*

*Anti-Discrimination Act 1998 (TAS)*

*West Coast Community Plan 2025*

*Councillor Code of Conduct and Local Government Amendment (Code of Conduct) Act 2015*

*WCC CORP Policy- Personal Use of Social Media*