



POLICY – 1.8 Official Communication

Relevant Delegation

N/A

Objective

This policy establishes protocols for official communications of the Shire of Menzies with the community to ensure the Shire is professionally and accurately represented and to maximise a positive public perception of the Shire.

Policy Statement

1. Official Communications

The objectives of the Shire'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 local 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;
- f. Receiving and responding to community feedback, ideas, comments, compliments and complaints.

All official communications will be consistent with relevant legislation, policies, standards and the positions adopted by the Council. Communications will always be respectful and professional.

The Shire 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 but not limited to, website, advertising and promotional materials, media releases, social media, community newsletters and letter drops.

2. Speaking on behalf of the Shire of Menzies

The Shire President is the official spokesperson for the Shire of Menzies and may represent the Shire of Menzies in official communications, including speeches, comment, print, electronic and social media. [s.2.8(1)(d) of the *Local Government Act 1995*].

Where the Shire President is unavailable, the Deputy Shire President may act as the spokesperson. [s.2.9 and s.5.34 of the *Local Government Act 1995*]

The CEO may speak on behalf of the Shire, where authorised to do so by the Shire President. [s.5.41(f) of the *Local Government Act 1995*]

3. Responding to the Media

All media enquiries relating to Shire business must be directed to the CEO (or a person authorised by the CEO) for information to be collated to assist the President or CEO in forming an official response on behalf of the Shire.

Where media directly approach an elected member for a personal statement, they must comply with section 4 of this policy.

4. Personal Communications and Statements on Shire Matters

The provisions of the *Local Government Act 1995* essentially direct that only the Shire President, or the Chief Executive Officer if authorised, may speak on behalf of the Local Government. It is respectful and courteous to the office of Shire President to refrain from commenting publicly, particularly on recent decisions or contemporary issues, until such time as the Shire President had opportunity to speak on behalf of the Shire of Menzies.

Any public statement made by an elected member other than the President, or the CEO where authorised, (in a personal or official capacity) must ensure:

- a. They have clearly stated the view is personal and not representative of the Shire;
- b. Comments comply with legislation, the code of conduct and policies;
- c. Statements are factual;
- d. Reasonable measures are taken to protect the reputation of the Shire;
- e. Statements do not denigrate any decision of the Council, or the character or actions of elected members or employees; and
- f. Communications do not contain offensive or distasteful representations toward elected members, staff, community members or the Shire's reputation.

Elected members and staff should maintain awareness that personal comments made privately have the potential to be made public and must ensure all communications do not breach this policy, legislation or the Code of Conduct.

– *End of Policy*

ADOPTED: 28 SEPTEMBER 2023