
CGP022 – Social Media

1. Intention

This policy establishes protocols for using social media to undertake official Shire of Waroona communications with the community and provides guidance for elected members and employees on how to use social media in the course of their official duties. It ensures that communication is professional, accurately represents Council's position and fosters a positive public perception of the Shire of Waroona.

2. Scope

This policy applies to elected members, employees, volunteers, and contractors of the Shire of Waroona.

3. Statement

The Shire of Waroona's official social media activity will be consistent with relevant legislation, policies, standards, and the positions adopted by Council. Our communications via social media will always be respectful and professional.

The Shire of Waroona uses social media to facilitate information sharing with our community. Social media will not however, be used by the Shire of Waroona to communicate or respond to matters that are complex or relate to a person's or entity's private affairs.

The President is the official spokesperson for the Shire of Waroona representing the Local Government in official communications, including speeches, comments, print, electronic and social media. Where the President is unavailable, the Deputy President may act as the spokesperson.

The CEO may speak on behalf of the Shire of Waroona, where authorised to do so by the President. The provisions of the Local Government Act 1995 essentially direct that only the President, or the CEO if authorised, may speak on behalf of the Local Government.

It is respectful and courteous to refrain from commenting publicly, particularly on recent decisions or contemporary issues, until such time as the President has had the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Shire of Waroona.

Communications by elected members whether undertaken in an authorised official capacity or as a personal communication, and approved Shire of Waroona social media accounts must not:

- bring the Shire into disrepute,
- compromise the person's effectiveness in their role at the Shire,
- breach either code of conduct of the Shire of Waroona,
- infer a negativity towards an elected member or employee's ability to complete their duties, or
- disclose, without authorisation, confidential information.

Where an elected member publishes information in their role as an elected member, they are to disclose that they are not speaking on behalf of Council should there be likely to be any confusion in this regard.

Each social media account on each platform will be authorised in writing by either the Shire President for an elected member, or by the CEO for an employee prior to that account going live.

All authorised accounts established for the organisation will be set up under the Shire of Waroona main account and linked to enable the correct processing of information and engagement. Any social media accounts developed by an employee during company time/and or on company owned equipment belongs

to the Shire and administrative permissions must be granted to authorised officers. Corporate Services will maintain a record of all Shire social media accounts and relevant access.

The Chief Executive Officer will give written delegation to those employees authorised to use approved social media channels as a form of communication with the community. Employees will be expected to communicate in a proper manner and adhere to the Shire of Waroona's Code of Conduct and social media procedure at all times. Employees will only post as the approved social media accounts and not their personal accounts. Persons with written authorisation to communicate through social media must ensure information provided is truthful, accurate and in the interest of the Shire of Waroona. In doing so, they certify that no information disclosed is of a confidential nature, commercially sensitive, or containing personal information.

Employees with access to the Shire's social media accounts must ensure the following:

- All users must opt into two-factor authentication where available;
- Each post is proofread and spell-checked;
- The intent of the post is clear and concise;
- The information posted is accurate;
- Each post is respectful and polite;
- Content adheres to the terms of use of the relevant social media platform;
- If a mistake is made it is quickly corrected, a disclosure is made, and the Department's Director is informed;
- If unsure of a situation, consult either the Chief Executive Officer, or Director Corporate & Community Services or Director Infrastructure & Development Services.
- If an employee notices inappropriate content on any form of social media in relation to the Shire, it should be reported to either the Chief Executive Officer, Director Corporate & Community Services or Director Infrastructure & Development Services.

The Shire of Waroona may also post and contribute to social media hosted by others, so as to ensure that the Shire of Waroona's strategic objectives are appropriately represented and promoted. These posts are to be authorised by an approved Officer prior to posting.

The Australian Advertising Standards Bureau (ASB) has issued a significant decision, classifying Facebook as an advertising medium. Consequently, it falls under the purview of the industry's self-regulatory code of ethics – the Australian Association of National Advertiser's (AANA) Code of Ethics. Social media pages are required to adhere to relevant codes and laws, meticulously reviewing all public posts to ensure they do not contain elements such as sexism, racism, or factual inaccuracies.

This ruling empowers authorities to impose fines or public scrutiny on companies for comments displayed on their social media 'brand' pages. The ASB's general stance is that Australia's advertising laws extend to all content on a brand's page, encompassing both material generated by the page creator and comments posted by users or friends.

Additionally, any comment or post that violates these codes and laws will be promptly removed without prior consultation.

3.1 Record Keeping and Freedom of Information

Official communications undertaken on behalf of the Shire of Waroona, including on the Shire of Waroona'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 Waroona's Record Keeping Plan and the *State Records Act 2000*. These records are also subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1992*.

3.2 Elected Member & Employee Personal Accounts

Personal communications and statements made privately in conversation, written, recorded email or posted in personal social media have the potential to be made public, whether it was intended to be made public or not.

Therefore, on the basis that personal or private communications may be shared or become public at some point in the future, elected members and employees must ensure that their personal or private communications do not breach the requirements of this policy, the Code of Conduct and the *Local Government (Model Code of Conduct) Regulations 2021*.

Comments which become public, and which breach this policy, the Code of Conduct or the *Local Government (Model Code of Conduct) Regulations 2021*, may constitute a serious breach of the *Local Government Act 1995* and may be referred for investigation.

No employee or volunteer of the Shire of Waroona is to post, comment, or share on the Shire's social media account/s from their own personal account unless authorised by the Chief Executive Officer. They are, however, welcome to like/follow the organisation's official pages, and like any post from an authorised channel.

Any social media interaction from an employee or volunteer outside the Shire of Waroona's official channels that is seen to be disrespectful or damaging to the Shire's reputation will be dealt with as a breach of the code of conduct. Employees and volunteers are encouraged to refrain from engaging on any social media platform concerning Shire of Waroona matters so as to avoid any unintended breaches.

This policy constitutes a lawful instruction to both elected members and employees and any breaches may lead to disciplinary action by the Shire of Waroona.

3.3 Policy Breach

Comments which become public, and which breach this policy may also breach the Codes of Conduct and/or the *Local Government Act 1995* and may be investigated.

Breaches of this policy by employees may lead to disciplinary action and/or dismissal by the Shire of Waroona.

4. Legislative and Strategic Context

The *Local Government Act 1995* and the associated subsidiary legislation provide the broad framework within which this policy operates. Specific references include –

- Local Government Act 1995, section 2.8 - The Shire President speaks on behalf of the Shire of Waroona.
- Code of Conduct for Council Members, Committee Members and Candidates, clause 8 – Personal Integrity.
- Code of Conduct for Council Members, Committee Members and Candidates, clause 9 – Relationship with Others.
- Code of Conduct for Employees and Volunteers, clause 3.3 Personal Behaviour
- Code of Conduct for Employees and Volunteers, clause 3.13 Personal Communications and Social Media

5. Review

This policy is to be reviewed every three years (triennially).

6. Associated Documents

Nil.

Division	Corporate & Governance				
Policy Number	CGP022				
Contact Officer	Manager Corporate Services				
Related Legislation	Local Government Act 1995 Local Government (Model Code of Conduct) Regulations 2021 State Records Act 2000				
Related Shire Documents	Nil				
Risk Rating	Medium	Review Frequency	Triennially	Next Review	May 2026
Date Adopted	18/12/2018				OCM18/12/126

Amendments		
Date	Details of Amendment	Reference
22/06/2021	Updated as part of major review and reformatted.	OCM21/06/071
19/12/2023	Reviewed with minor amendments	OCM23/12/179
Previous Policies		
COM023 – Social Media Policy		