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	Caretaker	Date Adopted:	08 March 2022
		Next Review Due:	March 2026

1. STATEMENT

This policy implements the statutory caretaker period under *Section 91A Local Government Elections Act 1999 (the Elections Act)* which is the operational Section that oversees the Caretaker period. The legislation requirements under *Section 91A (LGA) Act* prohibit the use of Council resources for the advantage of a particular candidate or group of candidates during the election period. This policy also reinstates Council's commitment to fair and democratic elections, and adherence to this principle.

2. DEFINITIONS

Chief Executive Officer means the appointed Chief Executive Officer or Acting Chief Executive Officer or nominee.

council Staff means any person that is employed full-time, part-time or casually by the Council who receives remuneration for their work.


Council Member means an elected member of the Wattle Range Council.

election period means the period commencing on the day of the close of nominations for a general election and expiring at the conclusion of the general election.

designated decision means a decision:

- a) relating to the employment or remuneration of the Chief Executive Officer, other than a decision to appoint an acting Chief Executive Officer or to suspend the Chief Executive Officer for serious and willful misconduct;
- b) to terminate the appointment of the Chief Executive Officer;
- c) to enter into a contract, arrangement or understanding (other than a contract for road works, road maintenance or drainage works) the total value of which exceeds whichever is the greater of \$100,000 or 1% of the Council's revenue from rates in the preceding financial year, except if the decision:
 - i. relates to the carrying out of works in response to an emergency or disaster within the meaning of the *Emergency Management Act 2004 (SA)*, or under section 298 of the *Local Government Act 1999 (SA)*;
 - ii. is an expenditure or other decision required to be taken under an agreement by which funding is provided to the Council by the Commonwealth or State Government or otherwise for the Council to be eligible for funding from the Commonwealth or State Government;
 - iii. relates to the employment of a particular Council employee (other than the Chief Executive Officer);
 - iv. is made in the conduct of negotiations relating to the employment of Council employees generally, or a class of Council employees, if provision has been made for funds relating to such negotiations in the budget of the Council for the relevant financial year and the negotiations commenced prior to the election period; or
 - v. relates to the Community Wastewater Management Systems scheme that has, prior to the election period, been approved by the Council.

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general election means a general election of council members held:

- a) under section 5 of the *Local Government (Elections) Act 1999*; or
- b) pursuant to a proclamation or notice under the *Local Government Act 1999 (SA)*.

Minister means the Minister for Local Government or other minister of the South Australian government vested with responsibility for the *Local Government (Elections) Act 1999*.

3. APPLICATION OF POLICY

3.1 This Policy applies throughout the election period for the 2022 general election. For the purposes of the Local Government Elections of November 2022, the policy commences on 6 September 2022 and ends at the conclusion of the election, when results have been declared.

3.2 This policy applies to:

- a) the Council; and
- b) Council staff.

3.3 This Policy is to be taken to form part of the Code of Conduct for Council Employees gazetted for the purpose of section 110 of the *Local Government Act 1999*.

4. PROHIBITION ON DESIGNATED DECISIONS

4.1 The Council is prohibited from making a designated decision during an election period.

4.2 A decision of the Council includes a decision of:

- a) a committee of Council; and
- b) a delegate of Council.

5. PROHIBITION ON THE USE OF COUNCIL RESOURCES


5.1 Council resources must not be used for the advantage of a particular candidate or group of candidates.

5.2 For clarity, neither the Local Government (Elections) Act 1999 nor this caretaker policy prohibits a council providing resources to all members of the public, which incidentally includes all candidates for election.

5.3 The following council resources must not be for the advantage of a particular candidate or group of candidates and may only be used by council members, where necessary, in the performance of their ordinary duties as a Council Member.

- Mobile phones
- Council vehicles
- Council- provided landline phones, computers and other office equipment beyond that provided to members of the public (e.g in a public library).
- Council business cards.
- Requests to council employees to perform tasks which would confer an advantage on a candidate or group of candidates.

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- The ability to issue invitations to council events.
- Council travel arrangements (e.g access to council- negotiated rates for flights, accommodation or hire cars).
- Access to areas that members of the public cannot access, including areas within the property of third parties (e.g a 'Mayors Palour' at a suburban football oval).
- Councils produced promotional brochures and documents.

6. CONSEQUENCE OF CONTRAVENING THIS POLICY

- 6.1 A designated decision made by Council during an election period is invalid, except where an exemption has been granted by the Minister.
- 6.2 Any person who suffers loss or damage as a result of acting in good faith on a designated decision made by the Council in contravention of this policy is entitled to compensation from the Council for that loss or damage.
- 6.3 A breach of this policy is a breach of the Code of Conduct for Council Members and Code of Conduct for Council Employees.


7. APPLICATION FOR EXEMPTION

- 7.1 If the Council considers that it is faced with extraordinary circumstances which require the making of a designated decision during an election period, the Council may apply in writing to the Minister for an exemption to enable the making of a designated decision that would otherwise be invalid under section 91A of the *Local Government (Elections) Act 1999* and this policy.
- 7.2 If the Minister grants an exemption to enable the making of a designated decision that would otherwise be invalid under section 91A of the *Local Government (Elections) Act 1999* and this policy, then the Council and Council staff will comply with any conditions or limitations that the Minister imposes on the exemption.

8. TREATMENT OF OTHER SIGNIFICANT DECISIONS

- 8.1 So far as is reasonably practicable, the Chief Executive Officer should avoid scheduling significant decisions (including major policy decisions) for consideration during an 'election period' and ensure that such decisions:
- are considered by Council prior to the 'election period'; or
 - are scheduled for determination by the incoming Council.
- 8.2 A 'Significant decision' is any major policy or other decision which will significantly affect the Council area or community or will bind the incoming Council.
- 8.3 A 'major policy' decision includes any decision (not being a designated decision):
- to spend unbudgeted monies;
 - to conduct unplanned public consultation;
 - to endorse a new policy;

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- d) to dispose of Council land;
 - e) to approve community grants;
 - f) to progress any matter which has been identified as an election issue; and
 - g) any other issue that is considered a major policy decision by the Chief Executive Officer.
- 8.4 The determination as to whether or not any decision is significant will be made by the Chief Executive Officer, after consultation with the Mayor or Chairperson (as relevant). The Chief Executive Officer must keep a record of all such determinations made by Chief Executive Officers including by previous Chief Executive Officers and make the list to candidates available upon request.
- 8.5 Where the Chief Executive Officer has determined that a decision is significant, but circumstances arise that require the decision to be made during the election period, the Chief Executive Officer will report this to the Council.
- 8.6 The aim of the Chief Executive Officer's report is to assist Council Members assess whether the decision should be deferred for consideration by the incoming Council.
- 8.7 The Chief Executive Officer's report to Council will address the following issues (where relevant):
- h) why the matter is considered 'significant';
 - i) why the matter is considered urgent;
 - j) what are the financial and other consequences of postponing the matter until after the election, both on the current Council and the incoming Council;
 - k) whether deciding the matter will significantly limit options for the incoming Council;
 - l) whether the matter requires the expenditure of unbudgeted funds;
 - m) whether the matter is the completion of an activity already commenced and previously endorsed by Council;
 - n) whether the matter requires community engagement;
 - o) any relevant statutory obligations or timeframes; and
 - p) whether dealing with the matter in the election period is in the best interests of the Council area and community.
- 8.8 Council will consider the Chief Executive Officer's report and determine whether or not to make the decision.


9. REVIEW

This Policy is scheduled for review by Council in March 2026.

10. AVAILABILITY

This Policy is available at the Council Website: www.wattlerange.sa.gov.au.

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11. REFERENCES & FURTHER READING

References	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model Caretaker Policy • under section 91A of the <i>Local Government (Elections) Act 1999</i> • under section 188 <i>Statutes Amendment (Local Government Review) Act</i> • Local Government Association of South Australia
Relevant Legislation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Statutes Amendment (Local Government Review Act) 2021</i> • <i>Local Government (Elections) Act 1999</i> – particularly section 91A • <i>Local Government (Elections) Regulations 2010</i> – particularly regulation 12 • <i>Emergency Management Act 2004</i>
Relevant Policies / Procedures / Guidelines	<p>This Policy should be read in conjunction with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caretaker Guidelines • Code of Conduct for Council Members • Code of Conduct for Council Employees

12. COUNCIL ENDORSEMENT

The table below sets out the adoption, review and amendment history of the policy.

Version No:	Issue Date:	Authorised by:	Description of Change:	Minutes Reference:
1	11 May 2010	Council	Adopted	Folio 4358; Item 11.1.9
2	15 February 2011	Council	Reviewed	Folio 4518; Item 11.1.9
3	8 July 2014	Council	Amended	Folio 5611; Item 12.2.5
4	12 June 2018	Council	Adapted into new format, minor amendments per LGA model	Folio 7653; Item 13.1.2
5	8 March 2022	Council	Reviewed due to LGA reform.	Folio 9901; Item 15.2.2

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