

 Wattle Range COUNCIL	POLICY	Version:	6
	Media & Online Communications	Date Adopted:	14 th June 2016
		Next Review Due:	14 th June 2020

1. STATEMENT

Wattle Range Council recognises that traditional media (e.g. press, television, magazine, radio) and social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) provides Council with an opportunity to engage, connect with and listen to its community and stakeholders.

Many types of media are identified as communication techniques in Council's Community Engagement Policy and may be utilised to help Council inform, consult, involve and collaborate with the community.

The intent of this policy is to formalise Council's position on communicating with the media, outline who is authorised to speak to the media, and ensure that all use of media, social media and online communications are professional, consistent, accurate, timely and appropriate.

2. DEFINITIONS

Account is a profile or membership on a single social media platform, tool or site.

Content is any information that can be published to an account, such as a status update, comment, post, tweet, photo, video or link, including such that are shared.

Council Business may include the provision of Wattle Range Council services, delivery of programs, development of policies, making of decisions, performance of Council functions and other similar types of transactions.

Council representative means persons employed by the Council (staff or employees), committee members, panel members, delegates of Council, volunteers, trainees, work experience placements, independent consultants and contractors and other authorised personnel offered access to Wattle Range Council's resources.

Elected Member means a person appointed or elected as a principal member or councillor of a Council under the *Local Government Act 1999*.

Media includes formats such as news, entertainment, education, data or promotional material. Examples include television, radio, newspapers, magazines, billboards, direct mail, telephone, fax and internet. The absence of a specific reference to a media type does not limit the application of this policy.

Platform / tool / site includes social networking sites, blogs, forums, discussion or bulletin boards, instant messaging facilities, citizen journalism and news sites which facilitate public comment. Examples include Facebook, Twitter, Google+, YouTube, Pinterest, Instagram, Wikipedia. The absence of a specific reference to a platform, tool or site does not limit the application of this policy.

Publish means the provision of content to media or uploading of content to an account.

Social Media means websites and applications where people comment, view, contribute, create, forward, post, publish and share content.

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129	Public	Corporate Services	Chief Executive Officer	4 Yearly
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3. PRINCIPLES

3.1 Scope & Application

This policy applies to all council representatives and Elected Members who use or propose to use media or social media platforms and accounts on behalf of the Wattle Range Council for Council business purposes.

This policy is not intended to cover personal use of media or social media where:

- the author publishes information in their personal capacity and not on behalf of, or in association with the Wattle Range Council; and
- no reference or inference is made to Wattle Range Council, its Elected Members, Council representatives, policies, services, suppliers or other stakeholders or Council related issues.

3.2 Authorised Representatives

Authorised Representatives are council representatives or Elected Members who have authority to communicate with the media and administer Council social media accounts.

Authorised Representatives include:

- The Mayor, who is the Official Spokesperson on behalf of Council.
- The Mayor or Chief Executive Officer (CEO) may make statements to the media for and on behalf of Council, including responses to media enquiries, or:
 - the Mayor may authorise an Elected Member in specific circumstances; or
 - the CEO may authorise a council representative in specific circumstances.
- Council representatives who have been approved by the CEO to administer social media accounts on behalf of Council.

Elected Members can express their own personal point of view on any particular Council issue provided their comments are prefaced as being personal views and not necessarily the views of Council or made as Council's Official Spokesperson.

Council representatives must not include personal commentary or opinion in representing Wattle Range Council.

3.3 Appropriate Use of Media and Social Media

Use of media and social media by Elected Members and council representatives should be done in a professional manner, consistent with the values of Wattle Range Council and in accordance with applicable codes of conduct, policies, procedures and legislation.

Wattle Range Council will use media and social media as follows:

- Involve the community in strategic direction and planning processes by promoting community consultation projects and engagement opportunities to seek public opinion.
- Identify issues circulating in the community and actively listen to the community's views.

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- Regularly publish content regarding the activities of Wattle Range Council, including news, initiatives, events, achievements and relevant information that increases public awareness of Council managed services, resources & facilities;
- Develop and manage an online community that is a safe and respectful place where members are encouraged to communicate and interact with the Wattle Range Council and each other, without any defamatory or inappropriate content;
- Maintain accounts for target audiences where positive social media engagement might be most successful;
- Increase accessibility between Council and the community, particularly through use of social media to connect with audiences that do not receive messages through traditional channels;
- Strengthen Council's reputation as being responsive, consultative, participatory and transparent;
- Actively promote other Council information resources such as the website or social media accounts in relevant communications;
- Support local businesses, organisations and events located in the Wattle Range Council area through social media accounts. Support of businesses, organisations and events located outside the Wattle Range Council may be considered where there is likely to be interest to the local community. All support is at the discretion of Wattle Range Council.

The Mayor may respond publicly from time to time, particularly to any letters to the editor, editorial statements and/or any articles in the media. Responses shall be for the purpose of providing the public an accurate statement on the position of Council.

Council welcomes enquiries from the media. All media representatives will be treated in the same manner as any other customer of Council and Council will endeavor to work within media timeframes where possible.

The establishment of a new social media account must be approved in writing by the CEO and must consider the business objective, target audience, proposed use in line with this policy, resourcing requirements and ensure alignment with Council's Policies.

3.4 Monitoring and Management of Social Media

Wattle Range Council will regularly monitor and maintain its social media accounts to ensure use is:

- consistent with this policy;
- content is published on a regular basis;
- enquiries are responded to in a timely manner; and
- inappropriate use of an account is dealt with appropriately.

Formal records will be kept in line with *Policy 1.49 Records Management*.

Non-compliance with this policy by council representatives will be managed through the Code of Conduct and disciplinary systems.

Non-compliance with this policy by Elected Members will be managed through the Elected Members Code of Conduct and disciplinary systems.

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3.5 Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

Council will evaluate the effectiveness of social media channels regularly and seek opportunities to continually improve engagement opportunities.

4. REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed at least every four years.

Reviews and amendments of this policy will include consultation with Executive Leadership Team, Elected Members and Staff.

5. AVAILABILITY

This policy is publicly available on Council's website: www.wattlerange.sa.gov.au.

A printed copy may be purchased from Council offices upon payment of the relevant fee in Council's Fees and Charges Schedule.

6. REFERENCES & FURTHER READING

Relevant Legislation:	• Australian Copyright Act 1968 • Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 • Australian Spam Act 2003 • Australian Privacy Act 1988 • Civil Liability Act 1936 • Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935 • Defamation Act 2005	• Fair Trading Act 1997 • Fair Work Act 1994 • Freedom of Information Act 1991 • Local Government Act 1999 • Local Government (Elections Act) 1999 • Equal Opportunity Act 1984 • State Records Act 1997
Relevant Policies / Procedures / Guidelines:	This Policy should be read in conjunction with:- • Code of Conduct – Elected Members • Code of Conduct – Council Employees • Policy 1.7 Caretaker	• Policy 1.49 Records Management • Internal Policy 2.7 Electronic Communications • Social Media Procedures and Forms • Policy 1.20 Council Logo

7. ADOPTION & AMENDMENT HISTORY

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:
	14/04/2009	Council	Adopted	Folio 4158; Item 11.5.1
	09/06/2009	Council	Amended	Folio 4181; Item 14.2
	08/09/2009	Council	Amended	Folio 4219; Item 11.1.2
Media Policy	08/03/2009	Council	Amended	Folio 4527; Item 6.1
		Council	Reviewed. Incorporated Social Media into Policy and changed title to Media & Online Communications	Folio 4158; Item 11.5.1

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6	14/06/2016	Council	Amended	Folio 6424; Item 13.2.4

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