
Policy Objective

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

Policy Scope

This policy applies to:

1. Communications initiated or responded to by the Shire of Boddington with our community; and
2. Elected Members when making comment in either their Shire of Boddington role or in a personal capacity.

Policy Statement

9 Official Communications

The purposes of the Shire's official communications include:

- Sharing information required by law to be publicly available.
- Sharing information that is of interest and benefit to the Community.
- Promoting Shire events and services.
- Promoting Public Notices and community consultation / engagement opportunities.
- Answering questions and responding to requests for information relevant to the role of the Shire.
- Receiving and responding to community feedback, ideas, comments, compliments and complaints.

The Shire's official communications will be consistent with relevant legislation, policies, standards and the positions adopted by the Council. Our 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:

- Website;
- Advertising and promotional materials;
- Media releases prepared for the Shire President, to promote specific Shire of Boddington positions;
- Social media; and
- Community newsletters, letter drops and other modes of communications undertaken by the Shire's Administration at the discretion of the CEO.

10. Speaking on behalf of the Shire of Boddington

The Shire President is the official spokesperson for the Shire of Boddington and may represent the Shire in official communications, including; speeches, comment, print, electronic and social media.

Where the Shire President / Mayor is unavailable, the Deputy Shire President may act as the spokesperson.

The CEO may speak on behalf of the Shire of Boddington, where authorised to do so by the Shire President.

The provisions of the *Local Government Act 1995* essentially direct that only the Shire President, or the CEO 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 has had opportunity to speak on behalf of the Shire of Boddington.

Communications by Elected Members, whether undertaken in an authorised official capacity or as a personal communication, must not:

- bring the Shire of Boddington into disrepute,
- compromise the person's effectiveness in their role with the Shire,
- imply the Shire's endorsement of personal views, or
- disclose, without authorisation, confidential information.

Social media accounts or unsecured website forums must not be used to transact meetings which relate to the official business of the Shire of Boddington.

Elected member communications must comply with the Code of Conduct and the *Local Government (Rules of Conduct) Regulations 2007*.

11. Responding to Media Enquiries

All enquiries from the Media for an official Shire of Boddington comment, whether made to an individual Elected Member or Employee, must be directed to the CEO or a person authorised by the CEO. Information will be coordinated to support the Shire President or CEO to make an official response on behalf of the Shire of Boddington.

Elected members may make comments to the media in a personal capacity – refer to clause 7.1 below.

12. Website

The Shire of Boddington will maintain an official website, as our community's on-line resource to access to the Shire's official communications.

13. Social Media

The Shire of Boddington uses Social Media to facilitate interactive information sharing and to provide responsive feedback to our community. Social Media will not however, be used by the Shire to communicate or respond to matters that are complex or relate to a person's or entity's private affairs.

The Shire of Boddington maintains the following Social Media accounts:

- Social networks, including - Facebook;
- Media Sharing networks, including – Instagram and YouTube;
- Micro-blogging networks, including – Twitter;
- Apps (applications), including – Localeye.

The Shire of Boddington may also post and contribute to Social Media hosted by others, so as to ensure that the Shire's strategic objectives are appropriately represented and promoted.

The Shire actively seeks ideas, questions and feedback from our community however, we expect participants to behave in a respectful manner. The Shire of Boddington will moderate its Social Media accounts to address and where necessary delete content which is deemed as:

- Offensive, abusive, defamatory, objectionable, inaccurate, false or misleading;
- Promotional, soliciting or commercial in nature;
- Unlawful or incites others to break the law;
- Information which may compromise individual or community safety or security;
- Repetitive material copied and pasted or duplicated;
- Content that promotes or opposes any person campaigning for election to the Council, appointment to official office, or any ballot;
- Content that violates intellectual property rights or the legal ownership of interests or another party; and
- Any other inappropriate content or comments at the discretion of the Shire.

Where a third party contributor to a Shire of Boddington's social media account is identified as posting content which is deleted in accordance with the above, the Shire may at its complete discretion block that contributor for a specific period of time or permanently.

Shire President Social Media Official Accounts

The Shire of Boddington supports the Shire President in using official social media account/s to assist the Shire President in fulfilling their role under section 2.8 of the *Local Government Act*, to speak on behalf of the Local Government. The content will be administered and moderated in accordance with this policy.

These official Shire of Boddington accounts must not be used by the Shire President for personal communications.

Use of Social Media in Emergency Management and Response

The Shire of Boddington will use the following channels to communicate and advise our community regarding Emergency Management:

- Shire of Boddington Website
- Shire of Boddington Facebook page
- SMS Messaging

14. Record Keeping and Freedom of Information

Official communications undertaken on behalf of the Shire of Boddington, including on the Shire's Social Media accounts and third party social media accounts must be created and retained as local government records in accordance with the Shire's Record Keeping Plan and the *State Records Act 2000*. These records are also subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1992*.

15. Personal Communications

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 must ensure that their personal or private communications do not breach the requirements of this policy, the Code of Conduct and the *Local Government (Rules of Conduct) Regulations 2007*.

Elected Member Statements on Shire Matters

An Elected Member may choose to make a personal statement publicly on a matter related to the business of the Shire of Boddington.

Any public statement made by an Elected Member, whether made in a personal capacity or in their Local Government representative capacity, must:

1. Clearly state that the comment or content is a personal view only, which does not necessarily represent the views of the Shire of Boddington.
2. Be made with reasonable care and diligence;
3. Be lawful, including avoiding contravention of; copyright, defamation, discrimination or harassment laws;
4. Be factually correct;
5. Avoid damage to the reputation of the local government;
6. Not reflect adversely on a decision of the Council;
7. Not reflect adversely on the character or actions of another Elected Member or Employee;

8. Maintain a respectful and positive tone and not use offensive or objectionable expressions in reference to any Elected Member, Employee or community member.

An Elected Member who is approached by the media for a personal statement may request the assistance of the CEO.

Comments which become public and which breach this policy, the Code of Conduct or the *Local Government (Rules of Conduct) Regulations 2007*, may constitute a serious breach of the *Local Government Act 1995* and may be referred for investigation.