

Council Policy Name: Media and Public Statements

Responsible Directorate: Finance and Corporate Services

Version: Current

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. The purpose of this Policy is to establish protocols for the release of public statements issued by the City of Busselton (including to the media and on Social Media) to ensure the City is professionally and accurately represented and to maximise a positive public perception of the City.
- 1.2. This Policy also provides clarity on the roles and responsibilities of the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor, Councillors and the Chief Executive Officer when speaking publicly/issuing public statements.

2. SCOPE

- 2.1. This Policy is applicable to public statements initiated by Council Members and the CEO (or delegated Officers) which pertain to the business of the City of Busselton; made orally, in writing, or electronically, in either their City role or in a personal capacity.

3. DEFINITIONS

Term	Meaning
Act	<i>Local Government Act 1995</i>
Policy	This City of Busselton Council policy is titled "Media and Public Statements"
Social Media	Web-based technology which facilitates the communication and sharing of text, photos, audio, video and information in general.

4. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

- 4.1. This Policy links to Key Goal Area 6 of the City's Strategic Community Plan 2017 and specifically the Community Objectives:
 - a. 6.1 Governance systems, processes and practices are responsible, ethical and transparent;
 - b. 6.2 Council engages broadly and proactively with the community;
 - c. 6.3 Accountable leadership that is supported by a skilled and professional workforce.

5. POLICY STATEMENT

- 5.1. Media and public statements will be issued by the City for the purposes of:
 - a. sharing information required by law to be publicly available;
 - b. sharing information that is of interest and benefit to the Community;
 - c. promoting City of Busselton 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 City; and
 - f. receiving and responding to community feedback, ideas, comments, compliments and complaints.

- 5.2. Official statements will be consistent with policies, standards and the positions adopted by the Council.

- 5.3. The City uses a combination of different communication modes to relay public statements including:
 - a. City websites;
 - b. advertising and promotional materials;
 - c. media releases and media statements promoting specific City positions prepared for or provided by the Mayor, the CEO (or delegated Officer);
 - d. Social Media platforms; and
 - e. community newsletters and communiques.

Speaking on behalf of the City of Busselton

- 5.4. Section 2.8 (1) (d) of the Act provides that the Mayor is the official spokesperson for the City of Busselton and may represent the City in official communications, including; speeches, commentary, print, electronic mediums and Social Media.
- 5.5. Section 5.34 of the Act provides that the Deputy Mayor may perform the functions of the Mayor if
 - a. the office of Mayor is vacant; or
 - b. the Mayor is not available, or is unable or unwilling to perform the functions of Mayor.
- 5.6. Section 2.10 of the Act sets out the role of a Council member and the role does not include speaking on behalf of the local government.
- 5.7. The Mayor may include commentary from other Council members in media and public statements where:
 - a. an Council member has specific expertise or knowledge of a specific area of Council business;
 - b. a comment from a Council member other than or as well as the Mayor would generally be expected by the community;
 - c. a comment from a Council member other than or as well as the Mayor maximises the positive perception of the City of Busselton Council.
- 5.8. The CEO or a CEO approved officer may speak to the media or otherwise in public as to the City's affairs in performance of the CEO's functions under S.5.41 of the Act, including that of managing the day-to-day operations of the City. The CEO only requires the approval of the Mayor when making statements of the kind which would ordinarily fall within the role of the Mayor as official spokesperson of the City.
- 5.9. Statements made by Council Members and City employees whether undertaken in an authorised official capacity or as a personal communication, must not:
 - a. bring the City of Busselton into disrepute;
 - b. compromise the person's effectiveness in their role with the City of Busselton;
 - c. imply the City's endorsement of personal views;
 - d. imply the Council Member or employee is speaking on behalf of the City, unless authorised to do so;or
 - e. disclose, without authorisation, confidential information.

Council Member Statements on City Matters

- 5.10. Council members may speak in public to the extent that doing so does not conflict with roles or obligations outlined in the City's Code of Conduct and the *Local Government (Rules of Conduct) Regulations 2007*.
- 5.11. Any public statement made by a Council Member, whether made in a personal capacity or in their capacity as a Councillor, should:
 - a. clearly state that the comment or content is a personal view only which does not necessarily represent the views of the City of Busselton;
 - b. be made with reasonable care and diligence;
 - c. be lawful, including avoiding contravention of; copyright, defamation, discrimination or harassment laws;
 - d. be factually correct;
 - e. avoid damage to the reputation of the local government;

- f. not reflect adversely on a decision of the Council;
 - g. not reflect adversely on the character or actions of another Council Member or Employee; and
 - h. maintain a respectful tone and not use offensive or objectionable expressions in reference to any Council Member, Employee or community member.
- 5.12. A Council Member who is approached by the media for a statement may request the assistance of the City via a request to the CEO or relevant Director.

Media Enquiries

- 5.13. The Council will openly discuss matters of interest with the media unless disclosure of information contravenes the City's duty of care, contractual obligations, a legal issue or could infringe laws or regulations that govern its operations, or the privacy of any individual.
- 5.14. Media enquiries will be dealt with promptly, honestly and within the media representative's deadline wherever possible.
- 5.15. All media enquiries must be directed to the City's Public Relations team in the first instance whereby information will be coordinated to support the release of an official response on behalf of the City. The media may, however, approach the Mayor directly for comment in his/her capacity as official spokesperson for the City.

Social Media

- 5.16. The City uses Social Media and maintains Social Media accounts to facilitate information sharing and to provide feedback to our community. Social Media will not be used by the City to communicate or respond to matters that are complex or relate to a person's or entity's private affairs.
- 5.17. The City may post and contribute to Social Media hosted by others to ensure that the City's strategic objectives are appropriately represented and promoted.
- 5.18. The City will, at its discretion, moderate its Social Media accounts to address, and where necessary delete, content deemed to be:
- a. offensive, abusive, defamatory, objectionable, inaccurate, false or misleading;
 - b. soliciting or commercial in nature;
 - c. unlawful or which may incite others to break the law;
 - d. information which may compromise individual or community safety or security;
 - e. repetitive material copied and pasted or duplicated;
 - f. electioneering for Council, appointment to official Office, or any ballot;
 - g. in violation of intellectual property rights or the legal ownership of interests or another party; and
 - h. inappropriate in any other way.
- 5.19. Where a third party contributor to a City's Social Media account is identified as posting content which is deleted in accordance with the above, the City may, at its discretion, hide that contributor's comment and / or block that contributor for a specific period of time or permanently.
- 5.20. The City of Busselton will, in conjunction with other communication modes, use Social Media to communicate and advise the community regarding Emergency Management.

6. RELATED DOCUMENTATION / LEGISLATION

- 6.1. City of Busselton Code of Conduct
- 6.2. Local Government (Rules of Conduct) Regulations 2007
- 6.3. Elected Members Guide

7. REVIEW DETAILS

Review Frequency		3 yearly		
Council Adoption	DATE	12 February 2020	Resolution #	C2002/037
Previous Adoption	DATE	N/A	Resolution #	N/A