



1/025 Media and Communications

Policy Statement

The Town of Port Hedland encourages the use of traditional and digital communications to improve community awareness of initiatives and improve service delivery.

It is recognised that the role of the Mayor is to speak on behalf of the Local Government and accordingly the Mayor is the official spokesperson for the Council.

The principles that are outlined in this policy are included in the Town of Port Hedland's Code of Conduct and the *Local Government Act 1995*.

Scope

This policy provides guidelines on responsible engagement with the community through traditional and digital communication platforms, including but not limited to advertisements, media interactions (interviews, releases etc), website, social media, online forums, blogs and online surveys/polls.

It outlines the standards and expectations the Town of Port Hedland has of its staff members and elected members, who are representatives of the Town at all times.

This policy applies to all officers, consultants, contractors and outsourced service providers performing work for the Town of Port Hedland. It also applies to elected members.

Content

Principles

Communications are to be used in a way that is consistent with the following guiding principles:

- Open – to share and promote access to information and services and be transparent and accountable
- Collaborative – to create opportunities to listen to and engage with the public, local communities and industry
- Responsive – to empower the use of social media to respond quickly to customers and emerging issues
- Reliable – to support a consistent and quality experience.
- Appropriate – to be consistent with the Town of Port Hedland values, related policies, code of conduct and legislative requirements



Media

The *Local Government Act 1995* provides that the role of the Mayor is to speak on behalf of the Local Government and accordingly, the Mayor is the official spokesperson for the Council.

Without express authority from the Mayor, Councillors and staff are not to offer a Council view, on any issue; this clearly being the function of the Mayor.

A Councillor's right to express a personal opinion on any issue of public interest is recognised. Councillors are at liberty to express personal views on any matter which is pertinent to the business of the Town, including Council decisions, provided they do not purport to represent Council. Councillors and Staff will refrain from making any negative comments publicly regarding a resolution of Council.

There shall not be any adverse reflection on Elected Members, Community Members, staff or a Council /Committee decision.

If approached by the media for formal comment on any matters relating to Council, Councillors and staff are in the first instance, to suggest that the media make direct contact with the Town of Port Hedland's communications department who will liaise with the media and coordinate an appropriate response.

The Mayor may authorise the Chief Executive Officer or other staff members to respond or comment.

Elected Members may make public statements to the media relating to their own personal matters provided their comments do not purport to represent Council or bring the Council to disrepute.

All Elected Members of the Council shall be able to inspect and/ or obtain a copy of any press release so filed, at any time. Media releases will be made available to Elected Members and the general public by publishing on the Town's website on the day of release.

Media Statements and press releases must not include information of an electioneering or personal promotional purpose. This policy does not negate Elected Members responsibilities that are outlined under 4/006 Elections – Caretaker Period Policy.

Traditional Communication

The Town of Port Hedland utilises a number of communication methods to promote its initiatives and improve service delivery. These include print and radio advertisements, videos, brochures, posters and community notices.

Communication materials are coordinated through the Town's communications department and must be authorised by the department prior to publication.

Generally traditional communication does not quote the Mayor or officer, however if so, the Mayor may authorise the Chief Executive Officer or other staff members to comment. As an example, this would apply to videos.

Digital Communication

Conduct

All elected representatives and employees should be cognisant that their conduct when using digital communications, in either a personal or official capacity, reflects upon them and their position.

All elected representatives and employees should be cognisant that online content is recorded by a number of search engines and that the content of posts and discussions may be publicly available and searchable into the future.

Guidelines for the Mayor

The Mayor is entitled to establish a Facebook fan page that identifies them as the Mayor. This page may be administered by the Mayor and/or delegated to Town of Port Hedland staff as appropriate.

On the information tab of the Mayor's fan page, the following disclaimer must be included:

This page is administered by the Mayor of Port Hedland and the contributions reflect the views of the Mayor, in their official capacity.

The Mayoral Facebook page will allow the community and stakeholders to make enquiries about information posted on the Mayor's Facebook. These postings will be considered a public record and will therefore be monitored, recorded and responded to accordingly.

An official response will be posted on the Mayoral Facebook page in accordance with the Town of Port Hedland Customer Service Charter.



Acceptable contributions to be posted to the Mayor's official Facebook fan page include:

- information about Council decisions, activities, events which are within the boundaries of the position and open for comments/feedback; and
- information about Council agenda items after the respective OCM and a decision has been made.

Unacceptable contributions to be posted to the Mayor's official Facebook fan page include:

- opinions or information about Council decisions, expressed as official statements;
- information in relation to the administrative functions and activities of Council; and
- personal opinions or comments on any topic or issue.

Guidelines for Councillors

Councillors are not permitted to establish official social media tools for communications with the community.

Councillors are authorised to establish and maintain personal social and digital media tools however must not use the title of "Councillor" in the name of any account, profile or page established.

Councillors should not make comments about the Town of Port Hedland, its elected representatives and staff or its partners and stakeholders on their personal social media tools.

Guidelines for Employees

Town of Port Hedland employees will use social media for the following purposes:

- disseminating time-sensitive information as quickly as possible (example: emergency information)
- increasing the Town's ability to broadcast its messages to the widest possible audience
- promoting a specific issue/topic information where appropriate for community consultation

The CEO will determine the authorised contributors for the Town of Port Hedland account.

Town of Port Hedland employees may maintain their own personal social media accounts and tools.



It is the preference of the Town of Port Hedland that employees do not initiate social media discussions on work related matters. If personally approached online in regards to a work matter, employees should immediately inform their supervisor and seek advice on how to reply in a way that positively reflects the Town of Port Hedland.

If employees choose to reply, they should include the following disclaimer:

“The views expressed on this site are my own and do not necessarily reflect the view of the Town of Port Hedland”.

In the event that employees respond to a work-related query or comment, they should:

- not comment on information that is meant to be private or internal to the Town of Port Hedland;
- ensure all comments do not conflict with the Town’s mission or official positions;
- do not comment on areas you are not familiar with; and
- do not discuss partners, sponsors or contractors without prior approval.

In using social media in a way that identifies their employment with the Town of Port Hedland, employees should be conscious that their online conduct reflects upon them and the Town of Port Hedland.

Authorised statements

Posts and statements should be in line with the guiding principles and actively promote Town initiatives.

Prohibited posts and statements are ones that:

- are in support of or opposition to political campaigns
- use profane language or content
- use content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, colour, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation’
- contain sexual content or links to sexual content
- include solicitations of commerce
- conduct or encourage illegal activity
- include information that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems
- include content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party



Supporting Guidelines

The implementation of this policy is supported through relevant internal operating procedures and the Town’s Code of Conduct.

Definitions

“Digital Communication” any means of exchange of information that takes place using digital technology or tools, such as website, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube.

“Engagement” refers any form of communication where opinion, comment and feedback is exchanged and used for organisational purposes.

“Media” refers to methods of communication with media outlets such as media releases, media responses, interviews, photo opportunities.

“The community” refers to any individual, community group, business, government department and agency, not-for-profit and non-government organisation, who has an interest in the Town of Port Hedland and its activities.

“Traditional communication” refers to communication methods such as print advertisements, radio advertisements, brochures, posters, community notices.

Relevant legislation	<i>Local Government Act 1995</i>
Delegated authority	Nil
Business unit	Communications
Directorate	Development, Sustainability and Lifestyle

<i>Governance to complete this section</i>			
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Document Control Statement – The electronic reference copy of this Policy is maintained by the Governance Team. Any printed copy may not be up to date and you are advised to check the electronic copy at <http://www.porthedland.wa.gov.au/documents/public-documents/policies> to ensure that you have the current version. Alternatively, you may contact the Governance Team.