

## Social Media Policy

### Objective

This policy outlines the standards and responsibilities for the use of social media by Council Members, employees, contractors, and authorised volunteers of the Shire of East Pilbara ("the Shire"). It ensures consistency, accountability, and appropriate use of social media to support the Shire's goals, promote transparency, and enhance community communication and engagement.

### Policy

The Shire recognises that social media is a powerful tool for communication, engagement, and community building. The Shire is committed to using social media responsibly in a professional manner to reflect our Shire values, protect our reputation, and support our organisational goals.

This policy outlines the expectations for Council Members, employees, contractors, and representatives when engaging with social media on behalf of the Shire or when referencing the organisation in a personal capacity.

### 1. Key Principles

- **Professionalism:** Maintain respectful and professional conduct at all times.
- **Cultural Safety and Respect:** The Shire is committed to ensuring all social media content is culturally safe and respectful, particularly when engaging with Traditional Owners. Content that references cultural events, heritage sites, language, or imagery must be approved in consultation with relevant cultural representatives or authorised Shire officers.
- **Transparency:** Be honest and disclose your official role when posting on behalf of the Shire.
- **Confidentiality:** Do not disclose confidential or sensitive information.
- **Respect:** Avoid defamatory, offensive, or discriminatory content.
- **Accuracy:** Share only factual and verified information.
- **Separation:** Avoid confusing personal opinions with official Shire positions.

### 2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All official Shire social media accounts.
- Personal use of social media by Shire representatives where reference is made to the Shire or its business.
- Contractors and volunteers acting on behalf of the Shire.

### 3. Definitions

**Social Media:** refers to digital platforms and technologies that enable people to create, share, and interact with content and each other online in real time. The communication medium is a powerful, real-time communication ecosystem that blends social interaction, media consumption, marketing, commerce, and branding.

Social Media is central to:

- Sharing of information and news
- Communication and networking in the workplace
- Customer service and community engagement
- Activism and social movements
- Digital identity and self-expression

Social Media refers to digital platforms and technologies that enable people to create, share, and interact with content and each other online in real time. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, X/Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, TikTok)
- Video and photo sharing platforms (e.g. YouTube, Flickr)
- Ephemeral content formats (e.g. Instagram Stories, Facebook Stories, Reels, Snapchat)
- Blogs and microblogs (including those hosted by media outlets)
- Wikis and online collaborations (e.g. Wikipedia)
- Forums, discussion boards and groups
- Encrypted or closed group messaging platforms used for work purposes (e.g. WhatsApp, Messenger, Signal)
- Online surveys, polls, and other interactive tools used for engagement
- VOD (video on demand) and podcasting
- Online multiplayer gaming platforms
- Instant messaging and geo-spatial tagging services

## 4. Principles

The Shire supports responsible use of social media to:

- Communicate timely and relevant information to employees, residents, visitors, and stakeholders;
- Disseminate time sensitive/emergency related information;
- Promote programs, services, events and initiatives that benefit the community;
- Engage in meaningful and productive, two-way conversations with the community;
- Strengthen the Shire's reputation and relationships;
- Drive web traffic to the Shire's website;
- Address any misinformation out in the public domain.

## 5. Official Use

### 5.1 Authorisation

Only designated employees are authorised to post, respond, or moderate on official Shire platforms. Access is granted by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

### 5.2 Content Guidelines

Posts must be:

- Relevant, factual, and respectful.
- Consistent with Council decisions and public communications.
- Free from confidential or sensitive information.
- Aligned with relevant laws, including copyright and defamation law.
- All content must comply with the *Copyright Act 1968* and relevant licences, including Creative Commons, to ensure lawful use of images, video, music, and written material.

### 5.3 Monitoring and Moderation

Accounts must be monitored regularly. The Shire reserves the right to hide or delete user comments that:

- Contain offensive, defamatory, or discriminatory content.
- Are spam or misleading.
- Breach privacy or incite unlawful behaviour.

## 6. Personal Use by Employees and Council Members

Employees and council members must not:

- Imply they speak on behalf of the Shire when using personal accounts.
- Disclose confidential or privileged information.
- Post content that could damage the Shire's reputation or relationships.
- Criticise Council decisions or staff in a public forum.

The Shire respects the right to personal expression but reminds all staff and members that their conduct on social media reflects on the organisation, especially in small or remote communities.

## 7. Compliance

### ***Freedom of Information Act 1992 (WA)***

The Shire of East Pilbara must comply with the *Freedom of Information Act 1992 (WA)* ("the FOI Act"), legislation enacted by the Western Australian Parliament to give the public greater access to information held by state and local government agencies.

All comments and posts put on a Shire controlled Facebook or other Social Media platform is subject to Freedom of Information legislation. All relevant comments/posts must be recorded in accordance with

the State Records Act, and may be accessed under the FOI Act.

## ***Public Interest Disclosure Act 2003 (WA)***

Any information which is considered 'public interest information' for the purposes of the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2003*, must not be posted/commented on any Social Media platform. Further information is available in the [Shire of East Pilbara Public Interest Disclosure Guidelines](#).

## **8. Breaches and Disciplinary Action**

Shire controlled Social Media platforms must **not** be used for:

- Entering online debates or difference in opinion about the Shire's work and services.
- Recruitment processes for employees other than for filling vacancies advertised.
- Canvassing, promoting or advertising any political, ideology or decision of a council member, candidate, or political party.
- The promotion or advertising of any individual business.

Depending on the circumstances, non-compliance with this Policy may result in disciplinary action, including removal of access to social media accounts, formal warnings, or termination of employment or contract. For elected members, breaches may constitute a breach of the *Local Government (Model Code of Conduct) Regulations 2021*.

Council Members who fail to comply with this Policy will be removed from the Social Media Platform and may also face action under the Shire's Code of Conduct.

The *Local Government (Model Code of Conduct) Regulations 2021* set out the standards of behaviour expected of council members.

## **9. Training and Support**

Authorised users will receive training and support to ensure compliance with this policy, best practice in digital communications, and awareness of local community sensitivities.

## **10. Review**

This policy will be reviewed every two years or sooner if legislation, social media platforms, or community expectations change.

## Authorisation Details

|                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                   |          |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------|
| <b>References:</b>             | <i>Local Government Act 1995</i><br><i>Local Government (Model Code of Conduct) Regulations 2021</i><br><i>Public Interest Disclosure Act 2003</i><br>Shire of East Pilbara Public Interest Disclosure Guidelines<br>Information Privacy Principles (IPPs)<br>WA Government Information Security Policy |                   |          |
| <b>Authorised by:</b>          | Council                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                   |          |
| <b>Date:</b>                   | 22 August 2025                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>Minute No.</b> | 2025/220 |
| <b>Review/Amendment Date</b>   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>Minute No.</b> |          |
| <b>Next Review</b>             | Every two years                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                   |          |
| <b>Responsible Directorate</b> | Community Experience                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                   |          |
| <b>Responsible Officer</b>     | Manager Communications and Engagement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                   |          |
| <b>File No.</b>                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                   |          |