



1 HEAD OF POWER

- *Local Government Act 2009 (Qld)*
- *Local Government Regulation 2012 (Qld)*
- *Local Government Electoral Act 2011 (Qld)*
- *Information Privacy Act 2009 (Qld)*
- *Information Privacy and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2023 (Qld)*
- *Public Records Act 2009 (Qld)*
- *Right to Information Act (Qld)*
- *Copyright Act 1968 (Qld)*
- *Defamation Act 1991 (Qld)*
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Qld)*
- *Spam Act 2003 (Qld)*
- *Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld)*
- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Qld)*

2 POLICY PURPOSE

This policy establishes Pormpuraaw Aboriginal Shire Council's (Council) commitment to engaging with the media in an accurate, timely, and consistent manner that promotes public confidence. It also sets out Council's commitment to the responsible, lawful, and professional use of social media. The policy establishes spokesperson arrangements, conduct expectations, and operational protocols for all interactions with the media and social media on Council matters.

3 POLICY OBJECTIVE

The objective of this policy is to establish a framework for all Council communications across traditional and digital platforms. It aims to promote public confidence by ensuring accurate, timely, and consistent management that builds trust in Councils governance. By clearly defining authorised spokesperson arrangements, conduct expectations, and legal compliance requirements, the policy protects Councils reputation and mitigates risk. Furthermore, it guides the response and professional use of official and personal social media by all personnel, ensuring adherence to privacy, public records, and right to information obligations.

4 POLICY SCOPE

This policy applies to all Elected Members, employees, contractors, consultants, agents, and volunteers (personnel) of Council.

- it applies to reactive media engagement (responses) and proactive engagement (releases, press conferences)
- it applies to the management of official Council social media accounts and platforms
- it applies to personal social media use where the individual identifies themselves as associated with Council, where the association is reasonably apparent, or where content relates to Council operations or community
- it applies whether access occurs on or off Council premises, during or outside working hours, and using personal or Council devices
- Councillor's personal social media accounts used to engage constituents are not official channels and are subject to the Councillor Code of Conduct

5 POLICY STATEMENT

Council relies on media and social media to communicate with the community, build public trust, and share services information. Because these engagements carry legal, reputational, and privacy risks, Council adheres to the following principles:

- **Open, Accurate, and Lawful content:** Council engages with the media openly and accurately. Social media content must be lawful, accurate, and consistent with adopted positions, free from defamatory, or copyright-infringing material
- **Consistent Public Voice:** Council maintains a consistent voice that reflects its decisions. Official social media accounts must be formally authorised, consistently branded, and managed by authorised personnel
- **Reputation and Integrity:** Council protects the reputation of the organisation, community, and its personnel
- **Privacy and Confidentiality:** Engagement must not disclose confidential information or personal information without authorisation, complying with the *Information Privacy Act 2009 (Qld)*
- **Personnel Wellbeing:** Council recognises that social media managers may be exposed to harmful content and will take reasonable steps to protect their wellbeing

5.1 TRADITIONAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

5.1.1 Spokesperson Arrangements

Only authorised spokespersons may comment to the media on behalf of Council

Spokesperson	Authority
Mayor	Official spokesperson for all major Council matters, including policies, emergencies and regional issues. This responsibility may be delegated to the Deputy Mayor, or specific elected members.
Deputy Mayor	Acts as the official spokesperson during the Mayor's absence, temporary incapacity, or via delegation.
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	Primary spokesperson on administrative and operational matters. May authorise a senior officer to speak on technical/operational matters within their area of responsibility

CEO or Nominated Officer	Coordinates all media enquiries, releases, and interview requests. Authorised to provide factual background clarification to media. Is not an authorised spokesperson on matters of policy or Council decisions unless specifically authorised by the Mayor
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5.2 ELECTED MEMBER AND EMPLOYEE CONDUCT

- Elected Members may communicate with the community about local government matters but not present themselves as official spokespersons unless delegated by the Mayor
- Elected Members must refer sensitive, whole-of-Council, or undecided matters to the Mayor first
- Personal views expressed by Elected Members contrary to adopted positions must be clearly identified as personal views
- Elected members approached about operational matters must refer media to the CEO or nominated officer
- Employees/Personnel must not respond to media enquiries without authorisation; unauthorised enquiries must be referred to the CEO or nominated officer
- Authorised personnel must confine comments to their responsibility area and not disclose confidential information

5.3 MEDIA RELEASES

- All media releases must be coordinated by the CEO or nominated officer, and approved by the relevant authorised spokesperson prior to release
- A record of all media enquiries and response must be maintained by the CEO or nominated officer, ensuring that authorised spokespersons are informed of relevant enquiries
- Releases and statements must not disclose identifiable personal information unless legally authorised or consented to

5.4 SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT

5.4.1 Official Account Administration

- New accounts require approval from the CEO or delegate and must be registered on the Approved Councils Social Media Accounts Register using a Council-owned email address (schedule 1)
- Account credentials must be held securely by Council and updated immediately if a managing staff member leaves or changes roles
- Accounts must display approved Council branding, and dormant accounts must be formally closed or archived

5.4.2 Content Publishing and Community Engagement

- Only authorised social media managers may post on official channels, and must be approved by the CEO, Executive Support and Human Resources Team Leader (schedule 3)
- Content must meet accessibility standards and comply with advertising/spam laws
- Images or AI-generated content must be checked for copyright, accuracy, and reputational risks
- Council encourages respectful community engagement and maintains a published comment moderation statement (schedule 2)

- User-generated content may be hidden or removed if it is abusive, defamatory, contains personal information, constitutes spam, is demonstrably false, or is off-topic. Content must not be removed merely because it criticises Council
- Customer complaints submitted via social media must be directed to formal complaint processes; Council must avoid engaging in individual debates on public channels

5.5 PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA USE BY PERSONNEL

Personnel are permitted to use social media in a personal capacity, subject to the following rules where a Council association is apparent:

- Personnel must clearly state that views are their own and do not represent Councils position
- Conduct must align with the Code of Conduct and professional standards
- Personnel must not disclose confidential/personal information, nor publish defamatory, harassing, or legally damaging content
- Council ICT resources must not be used for personal social media unless permitted under the Email and Internet use administrative policy
- Personnel must report any social media content that affects Council's reputation or safety to their manager or the CEO

5.6 SPECIAL CONTEXTS

5.6.1 Emergency and Crisis Management

- The mayor is the spokesperson for public statements regarding Council's emergency response, while the CEO speaks on operational matters
- All media contact must be coordinated through the CEO or nominated officer and align with emergency authority advice
- Social media during crises must be directed by the CEO or nominated officer; unauthorised or uncoordinated posting is strictly prohibited
- Authorised social media managers must escalate urgent or sensitive matters to the CEO or responsible manager promptly

5.6.2 Escalation and Caretaker Period

- During a caretaker period, major policy decisions and election material publication are restricted under the *Local Government Act 2009 (Qld)*
- Council's official social media must only deliver factual service information; content promoting or opposing candidates/parties is prohibited
- The CEO will issue specific guidance to authorise managers at the start of the election period
- Personnel must consult the CEO before issuing media releases. If ministerial approval is granted for a major policy decision, the CEO must ensure any media statements explicitly states this approval and complies with its condition
- Councillor candidates must ensure personal social media activity does not use Council resources, imagery or branding

5.7 GOVERNANCE AND COMPLIANCE

5.7.1 Records and Privacy

- Social media communications qualifying as Council records must be retained per the *Public Records Act 2023 (Qld)* and right to information (RTI) obligations
- Authorised managers must not delete posts relevant to legal proceedings or RTI without manager authorisation
- Personal information collected via social media must be handled in accordance with the *Information Privacy Act 2009 (Qld)*

5.7.2 Personal Wellbeing

- Council recognises its obligations under the *Work Health and Safety act 2011 (Qld)* to protect social media managers from online abuse
- Threatening or seriously abusive content must be reported to managers and law enforcement if a credible threat exists
- Managers are not required to personally respond to abuse and have authority to block users; Council provides access to Employee Assistance Programs for affected staff

5.8 TRAINING, MONITORING, AND BREACHES

- Personnel must receive training on this policy at induction or annually. Elected members receive briefings during induction and when the policy changes
- Failure to comply with the policy may lead to disciplinary action and the reversal of compromised decisions
- Suspected misconduct or fraud must be reported via Council's code of conduct process
- The policy's success is evaluated by compliance metrics, enquiry response times, tracking unauthorised systems, complaint outcomes, and training completion rates

6 HUMAN RIGHTS COMPATIBILITY STATEMENT

This policy has been assessed as compatible with Human Rights protected under *the Human Rights Act 2019*.

7 DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Authorised social media manager	Personnel authorised by the CEO or delegate to post content on official accounts
Comment moderation	The process of reviewing and managing comments, replies, and user-generated content posted by members of the public on Council's social media channels
Confidential information	Non-public information including personal data, legal advice, commercial in confidence material, and pre-decisional information
Council	Pormpuraaw Aboriginal Shire Council

Term	Definition
Crisis communications	Communications required in response to an urgent or serious incident, emergency, or event that requires rapid and coordinated public messaging from Council
Elected members	The mayor, deputy mayor, and councillors of council
Intellectual property	All forms of intellectual property rights including copyright, patent, design, trademark, trade name, know how, and trade secrets
Media	Public communication channels, including television, radio, print, online news, podcasts and social media
Official council social media account	An account, page, or profile operated on behalf of Council on any platform
Personnel	All elected members, employees, contractors, volunteers, consultants, and agents of council
Social media	Online platforms enabling content sharing
User generated content	Content posted by members of the public or other third parties on Council's social media channels, including comments, reviews, messages, and shared posts

8 RELATED POLICS AND OTHER DOCUMENTS

Code of Conduct for Staff

Code of Conduct for staff Summary

Councillor Code of Conduct

Records Management Policy (still under development)

9 MONITORING AND REVIEW

Notwithstanding the above, this policy is to be reviewed every four (4) years for relevance and to ensure that its effectiveness is maintained.

10 RESPONSIBILITY

This Policy is to be implemented by the CEO; and reviewed and amended in accordance with the Governance and Records Officer

11 SCHEDULE 1 – APPROVED COUNCIL SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS REGISTER

This register must be maintained and reviewed at least annually by the responsible manager. New accounts require CEO or delegate approval before establishment.

Platform	Account name / URL	Purpose	Authorised manager(s)	Account email	Date approved	Last reviewed
All	Pormpuraaw Aboriginal Shire Council	Social Media	CEO Executive Support & HR Team Leader	executivesupport@pormpuraaw.qld.gov.au	1/8/2026	1/8/2026

12 SCHEDULE 2 – COMMUNITY COMMENT MODERATION STATEMENT

The following statement should be adapted and published on each official Council social media platform as Council's community standards notice.

Welcome to [Council name]'s official [platform name] page. We welcome your comments, questions, and feedback. To keep this a safe and respectful space for everyone, we ask that all community members:

- be respectful and courteous toward Council staff, Councillors, and other community members
- keep comments relevant to the topic of the post
- not post personal information about themselves or others
- not post commercial advertising, spam, or irrelevant links
- not use offensive, abusive, threatening, or discriminatory language.

Comments that do not meet these standards may be hidden or removed without notice. Repeated or serious violations may result in the user being blocked from the page. This page is monitored during business hours. For urgent matters, please contact Council directly on 07 4060 601 or admin@pormpuraaw.qld.gov.au.

13 SCHEDULE 3 – CONTENT REVIEW CHECKLIST FOR AUTHORISED SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGERS

Complete this checklist before publishing any post on an official Council channel. All questions must be answered Yes before proceeding.

Check	Question	Yes / No / N/A
1	Is the content accurate and consistent with Council's official position or decisions?	
2	Has the content been reviewed and approved in accordance with internal sign-off requirements?	
3	Is the content free from defamatory, misleading, or factually incorrect statements?	
4	Is the content free from discriminatory, offensive, or harassing material?	
5	Does Council have the right to use all images, video, audio, and written content included? (Copyright check)	
6	If AI-generated content is included, has it been reviewed for accuracy and reputational risk?	
7	Does the content avoid disclosing personal information about any individual without consent?	
8	Does the content avoid disclosing confidential Council information?	
9	If the post is published during an election period, has it been reviewed against the electoral period guidelines?	
10	Does the content meet accessibility requirements (alt text, captions, accessible formats where applicable)?	

14 VERSION CONTROL

Version	Details	Resolution No	Date
V1	Established and adopted	2026/193	19 October 2026