



Media and Communications Policy



Yarriambiack
SHIRE COUNCIL

MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Yarriambiack Shire Council encourages a working environment which promotes gender equality and models non-violent and respectful relationships.

1. POLICY PURPOSE

This Policy provides guidance for the appropriate use of communications tools to help build the positive reputation of Council and to facilitate Council’s effective voice within, and on behalf of, the community.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to elected Councillors, the Management Team and employees including full-time, part-time, contract, casual, work experience and trainees, contractors and volunteers of Yarriambiack Shire Council.

This policy may also apply to agencies and individuals who provide services to Council and may be included in relevant external supplies contracts.

In all forms of communication, including verbal, printed or digital, Councillors, employees and contractors must adhere to the highest standards of ethical practice and professional competence. This policy should be read in conjunction with all related documents.

During a Council election this Policy should be read in conjunction with the Yarriambiack Shire Council Election Period Policy During an emergency it should be read in conjunction with the Municipal Emergency Management Plan.

3. DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Social Media	Social media consists of online interactive technologies through which individuals, communities and organisations can share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content or pre-made content posted online. Social media may include but is not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) social networking websites (eg Facebook, LinkedIn) (b) video and photo sharing websites (eg YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat) (c) blogs, including corporate blogs and personal blogs, blogs hosted by media outlets (eg ‘comments’ on news articles) (e) micro-blogging (eg Twitter) (f) wikis and other online community generated forums (excluding any Council initiated programs) (eg Wikipedia) (g) forums, discussion boards and groups (eg Google groups) (h) podcasting (i) messaging technologies/apps (e.g. WhatsApp) (j) streaming platforms (e.g. Twitch, Mixer) (k) private messaging (l) geospatial tagging (eg Facebook check-in)
Corporate Social Media Account	All corporate social media accounts and platforms that Council support and manage.

Councillor Social Media Account	A social media page or profile that has been created by a Councillor and is identified as a page that is used predominantly for their role as a councillor.
Personal Social Media Account	A social media account or page, used predominantly for private use.
Electronic Communication	Any form of communication is transmitted electronically or digitally. This includes text message (SMS), voice recording, in-application communication and email delivery such as e-newsletters.
Print Media	Printed publications including, but not limited to, newspapers and community newsletters
Broadcast Media	Television, commercial radio, community radio

4. POLICY

This policy ensures Yarriambiack Shire Council is delivering services in-line with community needs and expectations. Council communicates with key stakeholders through a variety of channels to engage with their needs, concerns, ideas and objectives.

Council communications will be a positive reflection of Council's commitment to informing the community in a manner that is clear, concise, accurate and consistent with Council decisions and policies. All communications will be written, produced and distributed in an accessible manner. Council will maximise the use of electronic and online communication to reduce printed material where practicable, both for the benefit of the environment and to expedite communicative outcomes.

Yarriambiack Shire Council reserves the right to remove, where possible, content that violates this policy or any related policies. This policy will be published and promoted to Councillors, employees and contractors.

4.1 Collaboration with Stakeholders

Yarriambiack Shire Council appreciates the importance of and actively contributes to collaborations within our communities and region. Council will endeavour to share and promote key activities, projects and information from external stakeholders that align with Council's values.

4.2 Media Relations and Spokespeople

Media Relations

Media is a key part of Council's operations, an important source of information for our community and a significant part of Council's role as a community leader and advocate within the region. Yarriambiack Shire Council will use this policy to assist the Mayor, Councillors, Chief Executive Officer and staff in understanding the correct communication processes when handling media enquiries, identifying spokespersons for media interviews, preparing media statements and making comments to the media.

Council will endeavour to respond to media enquiries within a respectful deadline where possible and attempt to reply to all enquiries within 48 hours of being received. Should Council choose to provide a response or in the event that response time cannot be met due to the complexity of the request, the Chief Executive Officer will contact the media and advise. All enquiries will be acknowledged by the Chief Executive Officer once received.

Spokespeople

The Chief Executive Officer and Mayor are the official spokespeople of Council.

The Communications Consultant is responsible for all media enquiries. Council staff are not permitted to be interviewed or provide a response to the media and must direct any enquiries to the Chief Executive Officer or Communications Consultant.

The Mayor is the official spokesperson on decisions of the Council. If the Mayor is unavailable, an authorised delegate of the Mayor will act as Council's official spokesperson.

The Mayor in consultation with Councillors is responsible for the allocation of public speaking roles at Council organised events requiring Council participation.

The Chief Executive Officer is the official spokesperson on all operational matters. Responses to media enquiries of a technical nature may be referred to the relevant Director to act as spokesperson.

The roles and responsibilities for each spokesperson are outlined in the following table:

Authorised Officer	Roles and Responsibilities
Mayor	Official spokesperson on all policy matters and decisions of the Council.
Councillors	Able to speak to the media if delegated by the Mayor to be the official spokesperson.
Chief Executive Officer	Official spokesperson on high level operational matters.
Directors	Delegated spokesperson on day-to-day operational or technical enquiries.
Communications Consultant	Responsible for coordinating responses and providing information to the media on behalf of Council.
Staff	No media role unless requested by the Chief Executive Officer to provide information or comment in the formulation of a media enquiry. May be chosen by the Communications Consultation to feature in communications material as the subject matter.

Media training will be made to all relevant staff and Councillors with CEO approval.

3.3 Key Communications Methods

Yarriambiack Shire Council utilises a variety of communication tools to provide the media and community with timely information.

The Council will actively develop positive relationships with the media and pursue all opportunities for media involvement.

All content published or communicated by or on behalf of Yarriambiack Shire Council using social media will be monitored and recorded.

Council Meetings

Shire Council meetings are held every month and are open to the community and media. Council Meetings are also livestreamed on Council's YouTube Channel.

Media Releases

The Communications Consultant is responsible for coordinating, approving and dispatching all media releases, photo opportunities and media briefings following authorisation. These will be emailed to councillors for their information.

All media releases from Council must be approved by the CEO prior to distribution.

Website

Content published on Council's website must be approved by the Chief Executive Officer or a Director and provided to the authorised staff members.

The development of sub-sites, including social media pages, is discouraged and all requests must be approved by the Chief Executive Officer.

Digital Communications (including Social Media)

Councillors and employees are encouraged to share Council's content in a positive manner, however, are not permitted to post on behalf of Council or comment from their personal social media account.

The Communications Consultant will monitor social media for relevant contributions that impact on the municipality, its operations and reputation.

Personal use

Yarriambiack Shire Council encourages Councillors and employees to participate in all forms of digital communications.

When using digital communications in a personal manner, Councillors and employees are reminded of their employment and Councillor obligations under their respective Codes of Conduct.

All staff have a responsibility to demonstrate professionalism when interacting with members of the community. As a result of living and working in small communities, this responsibility extends to activities outside of the workplace.

Failure to adhere to the above guidelines may result in disciplinary action as per the relevant Codes of Conduct.

Publications

The Communications Consultant assists Council departments to prepare publications for external use. Publications must be professionally produced and meet Council editorial standards and style guides and be proofread before seeking final approval from the Chief Executive Officer or relevant Director.

All outgoing Yarriambiack Shire material will include Council's logo and website details.

3.4 Branding Requirements

Logo Usage

Yarriambiack Shire Council logos are to appear on all Council communications including correspondence, publications, forms, brochures, advertisements, displays, signage, employee uniforms, fleet vehicles and other plant, electronic communications and any other relevant communication medium.

Where appropriate and in-line with contractual obligations, Council contractors are to display the Yarriambiack Shire Council logo on their vehicles/plant/publications, with the approval of the Chief Executive Officer.

All of Yarriambiack Shire Council's logos are to be used in line with the respective branding guidelines. Approval must be sought by the Chief Executive Officer prior to using a logo. Failure to use a Council logo without permission is in breach of Council's copyright.

Council's logos include (but are not limited to):

- Yarriambiack Shire Council
- Yarriambiack Libraries
- I Am Yarriambiack

Advertising

Council will undertake paid advertising to communicate information and promote events, activities and services to both the local community and beyond.

Advertising is recognised as a key tool for marketing purposes. Advertising spend will be in adherence to approved budget and procurement policy and procedures.

Advertising will be placed within the channel most appropriate to reach the target audience with the relevant content and includes (but is not limited to):

- Print media
- External Publications
- Broadcast media (television and radio)
- Online (including social media)
- Outdoor advertising

Signage

Yarriambiack Shire Council signs (including digital signs) are to adhere to the standards outlined in appropriate branding guidelines and must be approved by the Chief Executive Officer.

Public Displays

Displays or exhibits promoting Council are to include the appropriate Yarriambiack Shire Council logo and be of a professional standard and adhere to Occupational Health and Safety standards and legislation.

Breaches

Breaches of this policy will be dealt with in accordance with the relevant Code of Conduct.

4 Consistency with Governance Principles Local Government Act 2020

Governance Principle	Section of policy where covered
(a) Council decisions are to be made and actions taken in accordance with the relevant law;	Section 6 - Relevant Legislative Context and Related Policies
(b) priority is to be given to achieving the best outcomes for the municipal community, including future generations;	Section 4
(c) the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the municipal district, including mitigation and planning for climate change risks, is to be promoted;	Section 4
(d) the municipal community is to be engaged in strategic planning and strategic decision making;	Section 4
(e) innovation and continuous improvement is to be pursued;	Section 4
(f) collaboration with other Councils and Governments and statutory bodies is to be sought;	Section 4.1

(g) the ongoing financial viability of the Council is to be ensured;	Section 4.3
(h) regional, state and national plans and policies are to be taken into account in strategic planning and decision making;	Section 6 and Section 4.1
1. the transparency of Council decisions, actions and information is to be ensured.	Section 4.2

In giving effect to the overarching governance principles, a Council must take into account the following supporting principles—

- (a) the community engagement principles;
- (b) the public transparency principles;
- (c) the strategic planning principles;
- (d) the financial management principles;
- (e) the service performance principles.

5. Policy Review

Council commits to monitoring processes, information sharing and decision making to understand the overall level of success in the Policy's implementation.

This policy will be reviewed in conjunction with its associated procedures every three years.

6. Relevant Legislative Context and Related Policies

Legislation

- a) Local Government Act 2020
- b) The Public Records Act 1973

Yarriambiack Shire Council Policies and Procedures

- a) Governance Rules
- b) Election Period Policy
- c) Yarriambiack Style Guide
- d) Councillor Code of Conduct
- e) Employee Code of Conduct

Council Approved Policy

Policy Adopted:	Ordinary Meeting 2 December 2002	Minute Book Page
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