

Communication during a Caretaker Period Procedure

1. GOVERNING POLICY NAME

Election Caretaker Period Policy

2. PURPOSE

To preserve Council's political neutrality and public trust during local government elections by:

- preventing the use of council resources and communication channels to influence voting
- providing clear, practical rules for Councillors on communication conduct during election campaign periods, and
- ensuring compliance with the policy.

3. SCOPE

This guideline covers all communication activities by Councillors using council communication channels during the Caretaker Period, including:

- council's website, newsletters, media releases, paid advertising, mail-outs, printed publications, signage and notices
- council's social media pages and accounts, including livestreams and videos hosted or managed by Council
- council-hosted events, meetings, forums, surveys and engagement platforms
- council email systems, mailing lists, SMS services and CRM tools, and
- council-owned premises for campaign or media events.

This procedure does not cover candidates' personal communication channels, however, rules on authorisation of election materials and recordkeeping still apply in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1993* (Tas), and the *Local Government (General) Regulations 2025* administered by the Tasmanian Electoral Commission.

The procedure should be read in conjunction with the policy.

4. DEFINITIONS

The following definitions apply to this procedure:

Act	means the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> (Tas.)
candidate	means a person officially registered to stand for election as a Councillor in a City of Clarence local government election, other than a by-election
Caretaker Period	means the period from the advertising of a notice of election in accordance with section 269 of the Act to the issue of a certificate of election in accordance with section 304 of the Act.
communication channel	means any communication asset that is owned, managed or administered by council
Council	means the elected members (the councillors) of the City of Clarence
council	means the Clarence City Council established pursuant to section 18 of the Act
council officer	means an employee of the council
Council policy	means a council policy requiring Council approval
Councillor	means a person currently elected as a Councillor of the Council
election campaign	means the activities of candidates to win voter support in the period preceding an election and includes activities such as door knocking, bulk emails, production of signs and flyers, telephone canvassing, social media campaigns and advertising
election material	means anything intended to influence voting or affect the result, including social, digital, print, video, email or SMS
policy	means the Election Caretaker Period Policy 2026
procedure	means this procedure

5. PRINCIPLES

Council will adhere to the following communication principles during the Caretaker Period:

- a) **Neutrality:** communication will be apolitical and unbiased
- b) **Fair access:** no advantage or preference will be given to sitting Councillors over other candidates via communication channels or resources
- c) **Transparency and accountability:** decisions and content must be traceable and compliant with records, privacy, right to information and other legislative requirements, and
- d) **Continuity of service:** ordinary, non-contentious administration and public information will continue as set out in the policy.

6. PROCEDURE

Prohibited uses of Council communication channels

During the Caretaker Period, Councillors must not use City of Clarence channels to:

- publish, promote or amplify campaign messages, endorsements or references to any candidacy, political party or group
- publicise personal achievements or activities in a manner likely to influence voting (for example: “vote for me because...” or comparative claims)
- issue media releases quoting Councillors on contentious or political matters, publish opinion pieces, or feature Councillors prominently in council advertising
- target electors with election campaign style content through newsletters or mailing lists
- host or stream campaign events or candidate forums
- promote campaign pages or donation platforms.

Permitted communication

Council channels may continue to publish:

- Council decisions or council information.
- essential service information, including opening hours and closures, emergency notifications, public health notifications, waste, roadworks, and neutral operational updates

- statutory notices or Tasmanian Electoral Commission information, including deadlines, how to vote etc., provided it is strictly factual and apolitical
- previously scheduled non-contentious campaigns, such as safety or environmental messages, if assessed as neutral and not likely to affect voting
- event listings where Councillor attendance is incidental and not featured, avoiding 'hero' type images, quotes or captions that elevate individual Councillors

Content must:

- be reviewed by the Manager Communication, Media, and Engagement for neutrality
- include disclaimers where appropriate
- avoid the inclusion of Councillor photos unless necessary for ceremonial or statutory reasons, and
- apply equal treatment to all elected members.

Council managed social media rules

The following social media rules apply to council managed social media channels during the Caretaker Period:

- continue core service messaging only
- no promotional posts highlighting Councillor achievements
- no tagging or amplifying any candidate or campaign account
- remove comments that constitute electioneering per published moderation guidelines
- apply consistent moderation, removing or hiding partisan campaigning, defamatory content, or solicitation, and record all moderation actions, and
- avoid hosting livestreams of events or forums with Councillors present. If unavoidable, content must be factual, non-political, and focused on essential public information.

Councillor use of personal channels

During the Caretaker Period, Councillors may campaign on personal channels but must not repurpose any council content or assets (photos, videos, logos, templates, mailing lists), nor imply Council endorsement.

Media engagement

During the Caretaker Period, the following rules apply to media engagements:

- the Mayor will continue to act as the spokesperson for Council during the Caretaker Period, in accordance with section 27 of the Act
- operational media statements will be issued by the Chief Executive Officer or authorised officers.
- Councillor quotes are to be generally excluded unless statutory or ceremonial
- no proactive stories featuring Mayoral or Councillor initiatives or achievements will be permitted, and any reactive responses from council to media enquiries will be factual and service focused
- no Councillor messages in the Clarence News, if issued during the Caretaker Period
- Councillors must not use City or Clarence channels or ask council officers to produce or place opinion pieces or letters to the editor during the Caretaker Period unless authorised by the Chief Executive Officer.

Events, grants and sponsorships

During the Caretaker Period:

- council will continue essential community events but will not platform Councillors for keynote roles or promotional speaking slots that may confer advantage
- council will avoid announcements of new discretionary funding or major partnerships during the Caretaker Period unless essential and apolitical.

Access to information and resources

During the Caretaker Period:

- if council releases factual election information or region data, it must be equally available to all candidates via public channels
- council will maintain apolitical conduct
- council officers must not provide campaign assistance to any candidate or sitting Councillor and are not permitted to use council devices, email or time for campaign activities
- scheduled work produced with Councillor input, such as the Mayor's Message in the *Eastern Shore Sun* can proceed with authorisation by the Chief Executive Officer
- unscheduled work featuring Councillors can occur if it is deemed of strategic or a critical priority and is authorised by the Chief Executive Officer
- council facilities cannot be used for campaign launches or partisan events by any candidate, and

- standard venue hire applies consistently to all users with restrictions on signage and campaigning onsite.

Content review and approvals

- During the Caretaker Period, council's Manager Communication, Media and Engagement must review all content for neutrality, flagging any potential risks.
- Potential risks might include:
 - 'likely to affect voting'
 - 'features Councillor'
 - 'policy announcement'
 - 'new funding/major contract'

in which case council will either not publish or defer publishing the content until after the Caretaker Period concludes.

7. RELATED DOCUMENTS

The legislation and documents listed below form the framework to give effect to this procedure.

Council policy, plans, procedures, codes of practice and guidelines

- Election Caretaker Period Policy
- Use of Logo – Council Policy
- Brand and Visual Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Social Media Procedure and Guidelines
- Stakeholder and Community Engagement Framework

Other (Standards, Codes)

- Code of Conduct for Councillors
- Code of Conduct Policy for Council Employees
- Engagement Code of Conduct

8. ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

Approvals

Council	20 July 2026	Minute (Reference)	8.4.1
Review period	Minimum every 4 years		
Date 1	June 2027	Date 2	April 2030
Group Head	Ian Nelson Chief Executive Officer	ECM Reference	

Table of amendments

No.	Date	Brief Details