

Governance Communications and Engagement

Pre-Election Commitment Communication Protocols

Description of policy	Federal and State Pre-Election Commitment Communication Protocols
Policy applies to	<input type="checkbox"/> Councillors, all officers
Policy category	<input type="checkbox"/> Revised Policy
Description of revision and Version Number	Version Number: 2

Approved by	Council
Approval date	23 August 2022
Effective date	23 August 2022
Date of last revision	NA
Date of next review*	August 2024

*Unless replaced, this policy will still apply beyond the review date.

Related internal procedures and guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Media Policy
Related policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor Code of Conduct

Related legislation, standards and guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Government Act 2020
---	---

Policy Statement

In the lead-up to a Federal or State election, candidates will make a number of local commitments, deliverable should they, or the party they represent, be elected to government.

Some of these commitments will directly impact council services, facilities or operations. Others may be less directly linked to Council but will have implications for the community and will therefore be of interest to Council.

Advocacy on the community's behalf is a key responsibility and area of focus for Council and commitments made by election candidates – State or Federal – are something in which Council takes a keen interest.

It is important also, that Council be impartial – and seen to be such – in how it responds to election commitments. This impartiality is critical to ensuring public confidence in Council decisions and that its advocacy is pursued in the community's best interest.

These protocols therefore aim to provide clarity, to candidates, Councillors, Council officers and the community, regarding Council's participation in and promotion of State and Federal election commitments.

Objectives

A candidate or political party may invite the Mayor or Council representative to the announcement of an election commitment. These commitments may respond directly to Council advocacy efforts, but even if not, they will have implications for the community.

It is critical therefore to ensure that any such commitment is treated equally, in a non-partisan manner. This includes in any promotion or public response to a commitment, whether through Council's own communication channels (eg website or social media) or in any comment to local, state or national media.

The objectives of this policy are therefore:

- To put in place appropriate processes and protocols to ensure an impartial approach to the way in which Council responds to, and promotes any commitments by candidates in State and Federal elections.
- To ensure clarity of process and requirements to all candidates.
- To establish that, prior to any public endorsement or promotion by Council, an election commitment aligns with Council's advocacy priorities and capacity.
- To reinforce community confidence in Council's impartiality and that, in all its advocacy efforts, Council will act with the community's best interest as its number one priority.

Scope

The Protocols:

- Seek to complement the function and conduct expectations of Councillors as described in the *Local Government Act 2020*.
- Recognise the role of Mayor as principal spokesperson and representative of Council as described in the *Local Government Act 2020*.

Protocols

Should a candidate wish to have official Council representation at the announcement of an election commitment, as well as Council promotion of the commitment, the following steps are required:

- Confirm with Council that the commitment aligns with existing whole-of-Council advocacy priorities and, should this commitment require part funding by Council, whether Council has capacity within its existing resources to do so.
- Request or invitation lodged with Council through Council's Executive Services (if candidate has approached Mayor or Councillor directly, this will also be referred to Executive Services).
- Mayor and Ward Councillor invited (If Mayor is unavailable, the invite will be extended to the Deputy Mayor).
- Depending on the significance of the commitment, the invitation may be extended to all Councillors.
- A 48-hour blackout, commencing two days prior to the official election date, will be applied, meaning the details of any commitments publicly announced within this period will not be shared on Council platforms.

The following steps are premised on the requirements detailed above:

- A member of the Communications and Engagement Unit will accompany the Mayor – or any designated Council representative – to the announcement.
- The communications officer will take photos – or arrange for them to be taken – and gather the announcement detail.
- The attending communications officer will then draft a media release or news story detailing Council's reaction to the announcement.
- The details of the announcement will be published on Council's designated Election Commitment Tracker page and Council's media release will also be uploaded to the News page on Council's website. It will also be promoted on Council's social media platforms.
- Candidate material will not be replicated on, or linked to, from any Council platform.
- Any commitment promoted on Council platforms or through Council channels (website, social media, speeches etc.) will be accompanied by a brief explainer on Council's rationale for promoting it through its channels.

Representing the Shire at events, functions and delegations (official and unofficial)

The Mayor is the principal representative of Council and all Councillors support the Mayor.

In the event the Mayor is unable to attend, the Deputy Mayor will act as Council's representative. Should the Deputy Mayor also be unavailable, the Mayor will nominate another Councillor, taking into consideration whether the function is associated with a Councillor's ward and whether the function is associated with a group or committee to which a Councillor has been appointed as Council's representative.

In the event of the Mayor delegating attendance at a function to a Councillor, the CEO's office will liaise with the nominated Councillor and provide the necessary support to ensure that the Councillor is prepared to represent Council.