Social Media Policy for Elected Members

Council Policy

Renmark Paringa Council

Responsible Officer	Director Corporate and Community Services
Relevant Legislation	
Adopted	March 2025
Reviewed	
Next Review	March 2029

1. Purpose

Social media allows online communities with common interests to connect, share and consume information, thoughts and ideas.

Renmark Paringa Council recognises the opportunities that social media provides to engage in meaningful, two-way communication with the broader community.

The purpose of this Policy is to provide Council's position in respect to the expectations of its Elected Members when engaging in social media via posting of content, public comment and general use in both an official professional and personal capacity.

The Policy aims to:

- Set a standard for Council Elected Members using social media, whether in a professional or personal capacity, to demonstrate standards of conduct and behaviour that are consistent with this Policy, and reasonable standards of acceptable behaviour.
- To be read in conjunction with Local Government Association of South Australia's Social Media Guide for Elected Members and Council Policies as applicable.
- Not regulate personal use of Elected Members social media except to the extent that it could be connected to Council or could or does cause financial or reputational harm to the Council.
- Reduce the likelihood of miscommunication or inappropriate communications.
- Provide clarity about roles and responsibilities in relation to use, approval and monitoring for both Elected Members and staff.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all Elected Members of Renmark Paringa Council who purport to use social media to promote themselves as being a representative of Renmark Paringa Council.

The policy applies to all current and future social media tools and channels. That is, digital spaces where people comment, view, contribute, create, forward, post, upload and share content, such as:

- Blogs, forums, discussion and bulletin boards, instant messaging facilities and citizen journalism and news sites which facilitate public comment.
- Microblogging sites (e.g. Engage RPC).
- Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Instagram).
- Podcasts, video podcasts, video and photo sharing sites (e.g. Flickr, YouTube, Pinterest).
- Online encyclopaedias (e.g. Wikipedia).
- Online collaboration platforms (e.g. Yammer, Wiki).
- Any other websites that allow individuals to use simple publishing tools or new technologies emerging from the digital environment.

As it is not possible to expressly refer to or list all the specific sites or kinds of social media activity, the absence of a reference does not limit the application of this policy.

3. Legislative and policy framework

Elected Members of Renmark Paringa Council are expected to demonstrate standards of conduct and behaviour that are consistent with relevant legislation, regulations and policies.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Local Government Association of South Australia's social media for Elected Members Guide and other relevant policies and procedures of Renmark Paringa Council. A list of relevant legislation which may be used as a guide is included in Section 7 of this policy.

4. Policy Statement

Council's Elected Member social media use should comply with the Code of Conduct for Council Members as well as any other relevant media/ communications/ spokesperson policies. The following guidelines apply to Council Elected Member social media use when representing Renmark Paringa Council in their official capacity.

4.1 Accurate representation

- To provide clarity for the community between 'individual' views and the 'official' view of Council, a disclaimer statement must be displayed in accordance with the intended use of the social media channel. For example:
- Personal use only – 'these are my personal, individual views'.

- Personal and professional use – 'the views expressed are my individual comments and opinions, not the official position of Council'
- Council branding, including the Council logo, should only be on social media channels that are used purely for professional Council Elected Member reasons. In branding a channel, care must be taken to keep it distinct from 'official' Council channels.

4.2 Promotion and support

- Development, hosting, maintenance and monitoring of individual Council Elected Member social media is the responsibility of the individual councillor, however Council staff can provide guidance and advice if used for professional Council purposes.
- Individual Elected members may have social media channels included in their Council member contact details (for example, on Council website, newsletter, member stationery etc.) if these channels are only used for professional Council member purposes.

4.3 Record keeping

- Under section 99 of the Local Government Act 1999, the Chief Executive Officer has a legal responsibility to ensure that records are appropriately kept and maintained. This includes all Council Elected Member communication relating to Council business on social media.
- Council's social media channels are monitored and information stored appropriately in its records management system utilising social media archiving solutions. Elected Members who promote themselves as representatives of Council should advise the Executive Leadership Team.
- While it is not necessary to preserve all online conversations, anything significant that may influence Council policy, relates to Council decisions, or where there may have been breaches of policies or laws (i.e. inappropriate comments that you delete) must be appropriately recorded and stored in line with Renmark Paringa Council Information Management Policy.

4.4 Caretaker provisions

- Elected members must ensure that Council resources are not used to create or distribute electoral material, or to advantage or disadvantage a candidate during the caretaker period. This includes the use of Council logos on individual Council member social media channels and posts by candidates on Council-owned social media channels. Refer to Renmark Paringa Council Caretaker Policy.

For further information and advice about social media best practice, refer to the 'Local Government Association of South Australia's Social Media for Elected Members Guide'.

5. Organisation roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
CEO and Mayor	• Understand and comply with the provisions in this policy. • Seek training and development for using social media if desired. • Seek advice from the Executive Leadership Team if unsure about applying the provisions of this policy.
Elected Members	• Seek advice from the Executive Leadership Team if unsure about applying the provisions of this policy. • Seek approval for Council branding of social media from the Executive Leadership Team. • Advise the Executive Leadership Team if seeking to register social media account/tools/site for record keeping purposes. • Understand and comply with the provisions in this policy. • Seek training and development for using social media if required. • Seek advice from the Executive Leadership Team if unsure about applying the provisions of this policy. • If an Elected Member or staff observe any posts or comments from other Elected Members that breach these guidelines, they should report them to the Executive Leadership Team and include a link or reference to the offending material.
Executive Leadership Team	• Support CEO, Mayor and Elected Members to undertake their responsibilities as outlined above.
Communications Team	• Provide advice and assist Elected Members with the development of communication plans using social media. • Provide education and support to Elected Members, about this policy and their responsibilities when using social media. • Advise appropriate precautions (e.g. disclaimers). • Maintain a register of social media being used for conducting Council business to ensure that records are appropriately kept and maintained.

6. Adherence to Policy

For Elected Members breaching this policy may result in a code of conduct complaint.

7. References/Related Documents

Elected Members of Renmark Paringa Council are expected to demonstrate standards of conduct and behaviour that are consistent with relevant legislation, regulations and policies.

Relevant legislation and policies including but not limited to, the following:

- Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)
- Civil Liability Act 1936 (SA)
- Code of Conduct Elected Members Policy
- Copyright Act 1968 (Cth)
- Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935 (SA)
- Defamation Act 2005 (SA)
- Elected Member Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Policy
- Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (SA)
- Fair Trading Act 1997 (SA)
- Fair Work Act 1994 (SA)
- Freedom of Information Act 1991 (SA)
- Information Management Policy
- IT and Communications Policy
- Local Government (Elections) Act 1999 (SA)
- Local Government Act 1999 (SA)
- Local Government Association of South Australia's Social Media for Elected Members Guide
- Media Statements Policy
- Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)
- Renmark Paringa Council Caretaker Policy
- Renmark Paringa Council ICT Strategy
- Renmark Paringa Council Privacy Policy
- Renmark Paringa Council Public Consultation Policy
- Spam Act 2003 (Cth)
- State Records Act 1997 (SA)
- Work Health and Safety Act 2012