

S - G18 Local Government Election Caretaker Period Policy

Purpose	The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that Council continues to conduct its business in a responsible, transparent and impartial manner during the Caretaker Period preceding a Local Government General Election.
Department	Governance
File No.	ADM/0900, COU/0102
Council Meeting Date	22 July 2026
Minute Number	165.07.2026
Next Review Date	Four (4) years from Council Resolution Date (This Policy shall be reviewed following each Local Government General Election, or earlier if required due to legislative changes)
Review History	New

1. Definitions

<u>Caretaker Period</u>	The period commencing on the publication of the Notice of Election under the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> and ending upon the declaration of the election result by the Tasmanian Electoral Commission.
<u>Candidate</u>	A person standing for election.
<u>Electoral Material</u>	Any advertisement, notice, flyer, pamphlet, letter, social media post, electronic communication or other material intended or likely to influence the result of an election.
<u>Election Campaign</u>	Activities undertaken by a Candidate to seek election, including advertising, social media, public meetings, door knocking, distribution of material and media engagement.
<u>Major Policy Decision</u>	A decision that would significantly bind or limit the discretion of an incoming Council, including but not limited to: • appointing, dismissing or renewing the contract of the General Manager; • adopting or substantially amending Council Policies; • initiating or approving amendments to planning instruments; • entering into contracts with a value exceeding 1% of Council's annual operating revenue, unless previously approved through the Budget or Annual Plan; • approving significant unbudgeted expenditure; or • any other matter determined by the General Manager to substantially commit an incoming Council.

2. Objective

This Policy seeks to:

- ensure major policy decisions are not made that would unnecessarily bind an incoming Council;

- ensure Council resources are not used to support or disadvantage any election candidate;
- maintain public confidence in the impartiality and integrity of Council decision-making;
- provide clear guidance to Councillors, employees and contractors regarding their roles and responsibilities during the Caretaker Period; and
- ensure the ordinary business and essential services of Council continue throughout the election period.

Nothing in this Policy prevents the ordinary business of Council from continuing or discourages Councillors from fulfilling their statutory, civic and community responsibilities.

3. Policy

It is policy that:

Where the General Manager determines that a Major Policy Decision cannot reasonably be deferred until after the election, the matter may be referred to Council during the Caretaker Period.

The General Manager's report should address, where applicable:

- a) why the matter is urgent;
- b) legislative or contractual timeframes;
- c) financial implications of delaying the decision;
- d) impacts on the incoming Council;
- e) impacts on the community;
- f) whether the matter has previously been endorsed by Council;
- g) whether the matter involves emergency response or significant operational risk; and
- h) why consideration during the Caretaker Period is in the public interest

An Acting General Manager may be appointed where permitted under the *Local Government Act 1993*.

3.1. Council Resources

Council resources shall not be used to support or oppose any election candidate.

Council resources include, but are not limited to:

- a) Council offices and meeting rooms;
- b) vehicles;
- c) computers and mobile devices;
- d) email addresses;
- e) stationery;
- f) logos and branding;
- g) staff time;
- h) mailing lists;
- i) photography and video;
- j) websites;
- k) social media accounts; and
- l) any other Council-funded resource.

3.2 Media and Communications

Council communications during the Caretaker Period shall be limited to:

- a) operational matters;
- b) emergency information;
- c) statutory notices;
- d) routine community information; and
- e) previously approved Council business.

3.2.1 Council communications shall not promote or appear to promote an individual candidate.

3.2.2 Council shall not publish a Mayor's Column or similar publication featuring the Mayor during the Caretaker Period where the current Mayor is a candidate for re-election.

3.2.3 Photographs of individual Councillors should not be used in newly created promotional material unless necessary for civic, ceremonial or statutory purposes.

3.2.4 Council social media must not be used to promote or oppose any election candidate.

3.3 Councillors

Councillors may continue to:

- a) represent their community;
- b) attend community functions;
- c) undertake civic and ceremonial duties;
- d) correspond with constituents on Council matters;
- e) claim legitimate expenses in accordance with Council Policy; and
- f) perform their statutory responsibilities.

Councillors may not:

- a) use Council resources for campaign purposes;
- b) direct employees to undertake election-related activities;
- c) use their office to gain electoral advantage;
- d) use membership of Council committees or external organisations to campaign; or
- e) seek preferential access to Council information not otherwise available.

Councillors should avoid submitting Notices of Motion introducing significant new strategic initiatives during the Caretaker Period unless required by legislation or genuine urgency.

3.4 Electoral Material

Electoral material may not be displayed, distributed or promoted on Council-owned or managed land, buildings, facilities or digital platforms unless required by legislation.

3.5 Good Faith

Flinders Council is a small organisation serving a close-knit community. During the Caretaker Period, Councillors, employees and contractors are expected to act in good faith, exercise sound judgement and uphold the principles of integrity, impartiality and transparency.

Where uncertainty exists, advice should be sought from the General Manager before taking action.

4. Related Legislation

- *Local Government Act 1993 (Tas)*
- *Local Government (Code of Conduct) Order 2024*
- *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993*
- *Tasmanian Electoral Act 2004*

5. Related Council Documents

- Councillor Code of Conduct
- Communications Policy
- Code for Tenders and Contracts
- Delegations Register
- Employee Code of Conduct
- Procurement Policy

6. Responsibility Council

To comply with this Policy and avoid unnecessary Major Policy Decisions during the Caretaker Period.

Mayor

To continue fulfilling statutory, civic and ceremonial responsibilities while ensuring those duties remain clearly separate from election activities.

General Manager

To administer this Policy, provide guidance where required, determine whether extraordinary circumstances exist and ensure Council operations continue appropriately throughout the Caretaker Period.

Employees

To comply with this Policy and maintain impartiality throughout the election process.