



GOV01

Caretaker Policy

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to set out how Council Members and employees are to conduct their activities and actions during the local government general elections caretaker period.

2. SCOPE

This Policy applies to all employees and Elected Members of the West Daly Regional Council

3. DEFINITIONS

In the context of this Policy, the following definitions apply:

Campaigning includes campaigning activity, wearing, or displaying campaign material (refer to definitions of 'campaigning activity' and 'campaign material' at Sections 268 – 268A of the *Electoral Act 2004*).

Caretaker period means the period that commences on the nomination day for a Council general election and ends when the results of the general election are declared in accordance with the *Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2021*.

Employee means all employees of Council, whether employed on a permanent, fixed term, or casual basis.

Nomination day means the day that nominations close for a local government general election.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

Council is committed to act in an economically efficient and transparent manner, to be socially and environmentally responsible and to provide a high standard of service delivery through its term. During a general election caretaker period, the normal operations and programs of the Council are to continue.

Role of the CEO

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will give written notice to all Council Members and employees prior to the commencement of the caretaker period and that the caretaker principles in this Policy will apply.

The CEO will continue to prepare reports and provide information in order for Council Members to carry out their roles in relation to the day-to-day business of the Council.

Major Decisions

The Council will not make any major decisions during the caretaker period.

Major decisions are those decisions that have a significant impact on council operations and activities, or are otherwise politically sensitive, such that a reasonable person would not consider the decision to be part of the normal council operations.



Major decisions include:

- Entering into any high value contract or lease agreement involving expenditure inclusive of GST that exceeds 2.5% of the annual budgeted revenue in the relevant financial year.
- Entering into a new or substantially changed funding agreement, unless there is real risk the eligibility for funding will be lost.
- Committing council funds outside the adopted budget.
- Amending the Council's caretaker policy.
- Amending the Council's delegations.
- Making a decision relating to the employment or remuneration of the CEO or Acting CEO.

However, major decisions do **not** include:

- A decision that relates to the carrying out of works in response to an emergency or disaster.
- An urgent matter that cannot wait until a newly elected council makes a decision on that matter.
- A matter that has the possibility of legal or significant financial repercussions if a decision on the matter is deferred until the new council has been elected.
- An expenditure or other decision required to be taken under an agreement by which funding is provided to the Council by the Commonwealth or Northern Territory Government or otherwise for the Council to be eligible for funding from the Commonwealth or Northern Territory Government.
- The signing of an agreement where the majority of the negotiations were undertaken or resolved by Council prior to the caretaker period commencing.

Council Resources

Council resources are not to be used for the purposes of campaigning for a candidate.

Council resources may be used to help with running the general election or to encourage voter participation.

Communications

Council communication methods – including media, websites, social media and newsletters – will not be used in any way that favours, promotes or criticises any particular Council Member or candidate.

Council will continue to communicate normal council business relevant to the community.

During the caretaker period, the CEO is the preferred spokesperson for any official communications. However, this does not fetter the discretion of the Mayor to speak on behalf of the Council as the Council's principal representative.

Public Consultation

Council will defer any public consultation until after the caretaker period, unless:

- It is mandatory public consultation required under legislation; or
- The consultation cannot reasonably be deferred.



Events and Functions

Council members will not use council events and functions held during the caretaker period for campaigning.

No events or functions relating to opening or launching facilities will be held during the caretaker period.

Electoral Information

Council will only publish electoral information that is educational or promotional material relating to the election process and voter engagement.

5. Responsibilities

Employees

All employees and Council Members are responsible for complying with the provisions of this Policy.

Employer

- Council will ensure that a copy of this Policy is published on Council's website.
- The People & Culture Manager is the Policy Custodian for this Policy and is responsible for reviewing the operation of the Policy (every 3 years or more frequently as may be required), and for monitoring continuing relevance, effectiveness, and consistency with related documents and the Law.
- Following approval of this Policy document, the People & Culture Manager (or a nominated delegate) is also responsible for ensuring that the implementation and communication plan is implemented and that all Council employees have access to the Policy.

6. Related Documents

Legislation and References

Electoral Act 2004 (NT)

Local Government Act 2019 (NT)

Local Government (Electoral) Regulations 2021 (NT)

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