

Policy

Title: Election Caretaker Period

Category: Corporate Governance

Date Last Adopted: 17 August 2026

1. Objectives

The purpose of this policy is to establish caretaker processes and procedures that apply during the Caretaker Period preceding a local government general election to ensure that:

- a) routine service provision and business-as-usual operations of the Council continue; and
- b) major policy decisions are not made during the Caretaker Period where they would unnecessarily bind an incoming Council;
- c) Council resources are not used to advantage a Candidate in a local government general election; and
- d) The requirement for Council, elected members and Council officers to act impartially in relation to all election candidates is clearly understood.

2. Background

Council is committed to the application of good governance principles and high standards of integrity.

It is an established democratic principle that elected bodies should not unnecessarily bind an incoming government during an election period. Consistent with that principle, Council will avoid making Major Policy Decisions that would unnecessarily bind an incoming Council, unless required by extraordinary or unavoidable circumstances, including an emergency.

This policy establishes clear guidelines for the conduct of Council, elected members and Council officers during the Caretaker Period preceding a local government general election and adopts a pragmatic approach to ensuring the ordinary business



of Council continues in a responsible, transparent and legally compliant manner during that period.

3. Policy

Scope

This policy applies during the Caretaker Period preceding a local government general election and establishes the governance arrangements and requirements that apply during that period. It does not apply to a by-election held under section 308 of the Act.

Notification of the Caretaker Period

The Caretaker Period commences on the day a notice of election is published under section 269 of the Act. The Chief Executive Officer will notify Councillors, council officers and the public when the Caretaker Period begins and ends.

Once notified that the Caretaker Period has commenced, Councillors and council officers must ensure their activities, communications, and decision-making are consistent with the requirements of this policy.

General

During the Caretaker Period the following governance arrangements and requirements apply to Council, its elected members and Council officers:

- Tenure of Chief Executive Officer – Council should not appoint, dismiss or renew the contract of a Chief Executive Officer. An Acting Chief Executive Officer may be appointed in accordance with Section 61B of the Act, if required.
- Planning Instruments – Council will not initiate, amend or repeal a local planning instrument under the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993* (i.e. a planning scheme, a temporary local planning instrument or a planning scheme policy). For clarity this does not apply to applications made by third parties.
- By-Laws – Council will not make a new By-Law.
- Strategies, projects and master plans – Other than as set out in Council's approved Annual Plan, Council will not consider, endorse or adopt any new strategy, strategic project or master plan.
- Strategic Plan – Council will not endorse, adopt or amend Council's Strategic Plan.



- Council Meetings – Ordinary Council meetings will continue to be held during the Caretaker Period in accordance with the approved meeting schedule and may consider matters relating to the ordinary business of Council other than those matters identified in this policy. During the Caretaker Period, elected members will not submit notices of motion to Council or Council Committees pursuant to regulation 19 of the Meeting Procedures, nor ask questions with notice pursuant to regulation 34 of the Meeting Procedures.
- Meetings of Hobart Workshop Committee – Council will not hold any Hobart Workshop Committee meetings unless required in response to an emergency or other extraordinary or unavoidable circumstance.
- Use of Council equipment and stationery – Council-supplied equipment and Council-branded material must not be used by elected members or staff in any manner that supports a Candidate's election campaign. Elected members may continue to use Council equipment and branded material throughout the course of the Caretaker Period to carry out their functions under section 28 of the Act. For clarity, elected members may use Council-issued contact details (including their email address, telephone number, and mailing address) and corporate photographs in election campaign material, provided no additional cost is incurred by Council.
- City of Hobart communications – Elected members must not use their access to council officers resources or City of Hobart media channels, to support their own election campaign or the election campaign of any other Candidate. For clarity, elected members must not use Council officers or resources to prepare, coordinate or deliver campaign-related media or communications.

City of Hobart official media channels will continue to operate during the Caretaker Period for ordinary Council business, including factual, operational and service-related communications. Any media activity must remain politically neutral and consistent with the Lord Mayor's role as the official spokesperson for the City under the Act.

- Committees and external groups – an elected member shall not use their membership of a Committee or appointment by Council as a member of an external group to disseminate information or promote their, or any other Candidate's election campaign. For example, this Policy would prevent the distribution of Electoral Material by an elected member to members of a Committee or external group to which that elected member was appointed to represent Council in their capacity as a councillor.

Nothing in this policy prevents the Lord Mayor, elected members or Council officers from otherwise carrying on the normal business of the Council during the Caretaker Period.



In accordance with section 27 of the Act, and subject to this policy, the Lord Mayor will continue to perform the functions of office during the Caretaker Period, including acting as the spokesperson for Council and carrying out the civic and ceremonial functions of the mayoral office. If required, the Lord Mayor may also perform any functions required in response to an emergency event or other extraordinary event.

Individual elected members may continue to represent the community, facilitate communication between Council and the community and otherwise perform the functions of office set out in section 28 of the Act, other than section 28(2)(d), and subject to this policy¹.

The Chief Executive Officer may still exercise all delegations provided by Council and carry out the functions and powers set out in section 62 of the Act during the Caretaker Period, including the appointment of staff and the awarding of tenders and contracts, provided such actions do not constitute a Major Policy Decision. Council officers and any internal committee or body with delegated powers may also continue to exercise those powers during the Caretaker Period.

Capital works projects and contracts approved, funded or otherwise authorised before the commencement of the Caretaker Period may continue during the Caretaker Period, regardless of their scale, including where implementation occurs under delegation. However, new projects or commitments that would constitute a Major Policy Decision will not be commenced during the Caretaker Period, unless necessary to respond to an emergency, statutory obligation or other exceptional circumstance.

Council decisions and commitments made prior to the commencement of the Caretaker Period can continue to be actioned or implemented during the Caretaker Period including the provision of grants and sponsorships.

The Lord Mayor and elected members can continue to accept invitations to attend community functions and may continue to correspond with constituents on matters related to Council business during the Caretaker Period.

Nothing in this policy affects the application of the Council's policy titled "Elected Member Development and Support".

Council employees must maintain the normal business activities of Council during the Caretaker Period. Employees must undertake their duties in an appropriate way and take all steps to avoid any real or perceived support for a candidate in order to protect the organisation's ability to impartially serve any incoming Council following an election.

¹. Section 28(2)(d) relates to the appointment and monitoring of the Chief Executive Officer (general manager).



4. Legislation, terminology and references

Definitions

In this policy:

“Act” means the *Local Government Act 1993*.

“Candidate” means a person standing for election as a councillor, mayor or deputy mayor in a local government general election.

“Committee” means a council committee or a special committee established under section 23 and 24 (respectively) of the Act.

“Council” means the Hobart City Council.

“Caretaker Period” means the period immediately preceding a local government general election during which this policy applies, commencing on the publication of a Notice of Election under section 269 of the Act and ending seven days after close of polls for that election.

“Electoral Material” means any advertisement, handbill, pamphlet, notice, flyer, letter or article that is intended or calculated to affect the result of an election.

“Election Campaign” refers to 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.

“Major Policy Decision” means a decision by Council that would bind, or be likely to bind, an incoming Council in a significant way. This includes decisions relating to the appointment, remuneration or termination of the Chief Executive Officer, approval of contracts greater than 1% of Council’s net revenue (where not already approved, funded or authorised), adoption or renewal of Council policies, the making, amending or repealing of planning schemes and the making of by-laws.

“Meeting Procedures” means the *Local Government (Meeting Procedures) Regulations 2025*.



Legislation

The following legislation is relevant to this policy:

- *Local Government Act 1993*
- *Electoral Act 2004*
- *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993*

Responsible Officer:	Manager Legal and Governance
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