



# Working with Members of Parliament and Political Candidates Protocol

A5317202

## Purpose

To provide a framework to ensure Council follows a clear, equitable and apolitical process when working with Members of Parliament, government representatives and political candidates.

## Scope

This protocol aims to provide guidance and clarification the Council processes for:

- Involving Members of Parliament (including Ministers), other government representatives and political candidates in meetings with Council and Council events and functions
- Working with political candidates during an election or by-election
- Regular communications with Members of Parliament
- Communications during an election/by-election period with Members of Parliament and political candidates
- Council management of communication channels during an election/by election
- Plaque signage requirements for jointly funded projects • Signs and promotional materials
- Dispute resolution.

Members of Parliament, political candidates and other government representatives for Frankston City include:

### **Lower house:**

- Federal Member for Dunkley
- State Member for Frankston
- State Member for Carrum
- State Member for Hastings

### **Upper house:**

- Senators for Victoria
- State Members for South-East Metropolitan Region
- State Members for Eastern Victoria Region

### **Other:**

- Federal and Victorian Government Ministers
- Federal and Victorian Shadow Ministers
- Other elected officials
- Office staffers of the Member of Parliament and government officials

- Political candidates

This protocol is to be applied fairly with due consideration to all stakeholders.

It is applicable for any Mayor or Councillor running as a candidate in a State or Federal election or by-election. When this is the case, the candidate involved will abide by the Frankston City Council Governance Rules and Local Government Act in terms of necessary leave of absence, delegation of position and all other guidelines.

Council functions mean any event hosted, organised, funded or supported by Council, such as:

- Events for Council projects receiving Victorian and/or Federal Government investment
- Media and photo opportunities
- Funding announcements
- Official openings, launches and 'turning of the sod' functions
- Meetings and presentations
- Council community/public events (such as Christmas Festival of Lights, Little Beauty Market etc.)
- Political Candidates Forum and live debates

Support means a financial contribution by Victorian and/or Federal Government towards a local project, or a decision by Victorian and/or Federal Government. Other forms such as a letter of support, election commitments and lobbying by a Member of Parliament in opposition is not considered support for the purposes of plaque signage requirements.

Communications with and about Members of Parliament and political candidates means:

- Meetings (online or in person), direct phone calls, emails, letters and other forms of contact
- Media releases, media responses, social media posts, printed articles, eNews
- Statements in Council Meetings and in public forums

## Background

The relationship between Council and the elected, and prospective, Members of the Victorian and Federal Parliament, is one of utmost importance.

Council officers are often required to work with and invite Victorian and Federal Members of Parliament (including Ministers) and government representatives to a range of council functions.

Additionally, Council recognises that election/by-election periods present opportunities for political candidates to attend Council events and functions.

This protocol ensures a fair and considered approach is taken at all times when inviting a Member of Parliament or government representative to a Council function, regardless of political affiliation, with information clearly and equally communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

It also provides guidance on the involvement, or reason for non-involvement, of political candidates during election/by-election campaign periods .

Furthermore, Council has regular communication with, and about, Members of Parliament in various forums, including paid, earned, shared and owned communication channels. This also extends to political candidates during election/by election periods where Council meets with political candidates and shares public material relating to Councils key advocacy priorities.

In order to form and retain strong relationships with all stakeholders, Council considers information sharing where possible between Council, Members of Parliament and government departments to be of significant value not only for all stakeholders, but for the Frankston City community in general.

Adhering to this protocol is important for fostering positive working relationships with all Members of Parliament and government representatives, delivering positive outcomes for the Frankston City community while ensuring Council clearly remains apolitical at all times.

## Protocol

Council's Advocacy and Strategic Partnerships Team is responsible for liaising with Members of Parliament and their staff in determining diary availability and public communications.

All key details, including calendar invitations to a Member of Parliament for an official Council event or function will only be distributed by the Advocacy and Strategic Partnerships Team.

Council officers delivering a project will liaise with funding Department officers for proposed project milestone event dates.

This Protocol will be managed in alignment with Council's *Election Signs and Events Policy*.

## Liaising with elected representatives, political candidates and stakeholders

Council is committed to having open two-way communication with Members of Parliament, government representatives and political candidates.

Council's Mayor and Chief Executive Officer are the responsible spokespeople on behalf of Council when meeting with Members of Parliament and political candidates as per Councils Communications Policy. Council Directors and officers may also

attend discussions with Members of Parliament and political candidates where needed.

### Council events and functions

For Council organised functions/events, planning will consider all key stakeholders.

Event planning will commence once availability of key representatives is confirmed, inclusive of the Member of Parliament and/or government representative, Mayor, CEO and Councillors.

Fair consideration will be given to the availability of all stakeholders to reach a mutually agreed date, time and location for council functions, as much as is practicable. This includes considering the Victorian and Federal Parliament sitting dates and committee meetings.

The role of the Member of Parliament at any function/event will also be clearly identified prior to any invitations being sent (examples include representing a Minister, speaking, ribbon cutting, plaque unveiling, site walk through etc.).

Where there is a funding agreement for a project requiring a Council function (such as an official opening), FCC will follow appropriate funding agreement procedures alongside this protocol. In most instances, this will mean a lead-time of about six to eight weeks for Minister attendance.

In a situation whereby a Council function is faced with time constraints, the best possible option for the majority of stakeholders will be adopted, including Mayor and Councillor availability.

Priority in scheduling will be given as equally as possible, however in instances where this is not possible, priority will be given in sequence to:

- Federal and/or Victorian Government Ministers
- Federal and/or State Members (lower house then upper house)
- Council (Mayor, Councillors and EMT)
- Federal and/or Victorian Government departments/agencies
- Other stakeholders

Council will advise all Members of Parliament of the invitee list along with final attendees prior to the Council function occurring.

Where possible and as required, a detailed agenda and/or run sheet will be provided to Members of Parliament and government representatives at least 48 hours prior to the Council function.

In the event a Member of Parliament is unable to attend a function they have been invited to by Council, a representative (such as an Electorate Officer or Advisor) is welcome to accept the invitation on the MPs behalf, however they will not perform official duties. This excludes when an Electorate Officer or Advisor is running as a candidate for council, state or federal government.

### Speech and acknowledgement order

Local Members of Parliament have the opportunity to speak at local functions, such as an official opening, where they have supported a project and/or are representing a Minister.

The Coordinator Advocacy and Strategic Partnerships and/or Manager Community Relations will manage the event roles of a Members of Parliament, event agendas and speech running orders.

Not all local Members of Parliament will be invited to give a speech, or be acknowledged by Council during event formalities. Where an event is being held with funding from State and/or Federal Government/s, the Minister and local Member of Parliament (lower house) will be offered an opportunity to speak. Should no financial contribution be provided, the relevant local Member of Parliament will not be offered to speak.

Speech and acknowledgement order for an event with funding from various levels of government will be from the highest to the lowest level of government – Federal, State and Local. This does not alter regardless of financial contribution amount.

### Speech running order

1. CEO, Director or Manager to officiate proceedings and provide welcome to guests (unless another MC is arranged) and Acknowledgement of Country (unless formal a Welcoming ceremony has been arranged)
2. Federal Government Minister or representative (only if support provided to the project)
3. Victorian Government Minister or representative (only if support provided to the project)
4. Mayor or representative
5. Local Federal/State Members of Parliament
  - a. Lower house federal
  - b. Lower house state
6. Key stakeholders (such as sporting club Presidents, school Principals, business owner etc)
7. Others as required

### Acknowledgment order for Mayor/Council speech

1. Federal Government Ministers or representative
2. Victorian Government Ministers or representative
3. Local Federal/State Members of Parliament
  - a. Lower house federal
  - b. Lower house state
  - c. Upper house federal
  - d. Upper house state
4. Others

5. Key stakeholders (such as sporting club Presidents, school Principals, business owner etc) 5. Councillors
6. Others as required

### Events during caretaker and election campaign periods

During all caretaker and election/by-election campaign periods (Local, State and Federal), Council will limit the scheduling of Council functions such as sod turnings, media opportunities and openings.

Any Council functions or project events held during election caretaker periods will generally be a closed invitation only event.

Political candidates are able to attend Council functions that are open to the public as a community member only.

Council does not invite political candidates to participate in formalities of Council functions, such as speeches at official openings or participation in photo opportunities unrelated to Council's advocacy campaign.

During an election, if appropriate, Council may schedule and promote Candidates Forums to enable all political candidates for an electorate to speak to key issues within the electorate. This would not occur during a by-election.

Where Council is hosting an advocacy related event, such as a Candidates Forum, all local political candidates that are invited to attend (at Councils discretion) are provided the opportunity to speak. This information will be discussed collaboratively and will be provided to attendees prior to the council function.

An official agenda and 'rules of engagement' will be developed and distributed by Council. To ensure the event provides equal opportunities for all invited candidates the order of speakers will be randomly drawn by the event host.

### Sharing of Council event invitations

Invitees are requested not to re-distribute a Council invitation to any other parties without agreement from Council. This includes Members of Parliament inviting political candidates during election campaign periods.

Where a political candidate attends a Council event or function due to being invited by another event invitee without previous agreement from Council, Council will discuss this directly with the candidate.

If the event or function is a closed location event (such as within a building/facility or a construction site), Council will advise the candidate they are unable to participate in the event and formalities in line with Councils *Election Signs and Events Policy* which states in item 4.3:

#### 4.3 Conduct at Council events



*Council events must not be used for election campaign activities. Whilst candidates are encouraged to attend and participate in Council events, the focus of these community events must not be diverted to politics.*

### Behaviour at Council events and functions

When attending Council functions, attendees are asked to be respectful and professional towards others and should refrain from making negative comments or connotations towards other Members of Parliament, government, parties, businesses or organisations.

Where a Council event or function occurs during an election campaign period, Members of Parliament and election candidates must adhere to Councils *Election Signs and Events Policy*.

This means that election campaign and political candidate material, such as campaign related brochures and other election signage items are not accepted.

### Use of Council facilities

Council-owned facilities, such as community centres, halls, public open spaces and the Frankston Arts Centre, are available for public use. Members of Parliament and political candidates are able to use these facilities for community related events at their own expense and following the appropriate processes.

Applications for use of Council reserves, parks and open spaces must be made online at: <https://www.frankston.vic.gov.au/Things-To-Do/Get-Involved/Event-Applications-and-Information>

Events that occur on public land must follow Councils Election Signs and Events Policy.

### Former Members of Parliament

It is Council's responsibility to acknowledge current elected representatives in any formal project events and functions, particularly official opening celebrations. While Council acknowledges the contributions of former Members of Parliament towards jointly funded local projects, this will not be formally recognised at project events such as official openings.

Council and/or a local stakeholder of a jointly funded project may choose to invite a former Member of Parliament to an official opening where appropriate, however the former Member of Parliament will not be included in any event formalities such as speeches and photographs.

Council officers have the discretion to direct formalities, such as speeches, tours and photographs, including requesting some attendees remove themselves from areas where formalities are occurring. For example, removing an attendee from a formal photo opportunity.

## Meetings

Council is committed to regular meetings (in-person and online) with Members of Parliament in order to maintain a positive working relationship, to ensure local projects progress successfully and in order to proactively and collaboratively address local matters as they arise.

During state and federal elections, Council meets with political candidates as required to discuss key advocacy initiatives.

The Advocacy and Strategic Partnerships Team will distribute a calendar invitation for meetings to the relevant Member of Parliament/s and internal attendees such as Mayor, CEO and relevant officers.

For meetings with Members of Parliament and political candidates, a meeting agenda (agreed to by all stakeholders and distributed prior to a meeting) will be followed, and any Conflicts of Interests will be considered at the commencement of discussions.

Official meeting minutes will be recorded by Council officers and shared within three business days to all meeting attendees, all Councillors and Council's Executive Management Team for their review or approval. Should any clarifications be made following a review, a final version of the meeting minutes will be re-distributed to this group. In the case of no responses to the draft meeting minutes, this will be considered as agreement after seven business days.

## Communications

### Public Relations

Council attends many local events with our state and federal Members of Parliament, including where funding has been delivered towards a Council project.

Subsequently, Council will share stories and updates through our corporate communications channels such as Facebook, eNews, Frankston City News and others. This is to ensure our community is aware of how Council is working with other levels of government to deliver the best outcomes for the Frankston City community.

The Coordinator Advocacy and Strategic Partnerships and/or Manager Community Relations will manage all external communications being distributed regarding Victorian and Federal Government funding, projects, programs or services.

Where quotes from a Member of Parliament are included within Council communications (such as a media release or Frankston City News article), the comments must be respectful and professional towards others and should refrain from making negative comments or connotations towards other Members of Parliament, government, parties, businesses or organisations.



Similarly, when preparing a Council social media post (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram etc) the relevant Members of Parliament will be tagged as appropriate.

The order by which Members of Parliament will be included in required Council communications, due to their support of a project/service/initiative, will be as follows:

- Federal Member for Dunkley
- State Member for Frankston/Carrum/Hastings
- Other stakeholders

## Signage and promotional materials

### Plaque signage requirements

For a range of projects, such as sporting pavilion redevelopments, road upgrades and more, Council takes responsibility for the printing and installation of permanent plaque signage, which includes acknowledgement of all relevant project supporters.

Where there is a funding agreement for a project requiring a plaque, Council will follow appropriate funding agreement procedures alongside this protocol. This includes logo usage.

Council's plaque signage will acknowledge all government project supporters, such as a financial contribution from Victorian and/or Federal Governments. For the purposes of plaque signage requirements, a letter of support, election commitment and lobbying by a Member of Parliament in opposition is not considered support and will therefore not be included on plaque signage.

The order of acknowledgement on plaque signage, where a financial contribution has been made, will be as follows:

1. Federal Government Minister or representative
2. Victorian Government Minister or representative
3. Mayor or representative
4. All Councillors listed at the bottom of each plaque

The below types of Council functions may allow for Member of Parliament and government signage (such as a banner) and materials, which will be stipulated and confirmed in the event invitation:

- Projects receiving Victorian and/or Federal Government investment
- Turning of the sod
- Media, photo and funding announcements
- Official openings and launches
- Funding announcements

### Election/by-election campaign signage

Council's Election Signs and Events Policy outlines the rules that apply to signs and campaign activity at official council functions and on public land.

Reports of election signage breaches can be reported to Council directly by phone, email at [advocacy@frankston.vic.gov.au](mailto:advocacy@frankston.vic.gov.au) or using the Snap Send Solve app. All reports will be provided to Councils Safer Communities and Development Services Departments for action.

All reported election signage breaches are tracked and reported publicly on Councils website in order to ensure transparency, with identifying information removed for privacy reasons.

### Temporary relocatable A-Frame signs

Council will allow display of a temporary relocatable A-Frame (one sign) within public spaces such as outdoor shopping strips and sporting clubs, with a requirement the sign is only displayed when a candidate, or a representative of the candidate, is within proximity to the sign.

This does not include at major Council run events (eg. Waterfront Festival) and functions (eg. Citizenship Ceremonies).

### Promotional material

Where a Council event or function occurs during an election/by-election campaign period, Members of Parliament and political candidates must adhere to Councils Election Signs and Events Policy. This means that election campaign and political candidate material is not accepted.

### Sponsorship signage during election periods

Council requires sponsorship signage from Members of Parliament located on Council-owned land and facilities, such as football oval boundary fences, to be removed or covered during election periods as per Councils *Election Signs and Events Policy*.

Council's Recreation Team will communicate this requirement to Clubs prior to the commencement of early voting during an election campaign period.

### Dispute resolution

Where a Member of Parliament and/or political candidate feels a decision in relation to a council function, communication or signage has been unfairly made, they may:

1. Liaise with Council's Coordinator Advocacy and Strategic Partnerships
2. If the matter is still of concern, the Coordinator may seek input and a formal response from the Manager Community Relations to the Member of Parliament
3. Should the matter fail to be resolved, the Member of Parliament may liaise directly with the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer in order to seek a resolution in line with Council and other relevant policies, guidelines and procedures.

## Supporting documents

- Contact list – State and Federal Members, Ministers, Shadow Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries – Advocacy – June 2021 (A4403878)
- Invitation letter template to MPs and Ministers (A4150180)
- Invitation and event checklist with Members of Parliament (A4150188)
- Invitation template for Outlook calendar invitation
- Run sheet template

## Related documents

| Policies  | Forms  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communications Policy 2021</li> <li>• Election Signs and Events Policy 2018</li> <li>• Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014</li> <li>• Councillor Code of Conduct 2022</li> <li>• Local Government Act 2020</li> <li>• Frankston City Governance Rules 2022</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Record of Assembly of Councillors</li> <li>• Staff guidelines for recording an Assembly of Councillors</li> <li>• Conflict of Interest Checklist and Form</li> <li>• Documents for signing form</li> <li>• Speech Request form</li> <li>• Internal event notification form</li> </ul> |
| Guidelines / Procedures / Processes   | Other  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Memo to Councillors Guidelines</li> <li>• Memo to Councillors procedure</li> <li>• Internal event application process</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Victorian and Federal Government funding agreements, publicity guidelines and other related documents</li> </ul>  |

Related documents publicly available online at: **frankston.vic.gov.au** are identified in italics. All other related documents are available on Grapevine (Council's internal internet).

## Responsible officer

Should you have any questions about these protocols or need assistance, contact the Coordinator Advocacy and Strategic Partnerships as your first point of contact.

| Officer/s                                      | Responsibilities  |
|--|---|
| Coordinator Advocacy and Strategic Partnership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First point of contact for advice for Event/Project Officers</li> <li>• Confirm availability of Members of Parliament</li> <li>• Liaise with Members of Parliament and other key stakeholders</li> <li>• Prepare correspondence and review correspondence to Members of Parliament</li> <li>• Determine appropriate speaking order and roles of attendees</li> </ul> |

|   |   |
|---|---|
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine MPs inclusion in Council communications</li> <li>• Organisation of events and functions, alongside project officers, and briefing in of Communications Team</li> <li>• Liaises with Members of Parliament on quotes for inclusion in media releases</li> <li>• Ensure process is adhered to and provide assistance where required</li> <li>• Proof content of plaques</li> </ul> |
| Manager Community Relations             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liaise with EMT and Councillors on sensitive matters</li> <li>• Provide advice to Coordinator Advocacy and Strategic Partnerships and Event/Project Officers where required</li> </ul>   |
| Communications Team                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Includes Members of Parliament in media release contact list</li> <li>• Prepares speech and media statements</li> <li>• Attend photo opportunities</li> <li>• Ensure relevant Communications, Branding and Publication Style policies, protocols and guidelines are adhered to</li> </ul>  |
| Safer Communities (Authorised Officers) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management and possible enforcement of the <i>Election Signs and Events Policy</i>.</li> </ul>   |
| Executive Manager to the CEOs Office    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confirming CEO availability and date/time preferences</li> <li>• Following up and advising on CEO approvals and feedback</li> <li>• Liaising with relevant officers regarding MC notes, speeches, event roles, responsibilities and procedures on behalf of CEO</li> </ul>   |
| Councillors Office                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confirming Mayor and Councillors availability and date/time preferences</li> <li>• Liaise with Communications Team and Event/Project Officer regarding speech, MC and Mayoral/Councillors role/s</li> </ul>  |
| Event/Project Officer                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liaise with other relevant officers (Council, Electorate Officers and Government Departments)</li> <li>• Adhere to protocol and supporting documentation</li> <li>• Liaise with key stakeholders</li> <li>• Event organisation</li> </ul>  |

## Authorisation

This Protocol is managed by the Community Relations Department, and is approved by Frankston City's Mayor and Council's Chief Executive Officer (CEO):



-----  
Cr Nathan Conroy

**Mayor, Frankston City**



-----  
Mr Phil Cantillon

**CEO, Frankston City Council**

in accordance with Frankston City Council resolution at its Council meeting of 12 August 2024.