



ORDINARY MEETING

Late Supplementary

Date of meeting: 14 May 2024
Location: Council Chambers
Time: 6:30 PM

BUSINESS PAPER

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3. MAYORAL MINUTES

3.1.1. MM – Transparency and Accountability in the Hawkesbury

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Seek advice on the method and potential wording required to amend Hawkesbury City Council's Code of Conduct, to require all Councillors to disclose (annually) whether they personally, or other persons set out in clause 4.4 of Council's Code of Conduct, administers or is involved in any/all social media pages, websites, newsletters or published material, that particularly and repeatedly discuss the business of Hawkesbury City Council, its Councillors and/or its staff.
 2. Subject to the advice, Council consider amending its Code of Conduct to accord with this advice.
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BACKGROUND

It has come to my attention that a website / Facebook page is operating called 'Hawkesbury City Councillor Watch'.

This website / Facebook Page has been operating since 11 May 2022, where it mentions that it has been established to keep track of Councillor attendance at meetings and briefings, as well as publish Councillors voting behaviour.

Since then, this website / Facebook page has reported on Council meetings, with professional graphics, leading many in the community to believe that this is affiliated with Hawkesbury City Council. I can confirm that 'Hawkesbury City Councillor Watch' has nothing to do with the entity of Hawkesbury City Council.

In a most recent post, data was misconstrued and inappropriately conveyed to the Hawkesbury community that caused reputational harm to Hawkesbury City Council Councillors and in addition, for anyone who believes this data is coming from Council itself, casts doubt over the independence and apolitical nature of the organisation.

For clarification, adoption of this Mayoral Minute and upon receiving the requested advice and acting on it, it would also mean that Councillors must disclose annually to the organisation, all social media pages, websites, newsletters or published material that they create or administer where they use their title as Mayor, Deputy Mayor or Councillor. Further, it would mean that they must also disclose any/all other social media pages, websites, newsletters or published material that they, or those as set out in clause 4.4 of the Code of Conduct, are involved in, that particularly and repeatedly discuss the business of Hawkesbury City Council, its Councillors and/or its staff.

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Therefore, in the interests of transparency and accountability in local government within the Hawkesbury, it is prudent that all Councillors disclose all social media pages, websites, newsletters or published material that they or family members are involved in that repeatedly discuss, or by default, look to be affiliated with, the business of Hawkesbury City Council, so that the community is rightly informed about the origin and ownership of such data. It should also be an obligation of Councillors, who aim to be elected on platforms of transparency, accountability, honesty and professionalism, that they disclose this relevant information to the public.

oooO END OF MAYORAL MINUTE Oooo



Ordinary Meeting

End of Business Paper

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