

1. POLICY CERTIFICATION

Policy title:	Policy Framework
Policy number:	GOV001
Category:	Council Policy
Classification:	GOVERNANCE
Link to Strategic Plan Goals:	Goal 1: Strong Leadership through Good Governance, Strong Financial Management, Corporate Planning and Operational Support
Link to Strategic Plan Strategy:	Further strengthen corporate governance and financial sustainability
Link to Business Plan Strategy:	Goal One Strategy - Achieve strong Corporate Governance and Financial Management within the term of Council
Status:	Approved – UNDER REVIEW DECEMBER 2016

2. PURPOSE

This Policy Framework provides guidance for the development, classification, and categorisation of all policy documents for Roper Gulf Regional Council. It sets levels of policy and who has the authority and responsibility for each level. This document also provides a framework to support consistency, control, clarity, and quality in the development, approval and review processes associated with policy.

In the Roper Gulf Regional Council Policy Framework, there are two (2) types of policy documents:

- Council Policies and
- Organisational Directives

Supporting documentation required to achieve compliance with policy are Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), forms, templates and any other documentation.

Council Policies provide strategic direction, are based on legislative requirements, address cross-cultural issues, and have an external focus or addresses Council/Councillor-specific issues.

Organisational Directives relate to organisational wide attitudes, philosophies and intent and usually have an internal focus.

Standard Operating Procedures document the methods and steps required to implement Council Policies or Organisational Directives, as well as those to complete a function or task. Standard Operating Procedures may be applicable to all, or only to certain departments across the Region.

3. ORGANISATIONAL SCOPE

The Policy Framework applies to all Roper Gulf Regional Council Members, Council Committee Members, Local Authority Members, and staff, including contractors and volunteers.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

Policies are developed in order to provide boundaries, guidelines and consistency for the achievement of Roper Gulf Regional Council's strategic and operational goals. They take into consideration legal requirements, best practice and quality standards.

The Policy Framework aims to support the development of policy documents which are:

- written in clear language: should be concise, well written and easily understood;

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- clearly defined objectives, legislative requirements, and compliance mechanisms;
- have a standardised layout;
- conform to applicable standards and guidelines;
- approved at an appropriate level of the organisation; and
- assigned to specific managers for regular revision.

This Policy Framework provides key support for the Council Strategic and Business Plans, and for implementing sound governance practices across the Roper Gulf Region.

5. DEFINITIONS

Approval levels	A policy document will be endorsed and approved by different people in the organisation. See the diagram at the end of this document for advice on who has authority to endorse and approve different types of policy documents.
Categorisation	Selection of the appropriate category of policy, according to its level, content and purpose. The category allocated by the Policy Coordination Officer will be either Council Policy, Organisational Directive or Supporting Document.
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
Classification	Allocation of the appropriate classification of the policy, according to the content and limitations of the policy. Classifications currently include Administration (ADM), Asset and Infrastructure (ASS), Council (CL), Contract (CTS), Council Services (COR), Community Services (AGE), Finance Policies (FIN), Human Resources (HR), Local Authorities (LA), and Work Safe (WS). However, these classifications are subject to review.
Consultation	Consultation is the compulsory process of meeting with identified, relevant stakeholders to seek information, advice and feedback. It must take place prior to, and during development of any policy document and supporting documents.
Council Policy	A general statement outlining strategic directions and/or adherence to statutory or other corporate requirements, which usually has an external focus. The exceptions are policies specific to Council or Councillors (e.g.: Members' Disciplinary Policy) – these are also categorised as Council Policies. A Council Policy directs decision-making in areas affected by the policy. Council Policies must be approved by Council.
Endorsement	Agreement to the Council Policy, Organisational Directive, and Supporting Documents by the appropriate stakeholders prior to being sent for formal approval to the appropriate person(s). Endorsement should be seen as an essential step on the way to formal approval. See diagram at the end of this document.
Formal approval	The official and final approval of a Council Policy by Council or an Organisational Directive and Supporting Documents by the CEO. No policy document or supporting documents is official Roper Gulf Regional Council Policy until formal approval has been given and the document registered by the Policy Coordination Officer (Manager Governance and Corporate Planning).

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Organisational Directive	A general and official statement outlining attitudes, philosophies, intentions and boundaries that will usually have an internal, operational focus. Organisational Directives ensure that operational work supports the directions and objectives that Council has set in Council Policy, the Strategic Plan and the Business Plan. Organisational Directives must be approved by the CEO.
Policy Content	All Roper Gulf Regional Council Policies, Organisational Directives (except for By-Laws, Subordinate By-Laws, and planning documents such as the Business Plan) must be developed using the policy content list at Clause 7 of this document. SOPs may be written in whatever format is suitable for the procedure but must include WHS considerations. Templates are available for all Supporting Documents.
Policy Coordination Officer	The Policy Coordination Officer (Manager Governance and Corporate Planning) is responsible for performing final checks on the Council Policy, Organisational Directive, Standard Operating Procedure and any supporting documents prior to submission for approval. This takes place after the policy has been developed or reviewed.
Policy Development and Review Cycle	<p>The stages of the policy development cycle are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identification of a policy need; • development of the draft policy document and supporting documents; • consideration and endorsement; • consideration and approval; • implementation; and • ongoing monitoring and review of the policy. <p>See the diagram at the end of this document.</p>
Policy Drafter	The staff member responsible for writing the draft policy documents and supporting documents.
Policy Owner	Once a policy has been endorsed and approved, the nominated Policy Owner is the staff position who has responsibility and accountability for the regular monitoring, review and update of that policy.
SLT	Strategic Leadership Team
Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)	A specific statement about the steps needed to safely and effectively complete a task or function. A Standard Operating Procedure provides detailed 'how to' instructions and may include responsibilities for task achievement, timelines, safety guidelines, troubleshooting hints and approvals required. SOPs must be approved by the CEO.
Supporting Documentation	Documentation required to achieve compliance of policy documents are Standard Operating Procedures, forms, templates and any other documentation that provide the instructions and task achievement.
WHS	Work, Health and Safety

6. PRINCIPLES

6.1 Compliance

Policies must comply with all applicable Acts and statutory instruments such as

- Acts and their associated Regulations,
- Australian Standards (AS) and International Standards Organisation (ISO) Standards and Certifications, (including, but not limited to, the *Local Government Act* and the *Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act*),
- Council resolutions,
- other Roper Gulf Regional Council policies and
- the Roper Gulf Regional Strategic and Business Plan.

6.2 Consistency

Terminology used in the policy should reflect that used in any applicable legislation, standard, guideline, Roper Gulf Regional Strategic and Business Plan, or other Roper Gulf Regional Council policy documents.

6.3 Clarity

There are two (2) aspects of clarity that are important in the development of policy documents and supporting documents. They are:

6.3.1 Clarity of approval: All policy documents and supporting documents will clearly state where responsibility for final approval lies and when that approval was formally given.

6.3.2 Clarity of writing: All policy documents will use plain language as far as is possible. If acronyms or complex terminology are unavoidable, plain language definitions will be given in Section 5 of the policy. The aim is to allow a wide range of users to understand the content of the policy.

6.4 Stages of Policy Development

The five (5) stages of policy document development (refer to SOP ADM-234 Policy Development) are:

6.4.1 Identification of policy need: This includes identifying the matter to be addressed, deciding whether a policy document is the best way to address it, selection of the policy level which will best support achieving Strategic and Business Plan objectives and seeking authority to proceed. The Policy Proposal Form GOV130-001 must be submitted to the Policy Coordination Officer before policy development begins.

6.4.2 Draft policy document development: This stage includes identifying the relevant stakeholders, commencing the consultation process, gathering background information, writing the policy document and supporting documents, incorporating feedback into later drafts. The Draft documents must go to the Policy Coordination Officer for final checks and assignment of a registered Document Number prior to going on to the next stage.

6.4.3 Policy consideration and endorsement: This stage involves presenting the policy document to the appropriate endorser as per the diagram at the end of this document for evaluation and endorsement:

- Council Policies = Strategic Leadership Team (SLT),
- Organisational Directive = Strategic Leadership Team (SLT),
- Supporting documents such as SOPs = Consideration by Manager, and endorsed by Director.

For endorsement by the SLT a report is required to be submitted as an agenda item at the next SLT meeting by the Policy Coordination Officer. If urgent, it may require holding a special meeting to discuss the policy document.

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At this stage the policy document may be rejected, returned for further modification or endorsed.

6.4.4 Policy approval: This stage involves presenting the policy document to the Council or CEO for formal approval.

All new policies and reviewed/updated policies with significant changes must be presented to the Council for approval. This cannot be done until endorsement has been given by the SLT. This ensures that the policy document has been well researched and considered by the time it reaches the Council and this reduces the likelihood that it will be rejected. A report must be written to introduce the policy document onto the Council meeting agenda. Once approval has been gained, the policy document must be noted in the policy register.

All new Council Policies must be approved by the full Council.

Reviewed or updated Council Policies can be approved by Council or the Finance Committee. Organisational Directives must be endorsed by SLT and approved by the CEO.

Standard Operating Procedures and other supporting documents are to be considered by the Manager, endorsed by the Director and approved by the CEO.

Reviewed policy document and supporting documents that have only administration, formatting or other insignificant changes does not have to go back to Council or to the CEO but can be approved by its Policy Owner and Policy Coordination Officer.

6.4.5 Policy implementation: This is the final stage in the policy process and it is ongoing. It includes such activities as activating the policy, notification, distribution, awareness raising and education. Complex or very sensitive policies may require specific implementation plans.

Refer to the SOP ADM-213 Policy Implementation Plan.

6.4.6 Policy review: During the policy document drafting stage, consideration will be given to appropriate timelines for review of the policy document and its associated supporting documents. A review schedule will be incorporated into the policy document and this starts once implementation has occurred.

The Policy Owner is responsible for the ongoing monitoring, review and updating of that policy.

A reviewed policy document that has only administration, formatting or other insignificant changes does not have to go back to Council or to the CEO but can be approved by its Policy Owner.

6.5 Categorisation and classification

When formulating policy documents, an early task is to identify the **category** of the document – this will determine the approval levels required. There are two (2) category choices –

1. Council Policy or
2. Organisational Directive.

Classifications are used to group similar policy documents and to broadly describe the content. Classifications are subject to review.

There are ten (10) types of Council policy documents:

1. Assets and Infrastructure (ASS)
 2. Contract (CTS),
 3. Council (CL),
 4. Council Services (COR),
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5. Community Services (AGE),
6. Finance Policies (FIN),
7. Governance (GOV),
8. Human Resources (HR),
9. Local Authorities (LA), and
10. Work Safe (WS).

Categories and classifications are to be discussed with the Policy Coordination Officer and will be confirmed during the final checks done prior to presentation for consideration and formal approval.

Supporting documents will use the same grouping classifications as policy documents.

6.6 Policy Owner

A Policy Owner will be designated for each policy document and supporting document. The Policy Owner will bear responsibility for regular monitoring and review of the policy and for incorporating necessary changes.

The Policy Owner is also responsible to assess the revised policy document and decide whether any significant changes have been made. If it is, formal endorsement and approval needs to be gained again.

The Policy Owner is also responsible to coordinate a process to notify the necessary staff and stakeholders after a policy document has been revised.

All reviews of the documents must go to the Policy Coordination Officer for final checks.

6.7 Policy access

All Roper Gulf Regional Council employees will have access to all policy documentation.

Approved policy documents will be placed in the:

- Records management system Magiq/InfoXpert → Reference Library → Policy_Documents
- Sharepoint → Document Library → Policies and Standards.

Printed copies are available for staff from their Managers if required.

Council Policies are available on the Roper Gulf Regional Council website www.ropergulf.nt.gov.au. External members of the community can access the policies on the website or alternatively, printed copies of individual Council Policy documents will be made available on a cost-recovery basis.

6.8 Relationship/impact on other policies

It is the responsibility of the Policy Drafter in the case of a new policy document, or the Policy Owner in the case of a policy document undergoing a major review, to assess any areas of overlap, contradiction, or integration with other existing or draft Roper Gulf Regional Council policy documents. When identified, these must be discussed with the Policy Owner(s) of the affected policy documents. This check needs to consider policy documents in all categories. References or links to related policy documents must be stated within the new policy document in Section 8.

6.9 Policy currency

The current version of any policy document will be considered to be the electronic version stored in the Roper Gulf Regional Council Records Management System Magiq/InfoXpert → Reference Library.

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6.10 Policy numbering

Policy document numbering will reflect the category and classification of the policy. The Policy Coordination Officer will allocate numbers during the checks done prior to presentation for formal approval. A Register for each policy document and supporting document category will be kept by the Policy Coordination Officer.

6.11 Policy review

It is the responsibility of the Policy Owner to review the document according to the review time frame specified. It is the responsibility of the Policy Coordination Officer to update the current version of the policy document in the Roper Gulf Regional Council Records Management System, Sharepoint and website once reviewed and approved.

7. POLICY CONTENT

The content of the body of the *Council Policy*, or the *Organisational Directive*, will be organised under the following headings:

1. Policy/Directive Title.
2. Purpose.
3. Scope.
4. Policy/Directive Statement.
5. Definitions.
6. Principles.
7. Policy/Directive Content.
8. References.
9. Document Control
10. Contact Information

SOPs may be written in whatever format is suitable for the procedure but must include WHS considerations. Templates are available for all supporting documentation from the Policy Coordination Officer.

Additionally, the Policy Coordination Officer, in consultation with the Policy Drafter, will ensure inclusion of references to the document category, classification and related document control information, such as the version number, policy status, approval date, Policy Owner and review information.

8. REFERENCES

Acknowledgements (original author/source documents)	Litchfield Council Policy Framework. Reworked by Moira McCreesh.
Related Policies	All RGRC policies
Related Publications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Local Government Act</i> • <i>Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act</i> • <i>Information Act</i>
Related Supporting Documents	<p>SOP GOV-213 Policy Implementation Plan SOP GOV-234 Policy Development Plan TMP ADM-013 Policy Template TMP ADM-014 SOP Template</p>

9. DOCUMENT CONTROL

Policy number	ADM001
Policy Owner	Manager Governance & Corporate Planning
InfoXpert ID	
Endorsed by	Council
Date approved	21 October 2009
Revisions	October 2010 May 2017
Amendments	2010 – Admin changes + inclusion of Councillor-specific policy under Council Policy definition; clarification of format for SOPs; approval of reviewed and updated policies. 2017 - administration, formatting, approval process; Classification naming changed; SOPs removed from the category as a policy document and to a supporting document
Next revision due	May 2020

10. CONTACT PERSON

Position

Manager Governance and Corporate Planning

Contact number

08 8972 9000

Policy Development and Review Cycle

