

WHEN DOES THE OFFICE OF MAYOR BECOME A MARKETING TOOL?



The time for change is now!

Council Watch asks who authorised the association of “Mayor, City of Victor Harbor” with the promotion of a private commercial venture

Mayor Dr Moira Jenkins has used a Facebook presence prominently identified as “**Moira Jenkins Mayor, City of Victor Harbor**” to promote the launch of a book which she herself describes as part of her **private consultancy work**.

That raises a straightforward governance question:

Did Mayor Jenkins make a unilateral decision to associate the Office of Mayor and the name “City of Victor Harbor” with the promotion of her private commercial venture — and, if so, where is the Council authority for doing so?

Council Watch is not questioning Mayor Jenkins's right to write a book, publish a book, operate a private consultancy or promote her private business interests in her capacity as a private citizen.

The issue is the boundary between **private commercial activity and public office**.

The distinction matters because Mayor Jenkins has herself drawn it.

In promoting ***Beyond the Chamber: Navigating the Leadership of Local Government***, Mayor Jenkins stated that the book was part of her private consultancy work and was completely separate from her role as Mayor. She also stated that no Council resources, staff time or equipment were used in writing or producing it.

Council Watch accepts that these are the Mayor's stated assurances.

But they leave another question unanswered:

If the book is completely separate from her role as Mayor, why is it being promoted through a Facebook presence carrying the identity “Mayor, City of Victor Harbor”?

The Ombudsman has already considered “private” Facebook pages

This is not merely a theoretical question about Facebook.

A South Australian Ombudsman investigation involving former Alexandrina Councillor Bronwyn Lewis examined whether Facebook posts ceased to be public statements because they appeared on a personal or supposedly private Facebook page.

The Ombudsman's conclusion was clear:

“It is my view that social media posts are public statements, even in instances where those posts are caveated as private by the social media platform or are set to be available to a restricted audience, such as ‘private’ Facebook posts.”

The Ombudsman also noted that the underlying investigation had considered posts made to Cr Lewis's **personal Facebook page**.

The Cr Lewis matter arose under the former Code of Conduct framework and involved very different conduct. Council Watch is therefore **not suggesting that the Lewis findings establish that Mayor Jenkins has committed misconduct**.

What the decision does demonstrate is an important governance principle: describing a Facebook page as personal or private does not necessarily mean that an elected member's statements on that page cease to have a public character.

That distinction becomes particularly relevant where the Facebook presence itself prominently invokes the person's elected office.

“Moira Jenkins Mayor, City of Victor Harbor”

The Facebook identity at the centre of this issue is not simply “Moira Jenkins”.

It is presented as:

“Moira Jenkins Mayor, City of Victor Harbor”.

Those words matter.

“Mayor” is a public office.

“City of Victor Harbor” is the name of the council and community the Mayor has been elected to represent.

The book being promoted through that platform, however, is described by Mayor Jenkins herself as part of her **private consultancy work**.

That produces an obvious question about where public identity ends and private commercial promotion begins.

What authority does a Mayor have?

Section 58 of the *Local Government Act 1999* defines the specific role of a council's principal member.

Among other responsibilities, the Mayor provides leadership, presides at Council meetings, liaises with the Chief Executive Officer concerning implementation of Council decisions and acts as the **principal spokesperson of the Council**.

That role carries considerable public visibility and authority.

But being Council's principal spokesperson should not automatically be confused with having unrestricted authority to make the Council, its identity or the Office of Mayor part of a private commercial activity.

That is why Council Watch believes the appropriate question is:

Where is the authority?

Was Council asked to approve the association?

Was there a Council resolution?

Was there a delegation?

Was Council administration consulted?

Was approval sought to use the **“Mayor, City of Victor Harbor”** identity while promoting private consultancy activity?

Or was the decision made solely by Mayor Jenkins?

These are questions capable of straightforward factual answers.

Council's own social-media policy recognises the distinction

The City of Victor Harbor's current Media, Communications and Social Media Policy also recognises a distinction between Council-related communications and social media used purely in a personal capacity.

The policy states that it does not cover social media used in a personal capacity **where no reference is made to Council-related matters.**

Council's October 2026 policy material also makes clear that Council Members may express personal views, but should distinguish those views from the views of the City of Victor Harbor.

That makes the present circumstances particularly worthy of scrutiny.

If a social-media presence prominently identifies its owner as “**Mayor, City of Victor Harbor**”, can everything subsequently promoted through that platform automatically be characterised as purely private?

Council Watch believes the question deserves an answer.

The Mayor anticipated the public/private issue herself

There is another reason this distinction cannot simply be dismissed.

Mayor Jenkins expressly addressed the separation between the book and Council in her promotional material.

She stated that the book was part of her private consultancy work, was completely separate from her role as Mayor, that no Council resources, staff time or equipment were used, and that the launch was therefore being held in Goolwa rather than at City of Victor Harbor facilities.

Those assurances are important and should be acknowledged.

But Council Watch believes they also highlight the unresolved issue.

The question is not merely whether a Council computer, employee or building was used.

The Office of Mayor itself has value.

It carries public recognition, authority and visibility.

The contributor whose investigation prompted this article identified potential benefits including enhanced public profile, name recognition, professional reputation and credibility in private consultancy work.

Whether any such benefit actually constitutes an “**improper use of position**” is a much more serious legal question, and the evidence presently available does **not** establish such a breach.

Council Watch makes no allegation that Mayor Jenkins has breached section 62(4) of the *Local Government Act*.

The public-interest question exists before reaching that threshold.

Communicating as Mayor or marketing as Mayor?

There is a fundamental difference between **communicating as Mayor** and **marketing oneself as Mayor**.

A Mayor communicating with the community about Council decisions, advocacy, community events, public policy and local issues is performing an obvious public function.

Promoting an acknowledged private consultancy activity raises a different issue when the promotional platform prominently incorporates the elected title and the name of the City.

That does not automatically make the activity unlawful.

It does, however, make transparency about the separation between the two roles particularly important.

Council Watch wants the documentary answer

Council Watch believes the matter can be clarified without speculation.

We believe the following questions should be answered:

1. Is the Facebook presence titled “Moira Jenkins Mayor, City of Victor Harbor” owned, controlled and administered solely by Mayor Jenkins?
2. Did the City of Victor Harbor authorise the use of the mayoral office and City’s name in connection with that Facebook presence?
3. Was any Council resolution, delegation or administrative approval relied upon when the platform was used to promote *Beyond the Chamber*?
4. Did any City of Victor Harbor employee assist, directly or indirectly, with material associated with the book, its promotion or launch?
5. Were any Council-produced photographs, communications material, mailing lists, digital resources or other Council assets used in connection with the promotion?
6. Does Mayor Jenkins receive, directly or indirectly, income or another commercial benefit from sales of the book or from consultancy opportunities associated with it?

7. What safeguards are in place to ensure that followers of a page carrying the identity “**Mayor, City of Victor Harbor**” can clearly distinguish official mayoral communication from private commercial promotion?

These questions should not be difficult to answer.

If no Council resources were used, no Council authority was required, no Council involvement occurred and the Mayor considers the Facebook platform entirely private, Council Watch believes the community should be told precisely how that position is reconciled with a Facebook identity prominently carrying both the **Office of Mayor** and the **City of Victor Harbor name**.

This is about the boundary, not the book

Council Watch's concern is not that an elected representative has written a book.

Nor is it that an elected representative has outside employment or business interests.

The issue is whether the authority, identity and public visibility attached to elected office are being kept sufficiently separate from private commercial interests.

The South Australian Ombudsman's findings concerning Cr Lewis demonstrate why simply describing Facebook activity as “**private**” does not necessarily resolve questions about an elected member's public conduct.

Mayor Jenkins herself says this book is part of her private consultancy and completely separate from her mayoral role.

If the two activities are completely separate, the community is entitled to ask why the words “Mayor, City of Victor Harbor” are part of the platform being used to promote it.

That is the question Council Watch believes now deserves a clear answer.

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