



COONAMBLE SHIRE COUNCIL Media Policy

RESOLUTION NO:	MEETING:
4454	14 August 2019

INTRODUCTION

Clear and effective communication with residents of Coonamble Shire Council's Local Government Area is intrinsic to effective policy and service development. Council's objective is *to ensure all communication with the media is consistent, timely and that comments reported in the media are made only through authorised spokespeople*. In order to progress Council's Media and Communications objectives and requirements, the Media Policy is updated to reflect revised standards of best practice and procedures.

AIMS OF POLICY (IN POINT FORM IF APPLICABLE)

The aims of the Media Policy are to:

- adhere to the best practice principles of effective communication;
- ensure the public is informed of Coonamble Shire Council's decisions, policies, programs, events and issues in a timely and accurate manner;
- portray Council in a competent light, so the public perception of the organisation is enhanced;
- increase community support for the services, activities and initiatives of Council;
- increase community knowledge and confidence, so that customers are aware of the services which Council provides;
- continue to build a consistent and positive relationship with the media and to increase positive media engagement and outcomes within a changing political and communication environment.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. The Mayor is the principal member and spokesperson of the governing body, including representing the views of the Council as to its local priorities (*Section 226(c) of the Local Government Act 1993*). Therefore, the Mayor is the official spokesperson for Council as far as media initiatives (statements and releases) media responses (enquiries) pertaining to the governing body and politically sensitive issues are concerned.
2. The General Manager is the official spokesperson for council as far as media initiatives (statements and releases) and media responses (enquiries) pertaining to the operational and day-to-day administration functions of the organisation are concerned.

3. Directors have authority to speak to the media about operational matters regarding their department, based on the understanding that the General Manager is advised of the nature and format of the media liaison. Directors can also authorise their managers or other employees to make technical and/or specialised statements to the media, if and when the need arises, again based on the understanding that the General Manager is advised of the nature and format of the media liaison.
4. The delegated staff member has authority, in the normal course of carrying out the responsibilities and requirements of the position, to directly liaise with the media provided either the Mayor and/or the General Manager (whichever is appropriate in accordance with clauses 1 and 2 above) and the relevant Director, where appropriate, are informed either generally or specifically, of the purpose, format and content of the contact with the media.
5. No unauthorised employees are permitted to make comments to the media on behalf of Council.
6. Under no circumstances shall Council employees be permitted to give personal opinions relating to Council issues when dealing with the media.
7. Councillors may make personal comments to the media, but must make it clear that those comments are not representative of Council. Councillors shall strive to portray Council in a competent light and be mindful not to bring Council into disrepute.
8. Councillors are expected to be supportive of Council resolutions once they have been formally adopted, and not to be publicly critical and negative about those resolutions.
9. Chairpersons of Community Committees of Council have authority to comment to the media on committee matters only. Chairs of Community Committees of Council shall always strive to portray Council in a competent light and be mindful not to bring Council into disrepute.

PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE GUIDELINES

- The delegated staff member, on instruction and/or in consultation with the Mayor, General Manager or Director/s, shall prepare media initiatives (statements and releases) and media responses (enquiries) in whatever format is deemed to be most appropriate in respect of the subject or issue and the circumstantial timeframe. The delegated staff member shall submit any statements, releases or responses for the approval of the Mayor and General Manager (if pertaining to the governing body and politically sensitive issues), or for the approval of the General Manager and appropriate Director/s, (if pertaining to the operational day-to-day administration functions of the organisation) before they are released.

- The delegated staff member or the Executive Assistant shall be responsible for the distribution of media releases and media alerts to relevant media outlets and of media releases to the Mayor and all Councillors.
- Employees are encouraged to make suggestions about topics for media attention, but the Mayor, General Manager or Directors shall be ultimately responsible for deciding the topics for engagement with the media and, where possible, will make decisions in collaboration with the delegated staff member.
- All media releases shall be registered within Council's records management system and placed on Council's website and other social media outlets if appropriate, in either the originating format or in an edited or abridged version, as determined by the delegated staff member.
- Timely, accurate and appropriate media initiatives and responses shall be made to emerging Council or general Local Government stories and issues. This up-dated policy reflects Council's understanding that:
 - all contact with the media needs to be carried out on a day-to-day basis without undue delays in order to fulfil the media's news cycle and this is an essential element of practice and procedure;
 - it is best practice for the delegated staff member to determine the most suitable format of any media engagement and specifically any written content and to be informed of all media contact made by the organisation;
 - this policy operates in conjunction with Council's Social Media Policy (e.g.Facebook) and recognises that the use of social media may be the best method for release of information in specific circumstances and that social media is time and issue sensitive;
 - obtaining quotes from the Mayor, the General Manager and/or the relevant Director may not be required other than for written media releases.
- As a general guide, media engagement in any format should support or reinforce Council's vision, aspirations and past successes and reflect the intent of council as indicative in the Community Strategic Plan, the Delivery Program and Operational Plan.

APPLICABILITY

This Policy applies to all employees of Council, including volunteers and people on work experience, to all Councillors and to members of Community Committees of Council.

VARIATION AND REVIEW

This Policy shall be reviewed every three (3) years to ensure it remains up-to-date and workable. Council reserves the right to vary this Policy at its discretion.

IMPLEMENTATION / COMMUNICATION

The Media Policy shall be discussed at team meetings to ensure that all staff are aware of the Policy and its requirements. The delegated staff member shall distribute a copy of this Policy to media outlets.


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General Manager

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Date