

MEDIA POLICY

Responsible Department:	Corporate and Community Services
Responsible Section:	Community Relations
Responsible Officer:	Manager Community Relations

Objective

- Ensure information provided to the media by Council is consistent, well informed, timely and accurate.
- To protect and enhance the reputation of Council.
- Facilitate the promotion of positive relationships and open exchange of information between Council and the media.
- Identify responsibility and appropriate authorisation for information provided by Council to the media.
- Provide direction to Council Officials in dealing with media communications.
- Mitigate risks associated with the communication of inaccurate information.

Introduction

The purpose of this Media Policy is to provide guidelines for communication with the media to be undertaken by Council Officials that ensures a coordinated and consistent approach to media liaison related activities. This Policy applies to Council Officials (as defined in this Policy) in situations that involve:

- Direct written or verbal communication with the media about Council affairs and related matters.
- Making written or verbal comments on Council affairs in public forums, where it is reasonably foreseeable that such comments will be published in the media.

The Media Policy should be referred to in conjunction with the *Local Government Act 1993* ("the LG Act"), Council's Social Media Policy, any other relevant Council Policy and Council's Code of Conduct.

Policy

1. Definitions

1.1. For the purpose of this policy, the following definitions apply:

Term	Meaning
Contact	Journalists or media representatives may attempt to contact Council Officials by phone, email, through social media or in person.
Council Officials	Includes the Mayor, Councillors, members of staff Council, volunteers, contractors, administrators, Council committee members, conduct reviewers and delegates of Council.
Media	All forms of published content such as but not limited to, newspapers radio, television, online content (including social media).
Official Spokesperson	Council Officials who, for the purpose of this Policy may provide information to the media on behalf of Council in relation to Policy, administrative and operational matters.

2. Code of Conduct Provisions

Council Officials should be aware of their obligations under Council's Code of Conduct when speaking to the media, or otherwise communicating through social media. These interactions must not damage the Council's reputation, commercial interests and/or bring Council or holders of a civic office into disrepute. Any inappropriate comments provided to the media or posted on social media may constitute a breach of Council's Code of Conduct.

Council Officials must not discuss personnel, legal advice, commercial in-confidence matters, any confidential matters or any other matters that are in contravention of the *Government Information Public Access Act* or fall under the provisions of the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act*.

3. Official Spokesperson

The following Council Officials may, subject to this Policy and having regard to the provisions of the LG Act and other powers and responsibilities delegated by Council, act as the Official spokesperson for Council:

3.1. The Mayor

The Mayor as outlined in section 226(c) of the LG Act, is 'to be the principal member and spokesperson of the governing body, including representing the views of the council as to its local priorities'.

The Mayor may delegate these roles at their discretion to another Councillor, the General Manager or to another Official spokesperson.

3.2. Councillors

Councillors may be delegated by the Mayor to act as Council's Official spokesperson on specific matters.

At all other times, in line with the provisions of the Code of Conduct, Councillors may express only their personal views to the media on any matter relating to Council Policy and other matters of public interest, however this should be clearly identified as a personal view and not an official Council position or Policy and should not bring the holders of civic office into disrepute or denigrate Narrabri Shire Council or its functions.

3.3. General Manager

The General Manager and his/her delegate may provide information or comment to the media on behalf of Council on Policy, administrative and operational matters.

3.4. Directors

Council Directors may be delegated by the General Manager to provide information to the media on behalf of Council on Policy, administrative and operational matters within their area of responsibility.

3.5. Manager Community Relations

The Manager Community Relations is responsible for dealing with all media enquiries received directly or referred by other Council Officials in a prompt manner.

The Manager Community Relations may distribute media releases and written statements and provide information on behalf of Council on Policy, administrative and operational matters and take other necessary action as delegated by the General Manager.

3.6. Other Council Officials

Other managers or specialist staff, in consultation with the Manager Community Relations and with the approval of the General Manager and relevant Director, may provide information to the media within their area of expertise and delegations on behalf of Council on Policy, administrative or operational matters as required.

Areas within Council may conduct media and/or publicity campaigns related to their events or programs in consultation and with the approval of Manager Community Relations.

Contractors and volunteers engaged by Council, and staff not otherwise delegated authority to comment to the media, must refer all media enquiries relating to Council to the Manager Community Relations through their supervisor.

Media interaction and contact

All Council Officials authorised to engage with the media in the role of Council’s Official spokespersons are to contact the Manager Community Relations for assistance and advice. The Manager Community Relations is to be advised of interview/media requests and will arrange media interviews. The Manager Community Relations will attend media interviews or photo opportunities as appropriate.

Staff members are responsible for promptly reporting all contact with the media to the Manager Community Relations (via email or phone) and must also report such contact to their manager. In the absence of the Manager Community Relations, media enquiries should be referred to the Media Officer, your Director or the General Manager.

Council Officials may be asked by the Manager Community Relations to provide information relating to their area of expertise. Any such requests should be prioritised, and the information provided in an expedient manner, within the designated deadline as requested, or as subsequently agreed.

References

- *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW)
- *Local Government (General) Regulation 2005*
- Code of Conduct
- Social Media Sites Policy

History

Minute Number	Meeting Date	Description of Change
181/2021	26 October, 2021	Adopted (resolution to adopt after public exhibition should no submissions be received – no submissions received)