



MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION POLICY

Summary:

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear direction for the release and communication of Council information between Council and the community, including through the media.

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Department	Office of General Manager
Policy Custodian	General Manager
Superseded Documents	V7.0
Related Legislation	N/A
Delegations of Authority	General Manager Director Corporate Services Director Infrastructure Services

1. Overview

This Media and Communications Policy serves to establish central points of contact, protocols and a consistent method for managing communication between Council and print, broadcast and social media, to ensure coordinated, accurate and reliable presentation.

2. Policy Principles

Council is accountable to the community for its performance and recognises the key role effective communication plays between the Council and the community. Council encourages open communication with the community with an emphasis on promoting a positive, progressive and professional image of Council and staff.

3. Policy Objectives

The objectives of this Policy are to:

- Provide clear guidelines for Councillors and staff when communicating and dealing with the media.
- Encourage a positive relationship between Council and the community, and various media outlets.
- Ensure a responsible and consistent approach to all communications and media relations.
- Protect the integrity of Council, its officers, and its image.

4. Policy Statement

All communications and information provided to the print, broadcast and web-based media by Council is to be sourced from one (1) central point within Council. The General Manager is that central point.

All communications and information are to be cleared by the General Manager. The General Manager is the point of contact between Council and the community, and Council and the media for media releases, statements, announcements and advertising and will clear all communications, media releases and advertising. (Advertisements of a technical nature, or tenders and notices seeking quotations are excluded and should be cleared by the relevant Director.)

Announcements concerning new policies or major decisions taken by Council go out under the name of the Mayor e.g. "The Mayor announced today...".

Staff approached by the media to provide an article or segment of a technical and/or specialist nature and in relation to their position at Council, must advise the General Manager that they have been approached and will be participating in an interview.

Urgent or immediate announcements occurring out of hours are to be issued by the General Manager but if unavailable, can be issued by the Director Corporate Services or Director Infrastructure Services. The Mayor is to be advised of any issue or announcement.

All procedural releases go out under the signature of the General Manager. A copy of all proposed procedural releases and advertisements should be approved and signed by the General Manager.

Media Releases and News Items

Provision to the local media of all media releases and news items prepared by the Mayor will be used to advise the community of factual issues including procedural matters, new laws or regulations, reminders and local government items of specific interest not normally covered by reporters attending Council meetings.

Generally, media releases and news items will also appear in Council's *Your Local News* (if not out of date at the time of printing), in addition to provision to other print, broadcast, web-based, and social media where appropriate. (In the last-mentioned regard, Councils' Social Media Policy 2024 also applies.)

Public Comment

Public comment can include public speaking engagements (including comments on radio and television) expressing views in letters to the press, via social media, or in books or notices where it is reasonably foreseeable that publication or circulation will enter the public domain.

Staff

While it is recognised that Council employees, as members of the community, have the right to have an opinion – staff cannot make public comment or enter into public debate on political and social issues related to Council business in the media or at public forums. The General Manager, Director Corporate Services and Director Infrastructure Services need to be sensitive to the fact that because of their responsibility and status, there could tend to be the implication that the public comment is in some way an official comment of the Council. Reference is made to Council's Code of Conduct 2020 (Part 3 – General Conduct Obligations - 3.1, 3.2, 3.3) below.

Councillors

Councillors are not permitted to comment to the print or electronic media on Council's behalf unless authorised to do so by the Mayor. Council acknowledges that as elected representatives, the media will, from time to time, call on Councillors for personal comment. In this instance, a Councillor wishing to make statements to the media must inform the journalist:

- (1) That comments are made as an individual.
- (2) That comments made do not necessarily represent the views or beliefs of Council or other Councillors.
- (3) That the matter has or has not been determined by Council.

Reference is made to Council's Code of Conduct 2020 (Part 3 – General Conduct Obligations - 3.1, 3.2, 3.3) below.

Tenterfield Shire Council - Code of Conduct 2018

Part 3 General Conduct Obligations

General Conduct

- 3.1 *You must not conduct yourself in a manner that:*
- a) *is likely to bring the council or other council officials into disrepute*
 - b) *is contrary to statutory requirements or the council's administrative requirements or policies*
 - c) *is improper or unethical*
 - d) *is an abuse of power*
 - e) *causes, comprises or involves intimidation or verbal abuse*
 - f) *involves the misuse of your position to obtain a private benefit*
 - g) *constitutes harassment or bullying behaviour under this code, or is unlawfully discriminatory.*

- 3.2 *You must act lawfully and honestly, and exercise a reasonable degree of care and diligence in carrying out your functions under the LGA or any other Act.*

Fairness and Equity

3.3 *You must consider issues consistently, promptly and fairly. You must deal with matters in accordance with established procedures, in a non-discriminatory manner.*

5. Scope

The Mayor is designated as the official spokesperson for matters determined by the full Council, external matters affecting the Council, or issues which may have a significant impact on one or more communities across the Shire.

The General Manager is the designated spokesperson for all operational and administrative matters.

6. Accountability, Roles & Responsibility

Elected Council

- As per the Code of Conduct 2020 (Part 3 – General Conduct Obligations - 3.1, 3.2, 3.3) as above.

General Manager and Directors Corporate and Infrastructure Services

- As per the Code of Conduct 2018 (Part 3 – General Conduct Obligations - 3.1, 3.2, 3.3) as above.
- In the event of an urgent media release in the absence of the General Manager, the Director Corporate Services or Director Infrastructure Services have the authority to issue such releases.

Individual Managers

- No delegation.

7. Definitions

- For the purpose of this policy, media releases are defined to include the following:
 - A written statement with or without a direct quote from an elected member or General Manager forwarded to a media outlet or published in *Your Local News*, on Council's website or Facebook Page or other official social media platform, with the intent of promotion to the general community.
 - Letters or emails forwarded to a media outlet or published on Council's website or Facebook Page or other official social media platform with the intent of publication (verbal or print) to the general community.
 - An interview with a media representative where that interview has been instigated by the Mayor or General Manager.

8. Related Documents, Standards & Guidelines

- Code of Conduct 2020
- Community Engagement Policy 1.036
- Social Media Policy 2024

9. Version Control & Change History

Version	Date	Modified by	Details
V1.0	23/10/13	Council	Adoption of Original Policy (Res No. 386/13)
V2.0	19/12/12	Council	Review/Amended (Res No. 528/12)
V3.0	26/11/08	Council	Review/Amended (Res No. 672/08)
V4.0	23/03/16	Council	Review/Amended (Res No. 51/16)
V5.0	23/08/17	Council	Review/Amended (Res No. 168/17)
V6.0	23/09/20	Council	Review/Amended (Res No. 196/20)
V7.0	21/12/22	Council	Review/Amended (Res No. 248/22)
V8.0	27/11/24	Council	Review/Amended (Res No. 190/24)