

MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

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Policy Type: Strategic

Responsible Officer: Chief Executive Officer

Department: Executive Office

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1. BACKGROUND/SCOPE

The Goondiwindi Regional Council (“Council”) recognises the importance of communicating Council initiatives, services and decisions to its key stakeholders – ratepayers, residents, community organisations, visitors, business, industry and government – through a range of media.

This policy applies to all Council employees and elected officials (the Mayor and Councillors). It also applies to contractors, volunteers and partner organisations when they are delivering services on Council’s behalf.

This Policy sets out how Council’s employees and elected officials will interact with the media (“media interactions”). It is imperative that in all interactions with the media, Council acts in a professional, coordinated manner and that all statements made and information provided are accurate, appropriate and timely.

2. PURPOSE/OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure Council openly communicates with its key stakeholders to achieve organisational transparency and accountability by providing the media with timely and accurate information.

The objectives of this Policy are to:

- Provide clear directions to Council employees and elected officials when dealing with the media;
- Encourage a positive relationship between Council and the media;
- To ensure a responsible and consistent approach to all communication with the media;
- To protect the integrity of Council and its image.

3. DEFINITIONS

Media interaction: Media interaction generally includes the following activities: providing information via media releases or statements, letters to the editor, responding to media enquiries over the phone and via email, interviews or briefings, comments on talkback radio, addressing a seminar or conference where the media are present.

Media: all forms of published content such as newspapers, radio, television and online (including social media) and all organisations involved in publishing media content including freelancers.

Media release: For the purpose of this Policy, media release is defined to include the following:

- A written statement with or without a direct quote from an elected official or Chief Executive Officer forwarded to a media outlet or published on a website, with the intent of promotion to the general community;
- Letters or emails forwarded to a media outlet or published on a website, with the intent of publication (verbal or print) to the general community;
- An interview with a media representative where that interview has been instigated in accordance with this Policy.

4. POLICY NOT TO APPLY

This policy does not apply to:

- any paid or unpaid advertisement or notice generated by Council employee's as part of council's daily operational activities including general promotion and information news items provided to media outlets as part of the organisation's broader communications strategy; and
- internal publications.

5. POLICY STATEMENT

5.1 Spokesman Responsibilities

- The Mayor (and Councillors when specifically authorised by the Mayor) is the official spokesman to the media for matters determined by the full Council, external matters affecting Council, or issues which may have a significant impact on one or more communities of the Council region;
- The Chief Executive Officer is the designated spokesman to the media for administrative matters; and
- The Councillor in charge of a particular portfolio ("portfolio holder") or their delegate is the designated spokesman to the media for matters directly relating to that specific portfolio's activities or operational activities of the portfolio and provided for in Council's annual budget.

5.2 Spokesman Delegation

- The Chief Executive Officer, at his discretion, may authorise Departmental Directors to speak with the media on matters specifically relating to Departmental operations for the purpose of clarification of facts;
- The Mayor, at his discretion, may authorise the Deputy Mayor, or another Councillor to be the Council spokesman for a particular matter where the Mayor would otherwise be the spokesman in accordance with this Policy;
- No other Council employee or contractor may speak to the media on behalf of the Council, unless requested to do so by the Chief Executive Officer;
- Any requests received by Council employees directly from the media should be referred to the Chief Executive Officer or Mayor.

5.3 Media Releases

- Media releases will generally be initiated by the Mayor to deal with matters of significance/interest from Council meetings, and will usually feature quotes;
- The Mayor or Chief Executive Officer must approve all media releases issued. Councillors who wish to initiate a Council media release must first obtain approval from the Mayor, and the media release must be authorised by the Mayor prior to release. Council employees who wish to initiate a Council media release must first obtain approval from the Chief Executive Officer and the media release must be authorised by the Chief Executive Officer prior to release;
- Media releases for issue by Council will not be approved where the content is expressing a view different from an agreed Council position on any matter;
- The Chief Executive Officer may, at his discretion, delegate approval of media releases to a Departmental Director on occasion;
- All media releases generated on behalf of, or quoting the Mayor or portfolio holder must also be approved by the Mayor and portfolio holder; and
- Unless approved by the Mayor or Chief Executive Officer, only media releases formulated in accordance with this Policy will be released by Council.

5.4 Communication Team

Council's Communication Team shall be responsible for:

- The coordination of contact/media interaction with the media;
- The distribution of authorised Media releases;
- Managing and filtering media enquiries;
- Coordinating media interviews;
- Coordinating media kits and background material;
- Liaising with appropriate Council employees to coordinate a response to media issues;
- Relaying approved information to media outlet; and
- Alerting the Chief Executive Officer and Mayor to sensitive or controversial media issues relevant to Council.

5.5 Protocols

- Journalists shall be treated respectfully and courteously by Council employees and elected officials at all times;
- Media responses should always be "on the record";
- Media responses must not include disparaging comments about other organisations or individuals;
- Personal or contact details of Council employees, elected officials or other individuals must not be provided to the media without prior consent;
- The release of any information shall remain consistent with the *Information Privacy Act(Qld) 2009* and the provisions of the *Local Government Act (Qld) 2009*, in particular section 171 relating to the use of information from Councillors; and
- Council employees shall advise the Communications Team or the Mayor of likely events, announcements or issues that may attract media interest, and ensure the information provided is accurate.

6. REVIEW DATE

May 2024

7. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Council's Social Media Policy