

**Media and Public Relations
Policy 2021
POL047**



Policy No:	POL047
Policy Title:	Media and Public Relations Policy
Section Responsible:	Communications
Minute No/Ref:	562438
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1. INTENT

Council requires positive relationships with the media for many reasons:

- how Council and Narrandera Shire are portrayed in the media impacts greatly on how the organisation and the Shire are perceived
- the media is a strong ally in many situations, including assistance with the promotion of Council programs, events and initiatives
- in times of crisis when information needs to be conveyed to the public, such as during severe storms and bushfires.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all Councillors, Council employees, agents and contractors (including temporary contractors), administrators appointed under Section 256 of the Local Government Act 1993 (NSW), members of Council committees, conduct reviewers, delegates of Council, work experience employees and volunteers of the Council.

3. OBJECTIVE

- To establish clear roles, responsibilities and rules for all Narrandera Shire Council representatives when dealing with media and public relations' opportunities.
- To foster positive and effective relationships with media representatives and utilise the media to its full advantage in promoting the efforts of Council and its achievements, Narrandera Shire's liveability and supporting tourism and commercial business activity.
- To deal openly and effectively with controversial, crisis and sensitive information, while maintaining confidentiality where appropriate.
- To ensure coordinated, accurate and up to date information is provided.

- To continue building a positive and professional public image for Narrandera Shire Council and to educate the community on the role of Council.
- To encourage open communication with the community and improve communication within the organisation.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

Proactive media relations and well managed public relations are essential if Narrandera Shire Council is to achieve its strategic outcomes in relation to improving resident satisfaction with Council. Council will consistently promote Council's key messages and corporate priorities through news releases, social media and other proactive and reactive media and public relations activity.

While Council will always seek to provide good news stories for the media, it is equally important that media enquiries from a journalist or reporter are responded to in an appropriate and timely manner, and within the required deadline wherever possible and reasonable.

5. PROVISIONS

5.1 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Major announcements will only be released by the Communications Officer to maximise the media and marketing potential for Council as an organisation and/or Narrandera Shire.

5.2 MEDIA ENQUIRIES AND REQUESTS

All requests for comments from the media are to be directed to the Communications Officer to ensure the correct Council representative is commenting on Council matters.

- All media interviews are to be coordinated by the Communications Officer.

5.3 RESPONDING TO MEDIA ENQUIRIES AND REQUESTS

Responding to media requests for information and interviews will take into account staff availability and time constraints of both Council staff and media.

- It is an expectation that a sufficient amount of detail and context will be provided at the time of the request to enable an appropriate and informed response by Council.
- Council staff who receive requests direct from media representatives are to decline to comment and report the request to the Communications Officer.
- All official spokespersons are to ensure they do not defame or slander another person either verbally or through the written word, that they do not misrepresent Council, that they do not release unauthorised material and that they comply with the Code of Conduct at all times.

5.4 TRAINING

Official spokespersons are to be offered media training.

5.5 BREACHES

Councillors and staff members may expose themselves to legal actions or sanctions under these requirements unless complying with this policy and procedure.

- Breaches of this policy will be addressed in accordance with Council's Code of Conduct and Council's Disciplinary Policy.

6. DEFINITIONS

- **High profile:** issues which have generated a high media profile and therefore strong community interest (may not be related to Council business).
- **Media:** official, registered publications and official, registered online news sites e.g. Newspapers, magazines, journals, websites, social media, advertising, radio, television, digital media and journalists.
- **Online material:** all of Council's online material including the websites and social media presence.
- **Operational:** issues relating to the day to day running of Council that are not deemed to be political or likely to come before the Council.
- **Political:** issues pertaining to decisions of Council and or Council policy.
- **Public relations material:** official speeches, promotional literature, website content.
- **Technical expertise:** the underlying knowledge and skills that are necessary to carry out duties or complete a task.
- **Topical:** issues which are current and of a local interest (not necessarily related to Council business).

7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

7.1 MAYOR

- The Mayor is the official spokesperson on political issues, policy issues, topical issues or issues that have generated high media interest. If unavailable, delegate to the Deputy Mayor.
- The Mayor will give final approval for all media releases, which quote him/her directly.

7.2 COUNCILLORS

- Councillors may provide media comment as private individuals, identifying that it is provided as their own opinion and not representing the official position of Council. When commenting on a decision of Council, Councillors shall reference the resolution as carried by council to provide context to their comment.
- Councillors are encouraged to seek the assistance of the General Manger prior to making public statements to ensure the information is factually accurate.

- Councillors have the right to establish their own social media presence as a member of the governing body and as a representative of the community in accordance with the parameters of Narrandera Shire Council's Social Media Policy.

7.3 GENERAL MANAGER

- The General Manager is the official spokesperson on all operational and administration issues. The General Manager may nominate specialist members of staff to respond to technical questions on operational issues only. This may include a joint approach with the Mayor or a Manager.
- The General Manager approves all media releases.
- The General Manager and the Mayor will confer as to who is the most appropriate person to speak to the media when issues cross over political and operational lines.

7.4 DEPUTY GENERAL MANAGERS AND MANAGERS

- Managers may provide media comment on issues within their portfolio as delegated by the General Manager.
- Managers and designated staff are to make themselves or a member of their team available to brief the Mayor and General Manager on any technical issues relating to a particular media issue.
- Managers are to pro-actively prepare media releases, identify opportunities public relations, prepare written and imagery content and participate in digital medias including videos for social media channels.
- Managers are responsible for approving all website content before it is uploaded to the live site.

7.5 COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

- The Communications Officer is responsible for coordinating responses and providing information to the media on behalf of Council and organising media/photo opportunities and preparing speeches for the Mayor.
- The Communications Officer is responsible for distributing all written media comment to media outlets and placing all media onto the website and social media platforms where required.
- The Communications Officer may provide information to the media which is freely available to any member of the public. The information will be provided in order to improve or clarify the media's understanding of issues.
- The Communications Officer can comment to the media within the delegated areas of responsibility as defined by the Position Description of this position.
- The Communications Officer should be advised of all media contacts and requests for information on Council matters to ensure a consistent message and representation of Council is given. This will also allow for the adequate monitoring of media coverage.

- The Communications Officer is responsible for the over-arching management of content on Council's website, ensuring responsible officers who are delegated specific pages maintain and update their content contribution.

7.6 DESIGNATED DEPARTMENTAL STAFF

- Designated staff in each department will be responsible for ensuring the website content and approved social media content, related to their activities, is kept up to date and is relevant to the needs of the community.
- Designated staff will ensure all promotional material and presentations are of a high standard of professional content and format.
- In some circumstances, including if a specific request is made by the media, Council staff may participate in photographs and media articles or interviews. Prior approval must be granted from the General Manager.
- Outdoor and external staff approached by the media for information on the job/project on which they are working, should refer those inquiries to their immediate supervisor who should then advise the relevant manager. Should the manager be unavailable, supervisors should notify the Communications Officer.

7.7 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SECTION

- The IT Section is responsible for maintaining the technical aspects of approved Council websites.

8. RELATED LEGISLATION

- Copyright Act 1879
- Defamations Act, 2005
- Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009
- Privacy and Personal Information Act, 1988

9. RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

- Code of Conduct
- ES310 Community Engagement Policy
- POL018 Websites Policy
- POL056 Social Media Policy
- POL070 Disciplinary Policy

10. VARIATION

Council reserves the right to review, vary or revoke this policy in accordance with legislation, regulation and award changes, where applicable. Council may also make changes to this policy and the relevant procedures from time-to-time to improve the effectiveness of its operation.

11. PREVIOUS VERSIONS

Reference to a superseded policy number and/or name is also considered a reference to the new policy number. This policy was previously named:

- SPOD20 Communications and Media Policy
- ES250 Media and Public Relations Policy

POLICY HISTORY

Responsible Officer	Communications Officer		
Approved by	General Manager		
Approval Date	22 June 2021		
GM Signature <i>(Authorised staff to insert signature)</i>			
Next Review	1 June 2024		
Version Number	Endorsed by ELT	Endorsed by Council	Date signed by GM
1 Adopted	-	29/04/1997	29/04/1997
2 Reviewed	-	12/12/2006	17/01/2007
3 Reviewed	-	17/02/2009	17/02/2009
4 Reviewed	30/06/2014	19/08/2014	17/09/2014
5 Reviewed	1/04/2019	16/07/2019	5/08/2019
6 Reviewed	8/06/2021	-	22/06/2021

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12. Acknowledgement of Training Received

I hereby acknowledge that I have received, read and understood a copy of Council's Media and Public Relations Policy.	
Employee Name	
Position Title	
Signature	
Date	