



MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY

DOCUMENT VERSION CONTROL

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PURPOSE

The policy provides the framework for Councillors and staff to promote positive coverage of Council affairs that is fair, correct and consistent.

OBJECTIVES

- Ensure all communication with the media is reliable, balanced, informed, timely, professional and correct
- Clearly determine Council's authorised spokespersons
- Ensure responsibility for information provided
- Manage and enhance Council's reputation
- Effectively promote Council's services, programs and objectives
- Provide clear information about Council's decisions
- Limit the possibility of inaccurate information, miscommunication and reputational risk

SCOPE

This policy applies to all Elected Members and Council staff, including volunteers and contractors.

This policy applies to all interaction with external news media.

DEFINITIONS

Media – refers to all mainstream external news channels, including newspapers, radio, television, online news services and magazines. It does not refer to blogs and social networking tools and forums (refer to Council's Social Media Policy).

Council – Narromine Shire Council

Elected Members – refers to Mayor and Councillors

Caretaker Period – refers to the 40 days preceding a Local Government election

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

Local Government Act 1993
Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994
Privacy Act 1998
State Records Act 1998

RELATED POLICIES/PROCEDURES

Council's Code of Conduct and Procedures
Council's Social Media Policy

POLICY STATEMENT

1. Council Official Spokespersons

Mayor

The Mayor is the official spokesperson for Council on all the decisions of Council.

The role of the Mayor as spokesperson for Council is to:-

- Clearly articulate and explain the deliberations and decisions of Council
- Positively represent Council as a decisive and responsible governing body
- Promote partnerships between Council and key stakeholders
- Promote Council's services, programs and objectives
- Protect Council's reputation from harm caused by negative events or incorrect information to the media

Matters of significant government policy must be referred to Council prior to providing public comment.

The Mayor may nominate another Councillor to speak on a particular matter.

Deputy Mayor

In the absence of the Mayor or at the request of the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor may be the official spokesperson on all decisions of Council. This applies to any Councillor who may be appointed Acting Mayor in the absence of both the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

General Manager

The General Manager is the official spokesperson for Council on all operational or employee related matters.

The General Manager may authorise staff to provide official comment to the media about operational issues on behalf of Council.

Comments are to be limited to factual information, not opinion or supposition.

The General Manager is responsible for releasing any information to the media about an emergency situation.

2. Media Management for Councillors

Individual Councillors are entitled to express independent views through the media, however they must make it clear that any unofficial comment is their personal view and does not represent a position adopted by Council.

When a Councillor is delegated by the Mayor to speak on behalf of Council they must express and support Council's entire policy on the issue at hand and comply with the role of Official Spokesperson as per Item 1.

3. Media Communication Standards

Elected Members, the General Manager, and authorised staff members must ensure that media communication is timely, accurate, and fair, and complies with legislation and Council requirements and policies.

Specifically it must not:-

- bring Council, Councillors or Council staff into disrepute
- be defamatory
- divulge information which is confidential

4. Media Communication During Caretaker Period

Media releases or Council publications during the caretaker period must be of public interest relating to the day to day management of Council and must not be able to reasonably be considered as being for political purposes. Media releases or publications during the caretaker period will not make reference to Councillors or carry their images or statements.

Mayoral columns will not be published during the caretaker period.

Media events may be held during the caretaker period provided they relate to core Council business, or an ongoing project, and are not used for political purposes.

5. Recordkeeping

It is the responsibility of the official spokesperson to ensure that accurate records of any media communication on behalf of Council are retained in Council's electronic document records management system.