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Media Policy

Policy Number: POL13/21 • **Adopted:** [Click here to enter date] • **Minute Number:** [Click here to enter Minute number] • **File:** 20898E • **Produced By:** General Manager's Group • **Review Date:** 01/12/2016

1. INTRODUCTION

Shoalhaven City Council encourages open and transparent communication with the media as a way of engendering trust within the local community.

As such, it is important that both Councillors and staff place a strong emphasis on promoting a positive, progressive and professional public image through their interaction with the media.

This Policy has been designed to provide staff and Councillors with a consistent framework for the provision of media comment in relation to Council.

2. PURPOSE

The key objective of this Policy is to provide a framework which will allow Shoalhaven City Council to maintain integrity and create a positive public image within the community.

To achieve this Council undertakes to -

- Allow for the proactive distribution of media releases, promotional material, speeches, interviews and other literature designed to boost Council's profile.
- Provide an established framework for managing communication between Council and media with the aim of ensuring a timely, coordinated, fact based and accurate response to inquiries.
- Clearly indicate Council's authorised spokespeople.
- Limit the possibility of miscommunication and reputation risk.

3. STATEMENT

3.1. Scope

This Policy applies to all Councillors (inclusive of the Mayor) and all Council staff.

4. PROVISIONS

4.1. Authorised spokespersons

The Mayor and General Manager will remain the designated spokespersons for Council matters as defined within Council's Code of Conduct.

Councillors who are chairpersons of boards are able to make comment on matters pertaining to issues arising from these committees.

If a Councillor is delegated by the Mayor to speak on behalf of Council, they must fully support Council's stance on this matter.

Councillors have the right to express their own personal opinion and will ensure that any opinion expressed is acknowledged as being their own stance and not that of Council.

When Councillors do speak at a personal level they must not misrepresent Council's position or the facts.

The General Manager will be the spokesperson for operational matters and may authorise Directors or authorised Council staff to speak on his behalf.

The General Manager has authorised certain staff positions to make public comment - the list of these positions can be found on Council's intranet page.

Holders of these positions should only make official comment on behalf of Council on such issues that directly relate to the responsibilities of their position.

Authorised Council spokespersons will -

- Refer a media inquiry to the General Manager or relevant Director if the issue is viewed as being sensitive or outside of Council Policy.
- Have regard to Council's Code of Conduct in making factual and accurate comments to the media. Spokespersons must give full regard to Council's reputation, fellow staff and members of the community when answering an inquiry.
- Avoid providing 'off the record' information to journalists. It is best to assume all information will be published.
- Provide timely replies to requests for information from members of the media with due regard for media deadlines.
- Provide an overview of all media comment to the Media Manager immediately following the answering of an inquiry.

No Council staff member, other than those authorised by the General Manager, are to provide media comment.

4.2. Media literature

The Media Manager shall remain responsible for the flow of media information between Council and the community.

Media releases, media alerts, announcements and all other forms of communiqué will not be issued without the knowledge and prior consent of both the Media Manager and relevant Section Manager.

Issues that are deemed to be of a 'sensitive nature' to the organisation will also require sign off by the General Manager or relevant Director. The decision to seek the GM's approval prior to distribution remains at the discretion of the Media Manager.

Staff wishing to provide members of the media with a release must forward all relevant information to the Media Manager in advance of the required distribution date.

All staff should remain conscious of positive media stories and be proactive in forwarding relevant information to the Media Manager.

The Media Manager remains the direct contact for Council's social media channels as outlined within Council's Social Media Policy.

4.3. Media Strategy

When Council is faced with an issue that has the potential to create significant media interest, the Media Manager is responsible for the preparation of a strategy to guide the handling of the matter.

The strategy will include a planned timeline, communication objectives and a listing of potential risks along with planned media responses, advice to staff, spokesperson responsibilities and the development of press releases.

5. IMPLEMENTATION

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6. REVIEW

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7. APPLICATION OF ESD PRINCIPLES

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