



COMMUNICATION & MEDIA POLICY

POLICY TYPE	DOCUMENT CONTROLLER	RESPONSIBLE MANAGER	POLICY ADOPTED	REVIEW DUE
Council	Executive Coordinator	Chief Executive Officer*	27 October 2025	October 2027
PURPOSE	<p>The purpose of this Policy is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all communication with the media is consistent, fact based, well informed, timely, professional and appropriate; • Clearly identify authorised spokespersons of Council; • Improve communication with the community, including a focus on the pillars of accessibility, inclusivity and respect; • Establish consistent methods for managing (including initiation and response) and monitoring communication; • Ensure communication is lawful and does not breach copyright, defamation or other relevant laws, including those relating to Council's Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy, and the safety and well-being of children and young people; • Managing media and communication during times of crises and emergencies. 			
SCOPE	<p>This Policy applies to councillors, staff, committee members, volunteers and contractors of Council, and applies when acting in an official capacity on behalf of Council or where association with the Council is referred to or implied in a personal capacity.</p>			
DEFINITIONS	<p>For the purposes of this Policy, the following definitions apply:</p> <p>Authorised Person – A person authorised to provide consent to speak to the media, or to speak to the media on behalf of Council. For Council's communication means the Chief Executive Officer (meaning the General Manager of a council appointed under section 61 of the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i>), Deputy CEO or an Executive Manager.</p> <p>Media – print, broadcast (television and radio), online and social media.</p> <p>Media comment – A public statement, response, or communication made through various media channels. These comments typically address issues related to council policies, decisions, or events affecting the local community.</p> <p>Media Release – An official written communication or announcement distributed to the media by a local government entity. Its primary purpose is to inform the public about significant actions, decisions, events, or developments related to local governance.</p> <p>Official or Authorised Spokesperson – The Mayor is legislated as the official spokesperson of Council under the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i>. A Councillor, the Chief Executive Officer, Deputy CEO, Executive</p>			

	<p>Manager or staff member may be authorised as a spokesperson.</p> <p>Consent must be considered for each and every instance of communication with the media and is not to be assumed nor considered perpetual.</p> <p>Social Media – web-based technology, such as Facebook, X, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube, that allows for an exchange of dialogue between organisations, communities and individuals.</p>
<p>POLICY</p>	<p>1. Media Liaison</p> <p>Section 27 of the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> details that the Mayor acts as the principal spokesperson of Council.</p> <p>In the absence of the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor will be Council's official spokesperson (or a fellow Councillor if appropriate or the Chief Executive Officer if the matter relates to policy or operational matters).</p> <p>Councillors and staff must only disclose information that is publicly available, unless they have express approval to release the information (i.e. when new or exclusive information is approved for official dissemination, generally via a Media Release), and are not to disclose information that is confidential in nature.</p> <p>Consultation with the Chief Executive Officer or Deputy CEO should be undertaken to avoid any doubt as to whether the information is permitted to be communicated.</p> <p>If Councillors or staff suspect an issue may result in a negative perception of Council, Councillors should discuss this concern with the Chief Executive Officer, and staff with their immediate manager, who will escalate the issue to the attention of the Chief Executive Officer.</p> <p>2. Media Releases</p> <p>Media releases are an effective way to inform the media and thereby community. Media releases may be used as a proactive method for communicating information or reactively in response to providing accuracy and clarification on Council matters.</p> <p>A media release should not be issued quoting a Councillor or member of staff without that person's prior knowledge and approval. Staff with specialist knowledge may be quoted in media releases with the permission of the relevant authorised person.</p> <p>3. Speaking to the Media (including Media Comment/Requests)</p> <p>Council staff are encouraged to cooperate with media outlets subject to the guidelines of this Policy.</p> <p>Staff, who have been authorised to liaise with the media, should avoid providing “off the record” comments or information during media interviews. It is best to assume that everything said or communicated to the media will be considered public information.</p> <p>Staff must ensure that they comply with both the Staff Code of Conduct Policy and this Policy at all times.</p>

4. Responding to Criticism

Formal complaints about media content to media outlets should be made via the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer.

Unless authorised staff should not write to media outlets (including editorial forums) in reply to published correspondence that is critical of Council, Council staff or Council policy, process or decisions.

5. Emergency Management/Crisis Communication

In the event of an emergency or crisis in the municipal area, Council staff will refer to the Business Continuity Plan and the Business Continuity Critical Business Functions Sub Plan, which outlines Council's communication responsibilities and methods of and timeframes for response.

Councillors, staff and other Council officials must not provide comment or information to the media that is inconsistent with official advice issued by the Council and any other agency coordinating the emergency response.

6. Social Media

Councillors must comply with the requirements of this Policy when communicating via social media platforms.

Councillors are not authorised to speak on behalf of the Council unless explicitly directed by the Mayor.

When engaging in social media activity, Councillors must clearly state that any views expressed are their own, ensuring there is no confusion as to what capacity they are speaking in (and will only speak on behalf of Council were authorised).

Each Councillor is responsible for managing their own official social media platforms, and due to the nature of their role, should adhere to the principles of higher standard than that would be expected of the general public. This includes ensuring that their online behaviour does not negatively impact the Council's reputation or that of local government collectively.

Councillors must also understand what constitutes a public record and appropriately manage and record social media posts that constitute public records.

Confidentiality must be maintained relating to any information obtained through their role that is not publicly available and not communicated via social media.

Councillors must not undermine the positions of fellow councillors or staff in their social media posts, nor should they attempt to unduly influence others or erode public confidence in the Council's processes.

Councillors should recognise that expressing personal opinions on public matters on social media might compromise, or be perceived to compromise, their ability to perform their duties impartially.

Councillors must also ensure that they comply with the provisions of the *Local Government Act 1993*, pertaining to the Councillor Code of Conduct when engaging on social media in their capacity as Councillor.

	<p>Council staff must ensure they comply with the requirements pertaining to social media use detailed in this Policy, and also the Staff Code of Conduct, and ensure matters of confidentiality are respected.</p> <p>Council staff must also be mindful when posting in their capacity as a private citizen, where their association with Council (via their employment) may imply that the post/ comment etc relates to their role with Council and may be viewed as a "Council position" on a matter or subject.</p> <p>7. Non-Compliance In respect of media liaison and general communication (including social media), Councillors must ensure they conduct themselves in line with the Code of Conduct, Council Policy and the expected behaviours of the role of Councillor.</p> <p>Staff representing Council must conduct themselves at all times as a representative of Council and in accordance with other Council policies, including the Staff Code of Conduct.</p>
LEGISLATION AND RELATED DOCUMENTS	<p><i>Local Government Act 1993</i> Staff Code of Conduct Policy Councillor Code of Conduct Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy <i>Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act 2023</i></p>
ATTACHMENTS (IF APPLICABLE)	N/A
STRATEGIC REFERENCE	5.3 Council looks to employ best practice governance, risk and financial management
MINUTE REFERENCE	25/193
OFFICE USE ONLY	Update Register Y Training/Communication Y
	Advise Document Controller Y Advise HR / MCO Y
	<p>Management Sign Off:</p>  <p>Date: 27 October 2025</p>