

Media Policy

Leadership

1.2 Council communicates and engages with the community in a diverse, open and inclusive way

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Responsible Business Unit	Media and Communications
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1. Objectives

The objectives of this Policy are:

- To clearly identify Council's authorised spokespersons.
- To promote a coordinated, professional and consistent approach to media liaison.
- To promote positive media relationships.

2. Policy Statement

Council is committed to engaging with its local community and recognises the important role media plays in communicating with the community we serve.

It is important that Council builds on its relationship with the media and the community while continuing to provide accurate, timely, informative and interesting content in line with Council's vision and values.

This Policy applies to all media comment and activity on behalf of Council. Additional requirements relating to Social Media is covered by the Social Media Policy.

2.1 Statements to the Media

Statements relating to Council business and policy can be made to the media by:

- the Mayor;
- a Councillor nominated by the Mayor;
- the General Manager;
- the Coordinator Media and Communications.

In accordance with section 226 of the *Local Government Act 1993*, the Mayor is the principal spokesperson for the governing body, including representing the views of the Council as to its local priorities.

The Mayor and his/her Councillor delegates may comment on matters relating to the business of Council or Council decisions. Comments are to be made on behalf of Council.

Councillors have the right to express personal opinion but must ensure they clarify that any views expressed may not represent the official position or opinion of Council.


For operational matters, the General Manager (or delegate) will be the official spokesperson.

Councillors and staff of Council will not provide comment on staff matters. Any queries in relation to staff matters must be directed to the General Manager.

Authorised persons are entitled to decline comment.

Staff and Councillors are entitled to provide comment in their capacity as a resident of the Wingecarribee Shire however staff and Councillors must:

- ensure it is clear that views expressed are their own;
- not say anything that would bring Council into disrepute;
- not act in a way that compromises their professional duties;

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- ensure any comment provided is based on fact and is not speculative;
 - ensure any comment is not perceived to be an official comment on behalf of Council where you have not been authorised to make such a comment;
 - ensure any confidential information is not divulged;
 - not say anything that has the potential to have a negative impact on your working relationships within the Council or with external parties;
 - not say anything that has the capacity to damage the Council's reputation or contains content about the Council that may be misleading, speculative or deceptive;
 - not say anything that breaches the code of conduct.

2.2 Media releases and alerts, Articles, Columns and Newsletters

Council's Coordinator Media and Communications is responsible for preparing and distributing all media releases, media alerts, articles, columns and newsletters.

All media releases, media alerts, articles, columns and newsletters must be approved by the General Manager prior to release.

2.3 Response to media enquiries

Council will only proactively engage with accredited journalists or members of the Press. Council reserves the right to exercise its discretion when liaising with non-accredited representatives.

Recognised media organisations and their representatives will be treated equally and without bias.

All media enquiries should be directed to the Coordinator Media and Communications in the first instance.

Media enquiries are to be dealt with by Media and Communications staff promptly and truthfully.

Any Council staff contacted by the media must not provide any comment and refer the enquiry to the Coordinator Media and Communications.

Council reserves the right to not comment on any matter at its discretion.

2.4 Personal views of Councillors

Councillors must uphold and accurately represent the policies and decisions of the Council's governing body but may explain why they voted on a matter in the way that they did (see section 232(1)(f) of the *Local Government Act 1993*).

2.5 Confidential information

As specified by the *Local Government Act 1993*, Councillors and staff must not disclose or distribute material classified as confidential in briefing sessions or in reports presented to Council.



3. Scope

This Policy applies to:

- all Councillors, committee members, Council employees, contractors and volunteers;
- circumstances when authorised spokespersons are required to make comment or provide background information to media regarding Council business;
- circumstances when Council wishes to engage with the media or community to release information relating to Council business;
- all comment to media regarding Council business and policy.

4. Responsibilities

Responsibilities for the implementation of this Policy are shared as follows.

4.1 Councillors

Councillors shall:

- provide leadership in adhering to the requirements of this Policy.

4.2 Executive

The Executive shall:

- lead staff (either directly or through delegated authority) in their understanding of and compliance with this Policy and related documents.

4.3 Coordinator Media and Communications

The Coordinator Media and Communications shall:

- provide guidance to Councillors, Executive and other Council staff as to the content and implementation of this Policy;
- ensure the timely review of this Policy; and
- assist in investigations of alleged non-compliance with this Policy.

4.4 Group Managers and Managers

Group Manager and Managers shall:

- provide guidance to Council staff within their respective branches as to the content and implementation of this Policy, seeking guidance from the policy owner as required.

4.5 Council staff

Council staff shall:

- adhere to this Policy and the responsibilities set out in related documents.

5. Definitions

For the purpose of this Policy:

Media

means all media outlets including television, radio and print media, and internet publishers. It does not include social media, which is covered by the Social Media Policy.

6. Related Material

6.1 Related Legislation

The following legislative materials are related to this Policy:

- *Copyright Act 1979*
- *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*
- *Local Government Act 1993*
- *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*

6.2 Related Documents

The following documents are related to this Policy:

- Code of Conduct
- Community Engagement Policy, 2019
- Community Engagement Strategy, 2014
- Communications Strategy, 2014
- Social Media Policy

7. Non-compliance with this Policy

Non-compliance with this Policy should be reported to the General Manager who will investigate and determine the appropriate course of action.

8. Document Control

8.1 Version Control

Version	Adoption Date	Notes
1.0	11 April 2018	Initial adoption of document
2.0 (this version)	8 December 2021	Limits authority to talk to the media and make public comment to authorised spokespersons, removes references to social media which are now covered in separate policy, removes media membership requirement and removes procedural references

Approved by:

WINGECARRIBEE SHIRE COUNCIL

8 December 2021