

Media Management Policy

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Responsible Officer:	Corporate Communications Officer	Date Approved:	20/11/2024
Review Officer:	Chief Executive Officer	Review Due:	20/10/2028
Author:	Corporate Communications Officer	Commencement:	20/11/2024

1. PURPOSE

The Mareeba Shire Council is committed to providing timely, accurate and consistent information about relevant issues to the community.

The media, which encompasses both traditional and emerging channels, is an avenue through which this can occur, however, it is important that any communication with the media is appropriately managed to ensure Council's corporate integrity and a positive public image is maintained.

The intent of this policy is to provide a principled approach to ensure all media releases, statements and enquiries relating to Mareeba Shire Council are managed professionally and appropriately.

The Media Management Policy aims:

- To promote good governance consistent with local government principles.¹
- To ensure consistency is applied by Councillors and staff in all dealings with the media.
- To mitigate risk associated with release of inaccurate or inconsistent information to the media.
- To clearly declare Council's authorised spokespersons.
- To assign appropriate authorisation and responsibility for the information provided.
- To ensure that all media releases, statements and enquiries concerning Mareeba Shire Council issues are appropriately and professionally managed.

Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action being taken, up to and including termination of employment, engagement or contract.²

2. SCOPE

This policy applies across Council.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

AUTHORISED SPOKESPERSONS

The Mayor and Chief Executive Officer are the official spokespersons for Council. The Mayor and/or Chief Executive Officer may delegate Councillors, Directors, Managers or staff to act as a spokesperson for the Council when appropriate.

¹ See *Local Government Act 2009* (Qld) s 4.

² See *Misconduct and Discipline Policy* (MSC); *Misconduct and Discipline Procedure* (MSC).

The Mayor is the official spokesperson for all matters relating to Council policy and decision-making and is the only Councillor authorised to make official public comment in relation to Council's overall operations. The Mayor is also responsible for communicating Council's political responses and advocacy initiatives to the community.

The Chief Executive Officer is the official Council spokesperson on all matters relating to Council's operations including staff, administration, industrial matters and during any caretaker period.

CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

The Corporate Communications Officer is an authorised spokesperson of Council and will co-ordinate all media responses and liaise with the media on behalf of Council. The Corporate Communications Officer will issue media releases and statements that have been authorised by the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer. The Corporate Communications Officer will not engage in any media activity that is deemed by the Chief Executive Officer to be specifically for the personal advantage of any elected member or staff member.

COUNCIL EMPLOYEES

Council employees may speak to the media, write Letters to the Editor or engage with social media platforms as private individuals with the following restrictions:

- They do not comment, either directly or indirectly on Council matters, i.e. Council operations, business activities, Council decisions or policies;
- They do not comment, either directly or indirectly on matters concerning elected members or members of staff;
- They do not identify themselves as Council employees;
- Their comments are not representative of official Council position or policy;
- Their comments do not bring Council into disrepute.³

Where staff members receive an enquiry from the media, they are not to respond directly to the request unless authorised to do so. The request must be directed to the Corporate Communications Officer. The Corporate Communications Officer will determine the nature of the enquiry and the most appropriate method of response and will liaise with relevant staff and undertake any research necessary to prepare a response. Directors, managers and staff should make themselves available to answer enquiries from media where such enquiries affect an immediate area of operations and such answers should be confined to operational issues in alignment with current Council Policy.

Where the Corporate Communications Officer is absent, media requests should be forwarded to the Chief Executive Officer.

All new employees are to be made aware of Council's *Media Management Policy* as a component of the staff induction process.

CONSULTANTS AND CONTRACTORS

³ See *Social Media Policy* (MSC) s 4.1.

Consultants or contractors appointed by the Council to a Council project must comply with the *Media Management Policy*. If approached by the media on a Council project, the consultant or contractor is to direct the enquiry to the Corporate Communications Officer.

Where a media release or statement is being prepared by a consultant, contractor or another organisation which relates to a Council project or a project in which Council is involved, the relevant preparing Council officer is to ensure that a copy of the draft release is provided to the Corporate Communications Officer to ensure appropriate Council input and endorsement.

4. REPORTING

As a matter of courtesy, copies of news articles, TV reports, talkback radio and social media posts that mention or relate to Mareeba Shire Council are forwarded to the Mayor, Councillors, Executive Management Team and other relevant staff.

5. DEFINITIONS

Council – means the Mareeba Shire Council including all elected representatives, employees, contractors, volunteers, a Standing or Joint Standing Committee, committee members and any entity under direct Council ownership, management, sponsorship or financial control.

Media – is the primary means of mass communication (broadcasting, publishing, and the Internet) regarded collectively.

Social media – means tools such as websites and applications that allow users to create and share content and to participate in social networking. Social media may include but is not limited to:

- social networks, such as Facebook and LinkedIn
- media sharing networks, such as Snapchat, Instagram, and YouTube
- bookmarking and content curation networks, such as Pinterest
- corporate networks, such as Microsoft Teams, Skype for Business
- micro-blogging networks, such as Twitter and Tumblr

Post – means any shared or created content put on social media.

6. RELATED DOCUMENTS AND REFERENCES

Councillor Code of Conduct (MSC)

Employee Code of Conduct (MSC)

Local Government Act 2009 (Qld)

Misconduct and Discipline Policy (MSC)

Misconduct and Discipline Procedure (MSC)

Social Media Policy (MSC)

7. REVIEW

It is the responsibility of the Corporate Communications Officer to monitor the adequacy of this policy and implement and approve appropriate changes. This policy will be formally reviewed every four (4) years or as required by Council.