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Media Relations - Council Policy

Effective Date	5 May 2010
Policy Owner	Executive Services - Communication and Marketing Manager
Link to Corporate Plan	Strategic Theme 1: Effective and Inclusive Governance
Review Date	July 2018
Related Legislation	Local Government Act 2009
Related Documents	Councillors as Portfolio Spokespersons External Social Media - Council Policy Staff Code of Conduct

Policy Version	Approval Date	Adopted/Approved
1	05/05/ 2010	Adopted Ordinary Meeting of Council
2	22/02/2012	Approved Ordinary Meeting of Council
3	20/08/2014	Approved Ordinary Meeting of Council
4	20/07/2016	Approved Ordinary Meeting of Council

*This policy may not be current as Council regularly reviews and updates its policies. The latest controlled version can be found in the policies section of Council's intranet or Website. **A hard copy of this electronic document is uncontrolled.***



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1. PURPOSE

Western Downs Regional Council recognises media relations as an important tool for effective communication of Council initiatives, services and decisions to its key stakeholders – ratepayers, residents, visitors, private enterprise and government.

It is Council's objective to openly communicate with its key stakeholders to achieve organisational transparency and accountability by providing the media with accurate and timely information. Establishing a positive relationship with the media contributes to balanced and objective reporting of Council matters.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Council maintains its corporate integrity and positive public image by delivering clear messages, in a unified voice, that are consistent with Council's strategic direction and operational intent.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the Councillors and Staff of Western Downs Regional Council.

3. POLICY

3.1 Background

In accordance to Council's 'Councillors as Portfolio Spokespersons Policy', the Mayor is the official spokesperson for Council and is therefore its primary media representative.

As part of the role as Portfolio Spokespersons, Councillors may also act as media representatives and are required to work closely with the CEO and/or relevant General Manager to formulate coordinated media releases.

For matters concerning staff or internal organisational issues the CEO will act as Council's Spokesperson.

3.2 Policy

- 3.2.1 This policy should be interpreted so that its objective/purpose is achieved.
- 3.2.2 Council's corporate communication team are responsible for coordinating Council's media relations as well as providing advice and support to Councillors and staff in relation to professionally dealing with the media.
- 3.2.3 Councillors and staff are requested to advise Council's corporate communication team of potential newsworthy issues, incidents or upcoming events that may attract media attention, both positive and adverse. Council's corporate communication team will coordinate an accurate and timely response in close consultation with relevant Councillors and staff.
- 3.2.4 If a media enquiry is of a technical nature requiring operational expertise, the CEO, relevant General Manager or Group Manager may act as Council's media representative. No staff, other than those authorised above, are to speak directly to the media as a Council representative unless authorised by the CEO or General Manager.



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- 3.2.5 Council's corporate communication team will coordinate the approval of all media releases by the Mayor and CEO prior to distribution with a CC sent to Councillors for information and optional feedback.
- 3.2.6 Prior to being sent to the CEO and Mayor for approval, media releases must be approved by the relevant General Manager and when quoted in the release, the appropriate Portfolio Spokesperson.
- 3.2.7 Media releases will be distributed to the media with a CC to Councillors, the Executive, Managers, and Coordinators/Senior Officers. In addition, they will be made available on the staff intranet and publicly on Council's website.
- 3.2.8 Any public comment made by Councillors and on behalf of Council in any form of media, including social media, should be consistent with Council's strategic direction. If the comments are a personal view, it must be clearly stated that the comments expressed represent a personal view and not the official view of Council.
- 3.2.9 In general, Council will not respond to "Letters to the Editor" unless a gross inaccuracy requires explicit correction in which case a Media Statement may be issued.
- 3.2.10 Western Downs Regional Council does not issue 'off-the-record' comments.
- 3.2.11 Council will not engage in media relations that are deemed by the CEO to be of personal advantage to any Councillor or staff member.

