

POLICY

Policy name	Media Policy
Responsible manager(s)	General Manager
Contact officer(s)	Executive Manager Coordination and Communications
Directorate	Coordination and Communications
Approval date	6 June 2023
Outcome area	5 Our engaged community with progressive leadership
Strategy	5.1 Acknowledge our shared responsibility through an informed community
Delivery program	5.1.1 Proactively provide clear, accessible, timely and relevant information to support and inform the community
Operational plan	5.1.1.2 Communicate Council's activities to media and the community using owned and earned media

Purpose

Council has an important relationship with the media. This relationship provides Council with an opportunity to keep the community informed and involved in its activities and programs.

This purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide for communication of Council affairs through the media
- Set a framework for an effective working relationship with media
- Promote coverage of Council affairs that is fair, accurate and reliable
- Identify spokespeople and their responsibilities.

Policy aims:

- Ensure communication by Councillors and staff with the media is consistent, well informed, timely, appropriate and newsworthy
- Build Council's reputation and maximise accurate editorial coverage of Eurobodalla Shire Council's events, programs, services and decisions
- Promote positive media relationships
- Limit the publication of inaccurate information and reduce risk
- Clearly indicate Council's authorised spokespersons.

Policy statement

1	<p>Application</p> <p>This policy applies to communications between Eurobodalla Shire Council councillors and staff with the media and includes any communications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About Council affairs and related matters • At public speaking engagements. <p>The policy applied to council officials is defined in Council's Code of Conduct which reflects the Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW.</p> <p>This policy does not apply to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the distribution and publication of communications other than media releases for marketing, promotion and education purposes • advertising • media activities undertaken as part of Council's tourism promotion or other specific marketing projects.
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	<p>Council reserves the right to choose when and where it will publish and distribute communications other than those covered in this policy, and the right to choose where it will place advertising.</p>
2	<p>Legislation</p> <p>The policy acknowledges the rights and responsibilities of councillors as elected representatives as outlined in: The Local Government Act 1993; the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance Code of Ethics for journalists; addition of and the Australian Press Council's Statements of Principles, Specific Standards, Standards of Practice and Advisory Guidelines.</p>
3	<p>Spokespeople – roles and responsibilities</p> <p>The Mayor and General Manager are the official spokespersons on Council affairs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Mayor may designate Councillors to speak on his/her behalf. • The General Manager may designate directors to speak on his/her behalf, and managers and specialist staff to speak and respond to media queries on technical or operational matters. • As members of the community, Councillors are entitled to enter into public debate in their private capacity and make comment on Council affairs provided they clearly state that such public comment reflects their personal opinion and not that of the council or a committee of the Council. • The Chairs of committees can speak to media in regard to their particular portfolio with designated staff being able to comment on technical or administrative details about the issue at hand. • The Executive Manager Coordination and Communications and the Communications Manager are authorised Council spokespersons on matters of fact or clarification, and will request that media credit their responses to 'a Council spokesperson'. • Staff and councillors should support Council decisions and refrain from using the media to make negative personal comments which are likely to undermine public confidence in the Council or local government generally. • Staff must not make political or controversial statements in or to the media on Council affairs, decisions and or events or about Councillors. <p>Within these guidelines, Council will openly discuss matters of interest with the media unless disclosure of certain information contravenes Council's obligation of confidentiality or privacy, duty of care, or could infringe other laws or regulations that govern Council operations.</p>
4	<p>Liaising with the media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media enquiries and requests for interviews should be directed to Council's communications unit, who will coordinate Council's response with relevant staff and spokespeople. • The media service will be provided to media organisations and their representatives equally and without bias. • Media enquiries from media organisations and their representatives will be dealt with promptly and media can expect an acknowledgement of receipt of their query and a response in a timely manner.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requests for information and matters raised in discussions with media organisations and their representatives will not be disclosed to other media organisations. • Media releases will be approved by the General Manager, a director, or the Executive Manager Communications on their behalf. • Council's communications unit is responsible for coordinating and distributing media releases and other media communications on behalf of the Mayor or the Council. • The General Manager will determine the priority of media releases. • Council media releases will be placed on Council's public website. • In consultation with Councillors, the General Manager may cease or refuse to provide Council's media service to individuals or organisations that do not act in accordance with the Australian Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance Code of Ethics for journalists, and/or the Australian Press Council's Statements of Principles, Specific Standards, Standards of Practice and Advisory Guidelines. • The Mayor and councillors should advise the General Manager or Executive Manager Coordination and Communication of any contact with journalists or media outlets. This includes requests from or to journalists for interview, comment, or background (noting roles and responsibilities outlined under 3 Spokespeople).
5	<p>Incorrect information</p> <p>In the event that incorrect information or information that has personal or corporate reputation risk is published, the Executive Manager Coordination and Communications will investigate and report to the General Manager on how the information came to be published. If necessary, the General Manager will authorise a media release to be issued that conveys the correct information, or request that communications staff speak to the journalist concerned to request a published clarification or correction.</p>

Implementation

Requirements		Responsibility
1	<p>Implementation and Coordination</p> <p>This policy is to be implemented in conjunction with other media and corporate protocols. Council's Executive Manager Coordination and Communications is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented.</p>	Executive Manager Coordination and Communications
2	<p>Concerns</p> <p>Concerns received regarding this policy will be recorded on Council's customer service request (CSR) or records system and handled in accordance with Council's Customer Service Policy. They will be used to analyse the history of concerns and requests and to help determine follow up actions.</p>	Council officers
3	<p>Breaches</p> <p>Breaches of this policy will be dealt with in accordance with the Model Code of Conduct for Councils in NSW – that is staff will be</p>	General Manager

	disciplined while allegations against councillors, the Mayor or General Manager will be referred to the Office of Local Government.	
4	Complaints Complaints received regarding this policy will be lodged with the Public Officer and handled in accordance with council's Complaints Policy.	Public Officer
5	Consultation Consultation regarding this policy will occur as relevant with key stakeholders and may include legislative bodies, other agencies, relevant legislation, industry guidelines, and public comment. Changes to this policy will be placed on public exhibition for 28 days to invite submissions from the community.	Community key stakeholders

Review

This policy will be reviewed every 4 years. It may also be reviewed and updated as necessary when legislation requires it; or council's functions, structure or activities change; or when technological advances or new systems change the way that council manages media interactions.

The policy may be revoked at the expiration of twelve months after the declaration of the poll for the next general NSW local government election unless council revokes it sooner. **Note:** *The next general local government election is expected to be held in September 2024.*

Reviews of the effectiveness of this policy could include the following:

Performance indicator	Data source(s)
Customer concerns or complaints	Council records
Breaches	Council records

Governance

This policy should be read in conjunction with any related legislation, codes of practice, relevant internal policies, and guidelines.

Related legislation and policies

Name	Link
The Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW 2020	www.esc.nsw.gov.au www.olg.nsw.gov.au
Local Government Act 1993	www.legislation.nsw.gov.au
NSW Defamation Act 2005	www.legislation.nsw.gov.au
Privacy Act 1988	www.legislation.nsw.gov.au

Other related external references

Name	Link
Office of Local Government	http://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/
Australian Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance Code of Ethics	www.meaa.org/meaa-media/code-of-ethics/

Australian Press Council's Statements of Principles, Specific Standards, Standards of Practice and Advisory Guidelines.

www.presscouncil.org.au/standards/

Definitions

Term	Definition
Council affairs	Includes matters before the council and other Council affairs and business, policy, interpretation of policy, management of Council business or staff, or other matters that may commit the Council's resources
Council officials	As defined by the Model Code of Conduct for Councils in NSW, Council officials include Councillors, members of staff of Council and other approved delegates, including volunteers and chairs of Council committees
Council staff	Council officials employed by Council who are not councillors
Media	Organisations that prepare or disseminate mass media information, including reporters, journalists and researchers working for or on behalf of such organisations, either accredited with or regulated by a recognised media industry peak body, or that acts in accordance with the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance Code of Ethics for journalists and/or the Australian Press Council's Standards of Practice and Advisory Guidelines.
Publication	The distribution of information via print or electronic media including but not limited to newspapers, radio, TV, and the internet.
Media enquiries	When the media requests more information in relation to a media release – for example an interview with a Council spokesperson – or a response or quote in relation to an issue they are reporting on. Media enquiries are coordinated by the communications unit.
Media Service	Council's media service: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepares, publishes and distributes media releases • Responds to media queries and requests for information • Provides quotes, photos, videos and inclusions when available • Organises media briefings and provides updates and clarification • Liaises with stakeholders on joint media activities • Engages on media's social media platforms where appropriate • Addresses incorrect information in media • Distributes and publishes other communications outside the application of the Media Policy including but not limited to; Council's regular newsletters for residents, media for public relations activities to support tourism promotion or specific projects, and advertising and content for marketing, promotion and education purposes.

Change history

Version	Approval date	Approved by	Min No	File No	Change
1	13 Jul 2007	Council	494	06.0380	New policy 'Media Releases Spokesperson for Council'
2	10 Sep 2013	Council	13/272	E06.0380 E13.7095	Reviewed and updated, renamed to Media Policy
3	12 Sep 2017	Council	17/292	E06.0380 E16.0297	Reviewed and updated

4	22 Nov 2022	Council	22/313	S004-T00060	Reviewed and updated (start of new Council term) Report
5	6 June 2023	Councillor briefing	-	S004-T00060	Minor addition to point 4 of the policy statement.

Internal use

Responsible officer		General Manager		Approved by	Council
Minute	22/313	Report	GMR22/111	Effective date	6 June 2023
File no	S004-T00060	Review date	September 2024	Pages	6