



# Media Policy

## 1. POLICY STATEMENT

The Balonne Shire Council recognises the importance of communicating Council initiatives, services and decisions to its key stakeholders – ratepayers, residents, community organisations, visitors, business, industry and government - through a range of media.

## 2. PRINCIPLES

Council will openly communicate with its key stakeholders to achieve organisational transparency and accountability by providing the media with accurate and timely information.

Council will establish a positive relationship with the media to contribute to balanced and objective reporting of council matters.

Council will openly discuss matters of interest with the media unless disclosure would contravene information privacy, commercial in confidence or any legislative provision or duty of care.

## 3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all communications from the Balonne Shire Council to the community and applies to all Councillors, staff and contractors. For the purposes of this policy, media can include radio, television, Council's official social media and newspapers. Media releases may include a direct quote from an elected member or staff member.

It includes any emails forwarded to the media industry with the potential of being published in a newspaper or on a website or other public platform.

This policy does not apply to the use of personal social media or advertising, however the principles of this policy apply.

The Policy includes internally generated and distributed media and receipt of external enquiries from the media.

## 4. RESPONSIBILITY

The CEO is the spokesperson for administration matters.

The CEO may delegate spokesperson authority to the relevant departmental Director or appropriate staff member.

In absence of the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor is authorised to speak on all matters usually responded to by the Mayor.

## 5. DEFINITIONS

Media – television, radio, print media, photographers, specialist publications, internet news and online publications

Social Media – a website or application that facilitates interaction through creation, sharing and exchange of information and ideas in virtual communities and networks.

## 6. POLICY



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- 6.1 The Mayor is the designated spokesperson for all matters determined by full Council, and any other non-administration matter.
- 6.2 Councillors are entitled to express their personal views provided the comments are not attributed to them in any official Council position.
- 6.3 The CEO is the spokesperson for administration matters.
- 6.4 All enquiries from and to the media should be facilitated through the Office of the CEO.
- 6.5 The Office of the CEO is the central point of contact for all staff wishing to promote events, opportunities, services, or programs.
- 6.6 From time to time, staff may be required to provide information for a Director, CEO or elected member on a topic. Providing the information promptly and to a high level of accuracy is essential.
- 6.7 Councillors, if requested by the media, to provide a quote or respond to a matter outside their portfolio, all media enquiries should be forwarded to the Mayor. Unless authorised by the Mayor, in accordance with this policy, a Councillor must not speak to media on behalf of Council.
- 6.8 If an elected member wishes to liaise with the media on a matter or has been contacted directly by any media to provide comment, the Councillor must notify the Mayor and/or CEO of: the publication name, publication date, nature of the story, and the quote they provided as soon as possible.

## Managing a Personal Opinion

- 6.9 Prior to an adopted position by Council, Councillors may express personal opinion, however such quotes will not be published by the Balonne Shire Council. Up until a decision is made by Council on a topic, Councillors must acknowledge their comment as being their view or opinion and not that of Council.
- 6.10 At the point Council makes a decision on the topic, Councillors should respectfully support the decision as that of the majority of Council.
- 6.11 Staff are not permitted to comment publicly on Council business. In speaking informally with the public, staff must support Council's decisions.

## Approvals

- 6.12 The Mayor or CEO (depending if the article is general Council business or administrative only) must approve all media prior to issue/publication/distribution.
- 6.13 Any person quoted in print material will be provided an opportunity to review/amend their quote.
- 6.14 If an elected member other than the Mayor is quoted, only elected member quotes which support Council's agreed position will be approved.
- 6.15 Council staff, their spouses and close relatives, should refrain from providing personal public comment on Council operations, policy or decisions, including on social media channels such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and other forms including blogs, video/photo posting sites, forums and online chat services, in accordance with Council's Employee Code of Conduct Policy.



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## Guidelines on Making Public Comments

- Use positive language.
- Have a main thought in mind and stick to the topic.
- Make your point quickly.
- After a decision is adopted by Council, Councillors are not permitted to use language that is disparaging of Council's decision.
- Accurate and consistent Council image, brand and messaging;
- A flexible yet efficient system to receive and deliver Corporate communication;
- Timeliness of messaging;
- Management of reputational risk
- Circulate a copy of the media release to the organisation to keep Councillors and staff informed of current news
- Use all forms of media to circulate the message including Council's website and social media accounts.

## 7. LEGAL PARAMETERS

Local Government Act 2009

Local Government Regulations 2012

Information Privacy Act 2009

## 8. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

Councillor Portfolio Policy

Councillor Code of Conduct

Employee Code of Conduct