

POLICY:	MEDIA
DATE ADOPTED:	Director Corporate Services & Finance's Report #5 Council 15 September 2021 Resolution No. ORD2021- 330 Council 20 October 2021 Resolution No ORD2021-349
ORIGINAL ADOPTION:	Director Corporate Services Report #1 Policy 1 December 2004, Council 8 December 2004 Minute Book No. 9416 (former BCC Policy)
FILE REFERENCE:	04.00003
OBJECTIVE:	To develop and maintain an effective, professional level of communication with the media.

Roles and responsibilities

The Mayor

- The Mayor plays an integral role in reporting back to ratepayers and residents, the decisions and considerations before Council. The Mayor is the main spokesperson on political issues but will delegate media duties in consultation with fellow Councillors who also have regular contact with the media on issues of specific interest.

General Manager/Acting General Manager

- Gives the final approval on all media comment/releases relating to general Council business and is the spokesperson, unless choosing to delegate, on the main areas of Council business and strategic issues.
- Is responsible for maintaining an open communication policy with the Media & Communications Officer to provide adequate planning and lead time for preparation of media strategies.

Department Heads/Acting Department Heads

- Will approve all media generated by their department unless delegated authority is given to other staff eg Library, Art Gallery.
- Are responsible for developing proactive media opportunities amongst staff.
- Are responsible for identifying potential issues that may develop within Council or in the wider community, in relation to Council business and should brief the Media & Communications Officer who in consultation, will assess and develop an appropriate media strategy.

Media & Communications Officer

- Is the first point of contact for all media inquiries at Council.
- Is available at all times to respond to media inquiries and assess critical media issues.
- Is responsible for handling all media inquiries and preparing a response in consultation with Council staff and Councillors, where appropriate.
- Shall seek the final approval of the General Manager, Director of Corporate Services or appropriate Department Head before releasing any comment to the media.

- Is responsible for generating proactive news items to media, identifying potential to promote Council's services and developing appropriate strategies.

Corporate Communications team members

- Will support the Media & Communications Officer with media release writing and media liaison when required.
- In preparing information for radio ads, on hold messages and other items, shall inform the Media & Communications Officer of all possible news items.

All staff

- Are responsible for alerting the Media & Communications Officer of any media inquiry to Council as soon as they are aware of media contact.

Approaching the media

- After consultation with the General Manager, Mayor or Department Head the Media & Communications Officer will generally initiate all contact with the media and talk to journalists about potential stories, photo opportunities and events involving Council unless an alternative strategy is developed.
- Council staff should advise the Media & Communications Officer of all potential media events, launches, press conferences etc...no later than two weeks prior to the event so an appropriate strategy can be developed.

Responding to a media inquiry

- All media inquiries that come via phone, email or fax to Council are to be directed to the Media & Communications Officer or in the absence of that position, to the Manager Corporate Communications or Digital Communications Officer.
- If the Corporate Communications staff are unavailable, details of the caller and the nature of the inquiry are to be forwarded to the Department Head with a copy of details to be sent to the Media & Communications Officer
- It is the responsibility of the Media & Communications Officer to provide appropriate media liaison, source the relevant spokesperson/informant and complete the inquiry.
- All comment on Council business or information will come from the Mayor, General Manager, Department Head or delegated staff.
- The Media & Communications Officer will be responsible for media liaison with the Mayor and Councillors where appropriate.
- A copy of all media releases issued by Council will be forwarded to all Councillors, Council staff and posted to the News Centre on YourSay Bathurst
- All Council staff are entitled to a personal opinion but must not express their personal views in a public forum or to any member of the media, on behalf of Bathurst Regional Council.

Writing a media release

- Staff from all departments should be encouraged to identify media opportunities and where appropriate draft media releases.
- Once a release is drafted or media concept approved by the General Manager or Department Head it should be sent to the Media & Communications Officer for release to the media.
- As long as they are able to meet the appropriate Council criteria for media liaison, an exception for Media & Communications Officer approval will be given for Council services such as the Library, Art Gallery, Visitor Information Centre, and child care facilities. In these cases, all media releases should be forwarded to Media & Communications Officer for information as they are released to the media.

Confidentiality

- Council staff and elected representatives are bound by the Privacy Act, not to reveal the name or details of any member of the public who has dealings with Council to the media, unless the individual's permission is granted. The exception will be if the release of such information has already been made public through publication of Council's business papers.
- In accordance with Council's Code of Conduct, employees or Councillors shall not disclose otherwise than to the Council, a councillor or member of staff entitled to know, information concerning any matter relating to Council business.

Further information

The Media

- The media are responsible for the reporting of accurate, honest and fair stories with a fair opportunity for reply.
- They must attribute information to appropriate sources.
- They must distinguish between fact and opinion.