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Communications Policy	1.0.1	October 2022
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21 November 2018	5131	Revised

## Purpose

The Greater Hume Council Communications Policy provides the framework for communication between Council and its internal and external stakeholders.

The effective dissemination of information and communication engagement is a vital element in building a positive identity for Council through awareness of its services, activities and projects, achievements and resources. Community engagement, consultation and public relations are embraced in this policy statement.

Effective communication will be achieved through the distribution of regular, consistent and truthful information in partnership with productive community consultation on key issues.

## Scope

This policy applies to councillors, employees, contractors, consultants and any other persons including volunteers who undertake activities for Council.

Greater Hume Council's 'communication stakeholders' include:

- Ratepayers and residents
- Potential residents of Greater Hume
- Greater Hume Councillors
- Employees and volunteers of Greater Hume Shire
- Visitors to Greater Hume
- Investors, developers and individuals with business interests within the Greater Hume shire
- Customers who seek products or services or information from Council
- Community and government organisations
- Local, regional and national media.

## Definitions

**Communication** is the imparting or exchanging of information between Council, the community and stakeholders.

**Community** includes all people who live, work, study or conduct business in, or who visit, use and enjoy the services, facilities and public places of Greater Hume Council area.

**Consultation** is the provision of information and engagement by Council to its community and stakeholders (external and internal) that enables them to respond (expressing concerns and identified issues) so these can be considered before a final decision is made.

**Social Media** is the term given to computer-mediated technologies that allow the creating and sharing of information, ideas, career interests and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks.

## Policy Content

In committing to this policy Council aims to ensure that its communication strategy will:

- Provide regular and consistent communication on Council's projects and activities to all stakeholders
- Create a positive and professional image for Greater Hume Council through open communication and increased awareness of Council's activities and projects
- Foster a meaningful community consultation process in Council's activities
- Ensure effective internal communication
- Develop a strong customer service focus within Greater Hume Council
- Effectively manage negative issues
- Effectively manage unexpected crisis/disaster issues or events, e.g. Loose Fill Asbestos
- Ensure print, web based and electronic communication layouts comply with the Disability Inclusion Act 2014
- Use a variety of methods to communicate and to provide information in formats that accommodate the needs of all stakeholders.

## Corporate Identity

Council's corporate identity reflects its approach to business, culture and values.

Council needs to present a consistent and uniform visual image to ensure that its values are most effectively portrayed. Visual symbols include the correct use of Council's logo and corporate colours and use of consistent fonts and layouts in all publications and promotional material including stationery, Council strategic documents, printed community newsletter, electronic newsletters, banners, displays, etc.

The Greater Hume Council (GHC) Brand Manual ensures a consistent image is portrayed across all mediums and formats.

Senior management encourage the wearing of corporate uniforms and name badges.

## Greater Hume Shire Council Brand Manual

GHS Brand Manual is a document that establishes distinct guidelines on the use of Council's new branding.

## Communications Strategy and Implementation Plan

The Greater Hume Council Communications Strategy and Implementation Plan was adopted in June 2017.

The strategy incorporates a Communication Engagement Toolkit (CET) which is a planning tool for all events/projects (including crisis management communication) which are deemed by senior management to require a CET.

## Stakeholder Engagement

Council has also adopted a Stakeholder Engagement Policy to assist staff to identify stakeholders and the level and type of engagement required for effective communication and decision making for all projects and changes to service delivery.

## Website

Council's new website is regarded as a corporate publication with high visibility. The website is designed to meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 standards in accordance with the Australian Government Accessibility Policy.

## **Social Media**

Council actively uses social media platforms to engage and communicate its services, activities, achievements and resources with residents and ratepayers.

## **Customer Service**

The way in which Council receives, answers and responds to phone calls, letters and communication received electronically combined with its face to face contact with customers, has the greatest impact on how Council is perceived in the community.

It is vital that Council ensures correct, effective, efficient and customer orientated responses are generated to develop and maintain a positive reputation for Council.

Council's Customer Service Standard defines customer service expectations of staff, including the use of Telephone Call Forward, Email Out Of Office and Status View.

## **Events**

Greater Hume Shire's annual Australia Day Event is Council's major sponsored event in the shire. Events are planned in accordance with Council's Event Guide.

Events play an important role in community life as a means of entertainment, social interaction and source of pride and sense of place. Council events are commonly staged to celebrate and recognise achievements within the community and/or to promote a specific key message or interest.

Council also provides financial or in-kind support to community events to establish mutually beneficial partnerships between Council and the community which raise the profile of the Council.

## **Employee Relations**

Elected Councillors and employees are its most effective public relations ambassadors. It is vital that all employees and Councillors receive timely, relevant, consistent and user friendly information to ensure that they are adequately informed on Council's activities, and to minimise the likelihood of misinformation in the community.

Effective internal communication also encourages a participatory approach to change management, increases employees' morale and encourages more effective communication between employees across department and management levels.

Councillors of Greater Hume are expected to demonstrate standards of conduct and behaviour that are consistent with relevant legislation, regulations and policies.

## **Media Relations**

The local media, including newspapers, radio, television and digital media is a significant source of community information about Council. There are times when regional, statewide and national media interest is generated or occurs due to external conditions.

Council is committed to good media relations requiring a commitment to good governance, transparency and regular media contact in addition to a strategic outlook, political sensitivity and access to senior staff/information.

Only the Mayor and General Manager (or delegated officer) are authorised to speak to the media on behalf of Council, in accordance with the Media Policy.

### **Links to Policy**

Stakeholder Engagement Policy  
Media Policy  
Social Media Policy

### **Links to Procedure**

Stakeholder Engagement Procedure

### **Links to Forms**

Nil

### **References**

Nil

### **Responsibility**

General Manager

### **Document Author**

Executive Assistant – Governance and Economic Development

### **Relevant Legislation**

Local Government Act 1993  
Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979  
Disability Inclusion Act 2014 and the Disability Inclusion Regulation 2014  
Privacy and Personal Information Act 1998

### **Associated Records**

Communications Strategy and Implementation Plan  
Community Engagement Strategy  
Disability Inclusion Action Plan  
Local Disaster Plan  
Greater Hume Council Brand Guidelines