

Document Name	Document Version Number	Review Date
Media and Communications Policy	1.0.1	June 2025
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21 February 2024	6584	Adopted

Purpose

The Media and Communication Policy has the following objectives;

- To ensure consistency and co-ordination by Councillors and staff in dealing with the media
- To clearly indicate Council's authorised spokespersons
- To ensure appropriate authorisation and responsibility for information provided
- To ensure that Council's communication principles are maintained - honest and accurate content, purposeful, written in plain English, jargon free, inclusive and where appropriate, confidential.

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, volunteers and Section 355 Committee members.

Definitions

- **Communication** - 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** - 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** - online platforms and applications - such as but not limited to social networking sites, wikis, blogs, microblogs, video and audio sharing sites, and message boards - that allow people to easily publish, share and discuss content. Examples of social media platforms include, but are not limited to Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Yammer, YouTube, Instagram, Flickr and Wikipedia.
- **Media** – official, registered publications and official, registered online news sites.
- **Public Relations material** – official speeches, promotional literature and website content.
- **Policy** - a set of ideas or a plan of what to do in particular situations that has been agreed to officially by Council.
- **Topical Issues** - are current and of a local interest (not necessarily related to Council business).

- **High profile** – contemporary issues which have generated a high media profile and therefore strong community interest (may not be related to Council business).
- **Operational matters** - relating to the day to day running of Council that are not deemed to be political or likely to come before the council.
- **Technical expertise** - refers to the underlying knowledge and skills that are necessary to carry out duties or complete a task.
- **Online material** - All of Council's online material including the websites and social media presence.
- **Stakeholder** - Any person or group that may have an interest or stake in the planning and impacted by the outcome of the activity or change.

Policy Content

Greater Hume Council is committed to open communication to its community through the media. Proactive media relations and well managed public relations are essential if Council is to have an open and transparent relationship with the community.

Council will be open and honest in its dealings with the media while at the same time complying with its duty of care to protect confidential or personal information and not infringe any laws in providing information.

Council and its representatives will not knowingly provide information which is misleading or inaccurate.

Council will make all reasonable attempts to deal with media enquiries promptly and accurately. Council will treat media organisations and their representatives equally and without bias.

Councillors and the Media

The Mayor is Council's official spokesperson on matters of policy and interpretation of Council's position or decisions. In the absence of the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor will be Council's spokesperson on these matters. At the discretion of the Mayor, the General Manager may be authorised to speak on such matters.

As elected community representatives, councillors may express their personal view on any matter to the media, providing it is clearly understood that the views expressed are not necessarily the views of Council. Councillors may represent Council to the media only with the approval of the Mayor.

Council Employees and the Media

The General Manager will be Council's spokesperson on operational matters. The General Manager may, however, direct staff members to speak to the media on matters relating to their particular area of responsibility or technical expertise. In all instances staff must only give technical or factual information and not provide personal opinions.

Council employees may communicate with the media as private individuals, with the following restrictions -

- they comply with Council's Model Code of Conduct
- they do not comment on Council business or policy
- they are not identified as Council employees.

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. Council brand guidelines should be followed for any publication or promotional material including visual symbols, 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.

Approvals

Statements to the media on behalf of Council, such as media releases and responses to specific questions from the media, must be approved by the General Manager in all circumstances. In instances where the Mayor is quoted or the subject matter relates to Council policy or contentious issues, the Mayor will also approve.

Council employees who receive requests direct from media representatives shall decline to comment and report the request to an Executive Assistant who will inform the General Manager.

In circumstances where the General Manager is unavailable, the Director of the corresponding Department will be approached to respond to the media enquiry.

Media Releases

Staff may prepare draft media releases which are to be forwarded to an Executive Assistant for editing and to check formatting.

Greater Hume Council media releases must never be issued without the prior approval of the General Manager, the Mayor where appropriate, or delegated authority.

A media release must never be issued quoting a Councillor or member of staff without that person's prior knowledge and approval.

Staff with specialist knowledge may be quoted in media releases with the permission of the relevant delegated authority.

Once a media release is approved by the Mayor and General Manager the Executive Assistant will be responsible for distribution.

All media releases are to be presented on the Media Release template and are to conform to Council brand guidelines.



Breaches of this Policy

Councillors

Where a post by a Councillor could be considered a breach of this policy, this may constitute subsequent breach of the Code of Conduct which could result in the appropriate action being undertaken by the Mayor.

Staff

Where a post by a staff member could be considered a breach of this policy, this may be subject to disciplinary action as per the Performance and Misconduct Procedure.

Links to Policy

Records Management Policy
Code of Conduct
Social Media Policy
Information Technology Security Access Policy
Internet, Email and Computer Use Policy

Links to Procedure

Information Technology Security Access Procedure
Records Management Procedure
Performance and Misconduct Procedure
Social Media Procedure

Responsibility

General Manager

Document Author

Executive Assistant, Tourism and Communications

Relevant Legislation

Disability Inclusion Act 2014 and the Disability Inclusion Regulation 2014.
Local Government Act 1993
State Records Act 1998
Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998

Associated Records

Nil.