



Media Policy

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1. Policy Scope

This policy applies to all Councillors and to all permanent full-time and part-time staff, temporary and casual staff, service providers and contractors employed by Murrumbidgee Council.

This policy sets out the approved means of communication with the media on Murrumbidgee Council's behalf. The purpose of the protocol is to:

1. Ensure the media are provided with factually correct and timely information.
2. Uphold the principle of 'Being open and transparent in decision making' government as set out in the Murrumbidgee Council's Statement of Vision and Priorities 2017.
3. To deliver quality services creating a friendly, welcoming and engaged community

The protocol will apply to all permanent full-time and part-time staff, temporary and casual staff, service providers and contractors employed by Council.

The protocol also applies to all written or verbal statements released to the media on Murrumbidgee Council's behalf.

2. Principles

This policy has been developed in accordance with Murrumbidgee Council's principles and values which are articulated in the following documents:

1. Statement of Vision and Priorities
2. Statement of Business Ethics
3. Code of Conduct

When taking into account these principles one MUST ensure that the Council is able to function efficiently and effectively in its day-to-day operations.

3. Objective

- 3.1 To ensure Council at all times complies with the NSW Local Government Act 1993. Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 and other relevant legislation in relation to communication and information dissemination matters.
- 3.2 To clearly define who within the Council organisation has authority to speak with the media on official Council matters.
- 3.3 To ensure that Council's policies, practices and procedures are of best practice and meet the highest level of public accountability.
- 3.4 To promote and inform the community of Murrumbidgee Council's activities, policies and programs in the local area in a positive manner.
- 3.5 To ensure media enquiries are handled in a professional, cohesive manner to prevent or minimise negative publicity of the Council or Councillors.
- 3.6 To provide non-partisan media support and advice to the Mayor and Councillors.
- 3.7 To provide media support in a crisis.

4. Policy Statement

The purpose of this policy is to provide for effective communication of Murrumbidgee Council affairs to the public through the media. The policy aims to promote positive coverage of council events, activities and decisions that is fair, accurate and reliable.

Murrumbidgee Council is committed clear and relevant communication both within and external to the organisation. This policy supports (and is to be read in conjunction with) Council’s Code of Conduct.

5. Definitions

This policy’s definitions are:

Council means Murrumbidgee Council.

Staff means all person employed by Council.

Council official means Councillors, Council staff, volunteers or delegated persons as defined in the Local Government Act 1993.

Media: Relates to all forms of official communication including, but not limited to print and electronic media. Electronic media can include all forms of social media eg. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Snapchat etc.

Media statement: A written statement issued by the Council that states its position on a matter of Council business, Council policy or public interest.

Media comment: A verbal statement issued by the Council that states its position on a matter of Council business, Council policy or public interest.

Council spokesperson: A person authorized to communicate with the media on the Council’s behalf. On operational matters, this may be the General Manager, a Director, a Manager or other Council staff member nominated by the General Manager. The Mayor is the official spokesperson for the Council on policy or other matters in the public interest.

6. Legislative Reference

Legislation/Recognized Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Freedom of Information Act• Privacy & Personal Information Protection Act• Local Government Act 1993• Copyright Act 1968• Defamation Act 2005
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7. Policy Implementation

- 7.1 All media statements are prepared by the Communications Officer and must be approved prior to release by the General Manager. Media statements issued on behalf of the Council must be in the approved format.
- 7.2 All media enquiries must be referred in the first instance to the Communications Officer. In their absence media enquiries should be referred to either the General Manager, the Mayor or a member of staff nominated by the General Manager.
- 7.3 Council employees, service providers and contractors must not communicate with the media unless prior approval has been obtained from the General Manager. Approved staff may provide factual information to the media on Council business or policy matters via the Communications Officer. Staff should not comment or offer personal opinions to the

media on Council policies or business, nor make predictions as to future actions the Council may take on any matter.

- 7.4 Council employees must not discuss staff, confidential legal advice or commercial in-confidence matters with the media at any time.
- 7.5 Council employees may communicate with the media as private individuals, with the following restrictions:
- that they do not comment on Council business or policy;
 - that they are not identified as Council employees;
 - that their comments are not perceived as representing an official Council position or policy.
- 7.6 All Council and Committee meetings are open to the media, except those dealing with staff issues, confidential legal advice or commercial in-confidence matters.
- 7.7 Contractors or service providers employed by Council must refer all media enquiries regarding the Council to the Communications Officer.
- 7.8 All requests to film or photograph Council staff, facilities or events for news and current affairs purposes should be referred to the Communications Officer.
- 7.9 All Council documents that are on the public record are open to perusal by the media, except those relating to staff, confidential legal advice and commercial in-confidence matters. All file perusals by the media are subject to the provisions of Council policies dealing with access to information, privacy and freedom of information legislation.
- 7.10 Unauthorised release of Council documents by staff will be subject to disciplinary action.
- 7.11 In the event of an emergency in the Murrumbidgee Council area involving serious injury to and/or death of residents, Councillors, Council staff or significant damage to Council assets, the following procedure will apply:
- The Communications Officer must be notified immediately of details of the incident. The General Manager or his delegate will, in the absence of the Communications Officer, be on 24-hour call in the event of a major emergency.
 - Details of the incident must not be discussed with any media representative unless approved in advance by the General Manager.
 - All requests to interview, film or photograph Council staff involved in the incident must be referred to the Communications Officer.
- 7.12 Council officers should refer to the Community Engagement Policy when organising public meetings, public consultation or public forums on behalf of Council.

8. Exceptions

Nil

9. Policy Review

This policy is to be reviewed in August, 2019.