



Media Policy

GOULBURN MULWAREE COUNCIL MEDIA POLICY

POLICY OBJECTIVE

To recognise the value of the media as a means of Council communicating information to the public and to always be open, honest and proactive in our dealings with them.

LEGISLATIVE PROVISIONS

Defamation Act 2005

Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009

Privacy & Personal Information Protection Act 1998

State Records Act 1998

Work Health & Safety Act 2011

POLICY STATEMENT

A good working relationship with the media is imperative to Goulburn Mulwaree Council (Council) successfully relaying its key messages to the community. This policy outlines appropriate authority for media comment on behalf of Council. This will ensure that clear and consistent messages are communicated.

Principles

We, the councillors, staff, and other officials of Council are committed to upholding and promoting the following principles of media engagement:

- **Openness**
Council will ensure that we promote an open exchange of information between our Council and the media.
- **Consistency**
Council will ensure consistency by all councillors and staff when communicating with the media.
- **Accuracy**
The information Council shares with the media will be a source of truth for our council and community and we will prioritise the need to correct inaccuracies when they occur.
- **Timeliness**
Council will ensure that it responds to media enquiries in a timely manner.

Administrative Framework for the Engagement with the Media

- Council's General Manager will appoint a member of staff to be Council's Media Coordinator. The Media Coordinator should be a suitably qualified person.
- The General Manager may appoint more than one Media Coordinator.
- The Media Coordinator's role is to:
 - be the lead point of contact for all media enquiries, requests for interviews, requests to film or photograph council staff, facilities or events for news and current affairs purposes
 - be responsible for preparing all media statements prior to their release
 - liaise with relevant staff members within the organisation where appropriate
 - ensure that media statements are approved by the Mayor and/or General Manager prior to their release
 - develop and/or approve media training and/or induction to be provided to relevant staff and/or councillors
 - maintain a record of all media enquiries and responses
 - ensure that media organisations and their representatives are treated professionally, equally and without bias
 - ensure that media enquiries are dealt with promptly
 - provide guidance to councillors approached by the media for comment to avoid communication of misinformation, and
 - ensure that all media releases are published on the Council's website.

Who Can Engage With The Media

The Mayor

- The Mayor is the principal member and spokesperson of the governing body of Council including representing the views of Council as to its local priorities (section 226(c) of the *Local Government Act 1993*).
- If the Mayor is unavailable, the Deputy Mayor may act as the Council's spokesperson.
- The Mayor may delegate their role as spokesperson to other councillors where appropriate, (for example, where another councillor is best placed to comment, because the issue is of particular interest to them, or it is within their particular area of expertise).

The General Manager

- The General Manager is the official spokesperson for Council on operational and administrative matters.
- The General Manager may delegate to other Council staff to speak on their behalf where appropriate, (for example, where the delegated staff member has professional expertise regarding the subject matter, or the General Manager is unavailable).

Councillors

- As a member of the governing body and as a representative of the community, councillors are free to express their personal views to the media.

When engaging with the media, councillors:

- must not purport to speak for Council unless authorised to do so
 - must clarify when speaking to the media that they are expressing their personal views as an individual councillor and that they are not speaking for Council (unless authorised to do so)
 - must uphold and accurately represent the policies and decisions of Council
 - must not disclose Council information unless authorised to do so, and
 - must seek information and guidance from the General Manager where appropriate before providing comment to the media to ensure they have the most up-to-date and relevant information and have considered reputational or other risks.
- In the interests of promoting a positive, safe, and harmonious organisational culture, councillors should endeavour to resolve personal differences privately and must not prosecute them publicly through the media.
 - Where councillors (including the Mayor) become aware of potential issues that could result in media interest, they should provide this information to the General Manager.

Council Staff

- Directors and the Communications Manager are authorised to speak to the media on operational and general interest issues relevant to their area, subject to advising the General Manager of such contacts on an 'as-needed' basis.
- The Communications Manager has the key responsibility for distributing media comment and releases on behalf of the Mayor, General Manager, and agreed Directors and specialist managers.

Council's Marketing Team has the key responsibility for distributing media releases and liaising with media on non-council specific topics that promote the local government area under the Goulburn Australia branding as a desirable destination to visit, live, work and invest.

- Where staff has the expertise to prepare media releases they are encouraged to do so, adhering to the following:
 - Managers and staff are to be aware of potential media opportunities within their unit and notify the Communications Manager
 - All media releases are to be authorised by the General Manager prior to distribution via the Communications Manager
 - All Council-specific media releases are to be written and distributed on the official Goulburn Mulwaree Council media release template.
- Council staff must not speak to the media about matters relating to Council unless authorised by the General Manager, via the Communications Manager, to do so.
- If Council staff receive a media enquiry or they are invited to comment to the media on a matter relating to the Council, they must refer the enquiry to the Communications Manager.
- Council staff are free to express their personal views to the media on matters that do not relate to Council, but in doing so, must not make comments that reflect badly on Council or that bring Council into disrepute.
- If authorised to speak to the media, Council staff:

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- must uphold and accurately represent the policies and decisions of Council
- must not disclose Council information unless authorised to do so by the General Manager, via the Communications Manager, and
- must seek information and guidance from the Communications Manager where appropriate before providing comment to the media to ensure they have the most up-to-date and relevant information and have considered reputational or other risks
- Where Council staff become aware of potential issues that could result in media interest, they should provide this information to the Communications Manager.

Tone

- All media engagement by Council officials must be conducted in a professional, timely and respectful manner.

Induction And Training

- Council may provide training to Council officials who engage or are authorised to engage with the media.
- Media engagement training will be provided to councillors as part of their induction or refresher training or as part of their ongoing professional development program.

Councillors' Questions About Media Engagement

- Councillors must direct any questions about their obligations under this policy to the General Manager.

Standards Of Conduct When Engaging With The Media

- Council officials must comply with Council's Code of Conduct when engaging with the media in an official capacity or in connection with their role as a Council official.
- Council officials must not share information or make comments to the media through either direct or indirect mechanisms that:
 - are defamatory, offensive, humiliating, threatening, or intimidating to other council officials or members of the public
 - contains profane language or is sexual in nature
 - constitutes harassment and/or bullying within the meaning of Council's Code of Conduct or is unlawfully discriminatory
 - is contrary to their duties under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* and their responsibilities under any policies or procedures adopted by Council to ensure workplace health and safety
 - contains content about Council, Council officials or members of the public that is misleading or deceptive
 - divulges confidential Council information
 - breaches the privacy of other Council officials or members of the public
 - contains allegations of suspected breaches of Council's Code of Conduct or information about the consideration of a matter under the *Procedures for the Administration of the Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW*
 - could be perceived to be an official comment on behalf of Council where they have not been authorised to make such comment
 - commits Council to any action
 - violates an order made by a court
 - breaches copyright
 - advertises, endorses, or solicits commercial products or business.

Use Of Media During Emergencies

- During emergencies, such as natural disasters or public health incidents, the Communications Manager will be responsible for coordinating media releases and statements on behalf of Council.
- Councillors, Council staff and other Council officials must not provide comment or information to the media that is inconsistent with official advice issued by Council and any other agency coordinating the emergency response.
- Training on media engagement during emergencies may be provided to councillors and relevant staff and other Council officials.

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Media Engagement in The Lead Up To Elections

- This policy does not prevent the Mayor or councillors who are candidates at a council or any other election from providing comment to the media in their capacity as candidates at the election.
- Any media comment provided by the Mayor or councillors who are candidates at a council, or another election must not be provided in an advertisement, newspaper column, or a radio or television broadcast paid for by the council or produced by the council or with council resources.

Records Management Required

- Media content created and received by Council officials (including councillors) acting in their official capacity is a Council record and may be subject to information access applications made under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*. These records must also be managed in accordance with the requirements of the *State Records Act 1998* and Council's approved records management policies and practices.

DEFINITIONS

In this Media Policy, the following terms have the following meanings:

Council Official

- councillors, members of staff and delegates of Council (including members of committees that are delegates of Council).

Media

- means print, broadcast and online media used for communicating information to the public, including, but not limited to, newspapers, magazines, internet publishers, radio, and television broadcasters.

Personal Information

- means information or an opinion (including information or an opinion forming part of a database and whether or not recorded in a material form) about an individual whose identity is apparent or can reasonably be ascertained from the information or opinion.

Social Media

- means 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, BeReal., LinkedIn, Yammer, YouTube, Instagram, Flickr and Wikipedia.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Council's Code of Conduct

GOULBURN MULWAREE COUNCIL MEDIA POLICY

Version	Council Meeting Date	Resolution	Adoption Date	Effective From
1	20 March 2007	07/104	20 March 2007	20 March 2007
2	19 May 2009	09/264	19 May 2009	19 May 2009
3	19 April 2011	11/118	8 June 2011	8 June 2011
4	18 June 2013	13/249	26 July 2013	26 July 2013
5	2 May 2017	14/145	2 May 2017	2 June 2017
6	6 September 2022	2022/316	6 September 2022	4 October 2022
7	20 June 2023	2023/148	20 June 2023	18 July 2023
8	15 April 2025	2025/80		
All policies can be reviewed or revoked by resolution of Council at anytime.				

DIRECTORATE: Executive Services

BUSINESS UNIT: Executive Services