

POLICY:	MEDIA
DATE ADOPTED:	General Managers Report #8.1.1 Policy Committee Meeting 2 April 2025 Resolution No. POL2025-5
ORIGINAL ADOPTION:	Director Corporate Services Report #1 Policy 1 December 2004, Council 8 December 2004 Minute Book No. 9416 (former BCC Policy)
FILE REFERENCE:	11.00035
POLICY OBJECTIVE:	To ensure Council provides coordinated, accurate, consistent, timely and reliable information to the media, and through it, to the community about Council activities and other matters relating to the operation of the Council To develop and maintain an effective, professional level of communication with the media

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Part 1: Principles

1.1 We, the Councillors, staff, and other officials of Bathurst Regional Council are committed to upholding and promoting the following principles of media engagement:

Openness	We will ensure that we promote an open exchange of information between our council and the media.
Consistency	We will ensure consistency by all Councillors and staff when communicating with the media.
Accuracy	The information we share 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	We will ensure that we respond to media enquiries in a timely manner.

Part 2: Administrative framework for engagement with the media

Appointment and role of the Media Coordinator:

1. The General Manager will appoint a member of council staff to be the Council's Media Coordinator. The Media Coordinator should be a suitably qualified member of staff.
2. The Media and Communications Officer will fulfil the role of Media Coordinator for the purposes of this policy. In the absence of the Media and Communications Officer, the Manager Corporate Communications will fill the role.
3. The Media Coordinator's role is to:
 - 3.1. 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.
 - 3.2. be responsible for preparing all media statements prior to their release.
 - 3.3. liaise with relevant staff members within the organisation where appropriate.
 - 3.4. ensure that media statements are approved by the Mayor and/or General Manager prior to their release.
 - 3.5. develop and/or approve media training and/or induction to be provided to relevant staff and/or Councillors.
 - 3.6. maintain a record of all media enquiries and responses.
 - 3.7. ensure that media organisations and their representatives are treated professionally, equally and without bias.
 - 3.8. ensure that media enquiries are dealt with promptly
 - 3.9. ensure that all media releases are published on the Council's website.
 - 3.10. To maintain an up-to-date media delegations list

Part 3: Who can engage with the media

The General Manager

1. The General Manager is the official spokesperson for the Council on operational and administrative matters.
2. 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).

The Mayor

1. The Mayor is the principal member and spokesperson of the governing body of the Council, including representing the views of the Council as to its local priorities (section 226(c) of the *Local Government Act 1993*).
2. If the Mayor is unavailable, the Deputy Mayor may act as the Council's spokesperson.
3. 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).

Councillors

1. 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.
2. When engaging with the media, Councillors:
 - 2.1. must not purport to speak for the Council unless authorised to do so.
 - 2.2. 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 the Council (unless authorised to do so)
 - 2.3. must uphold and accurately represent the policies and decisions of the Council
 - 2.4. must not disclose council information unless authorised to do so, and
 - 2.5. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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 (subject matter experts)

1. Council staff must not speak to the media about matters relating to the Council unless authorised by the Media Coordinator to do so.
2. 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 Media Coordinator.
3. Council staff are free to express their personal views to the media on matters that do not relate to the Council, but in doing so, must not make comments that reflect badly on the Council or that bring it into disrepute.
4. If authorised to speak to the media, Council staff:
 - 4.1. must uphold and accurately represent the policies and decisions of the Council
 - 4.2. must not disclose Council information unless authorised to do so by the Media Coordinator, and
 - 4.3. must seek information and guidance from the Media Coordinator 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
5. Where Council staff become aware of potential issues that could result in media interest, they should provide this information to the Media Coordinator.
6. Requests to film or photograph Council staff, properties, events or Council meetings for news reporting purposes should be referred to the Corporate Communications team

Volunteers/ Contractors or service providers

1. Volunteers, contractors or service providers employed by Council must refer all media enquiries relating to Council to the relevant Director or the Corporate Communications team.

Tone

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

Approval

1. All Council media statements are to be approved prior to their release by the Mayor, General Manager, relevant Director or delegate following preparation in conjunction with the Corporate Communications team.
2. Media releases issued by facilities with media delegation should be copied to the Media Coordinator.

Induction and training

1. The Council must provide training to Council officials who engage or are authorised to engage with the media.

2. 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

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

Part 4: Standards of conduct when engaging with the media

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

Part 5 – Use of media during emergencies

1. During emergencies, such as natural disasters or public health incidents, the Media Coordinator will be responsible for coordinating media releases and statements on behalf of the Council.
2. Councillors, Council staff and other Council officials must not provide comment or information to the media that is inconsistent with official advice issued by the Council and any other agency coordinating the emergency response.
3. Training on media engagement during emergencies will be provided to Councillors and relevant staff and other Council officials.
4. In the event of an emergency situation within the Bathurst Regional Council Local Government Area the Mayor (Deputy Mayor if the Mayor is not available) and the General Manager (Directors if the General Manager is not available) are authorised to make media comments or media statements on behalf of Council.
5. If an emergency situation has escalated and the Local Area Management Committee is in the action, the media functions of Council (as they relate to the emergency) operate under the direction of the Local Emergency Operations Controller.

Part 6 – Media engagement in the lead up to elections

1. 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.
2. 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.

Part 7 – Records management requirements

1. 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 the Council's approved records management policies and practices.

Part 8 – Definitions

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

Council official	means Councillors, members of staff and delegates of the council (including members of committees that are delegates of the council)
Media Coordinator	means a person appointed under clause 1.3 of this policy
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, LinkedIn, Yammer, YouTube, Instagram, Flickr and Wikipedia
Subject matter experts	Staff who have delegated authority to provide media comment on operational issues only that require specific subject matter expertise and are not related to any business currently before Council. These matters must be considered routine and not political, topical or high profile (eg programs/events run by Council, or at Council facilities such as the Library, Art Gallery, Entertainment Centre or Museums).

References and related documents

Code of Conduct
Social Media Policy Councillors
Social Media Policy Staff
Statement of Business Ethics

Review timeframe

Within 12 months of a council election