

1. Policy Statement

Council is committed to providing effective media relations as a means of communicating Council's services, programs and facilities to the residents of Hinchinbrook.

2. Scope

This policy is applicable to all Councillors, Council employees, contractors employed by Council, consultants and volunteers. Hinchinbrook Shire Council requests that all media outlets comply with this policy and associated documents

3. Responsibility

The Chief Executive Officer and Executive Management Staff Members are responsible for ensuring that this policy is adhered to by all staff.

The Mayor is responsible for ensuring that this policy is adhered to by all Councillors.

4. Definitions

Councillor includes the Mayor, unless specifically mentioned.

5. Purpose

Hinchinbrook Shire Council recognises the importance of effective communication of Council services, decisions and projects to community members, visitors, ratepayers, private enterprise and government.

Council's objective is to be transparent and accountable through the provision of accurate and timely information to the media.

6. Policy

6.1 Primary Media Contact

- 6.1.1 The Media and Communications Officer is responsible for ensuring that Council responds to media enquiries in a timely manner.
- 6.1.2 In general external media personnel are directed to contact the Media and Communications Officer as a first point of contact for any information on Council or to seek a response from Council or the Mayor.
- 6.1.3 Editorial media enquiries, requests for media comment and/or information should be directed to the Media and Communications Officer in the first instance.
- 6.1.4 The Media and Communications Officer should be advised of any comments made by an authorised spokesperson to any response to the media.
- 6.1.5 In the case of the Media and Communications Officer being unavailable, Chief Executive Officer approval is required for any media enquiries.

6.2 Authorised Spokespersons

- 6.2.1 Only Council's appointed spokespersons are authorised to make statements to the media on behalf of Council.

Authorised spokespersons are:

- Mayor, official spokesperson;
- Councillors, Advisory Portfolio spokespersons;
- Chief Executive Officer;
- Directors, relating to their directorate;
- The Media and Communications Officer.

6.3 Councillors

- 6.3.1 The Mayor will be the official spokesperson for all Council matters. This specifically refers to all major Council announcements, decisions of Council and civic responsibilities. This does not refer to operational matters.
- 6.3.2 The Mayor will be offered the first opportunity to respond. Where the Mayor chooses the enquiry may be directed to the appropriate advisory portfolio Councillor.
- 6.3.3 When the Mayor is on official leave or out of the country the Deputy Mayor becomes the official spokesperson as Acting Mayor as outlined in 6.3.1.
- 6.3.4 Councillors have delegated authority to comment in the media on Council issues, directly relating to their advisory portfolios at the approval of the Council or the Mayor. Other Councillors, Chief Executive Officer, Media and Communications Officer and relevant Directors should be made aware of these comments.
- 6.3.5 As per the Councillor Code of Conduct Councillors must:
- not communicate with the public or media on behalf of the Council, unless expressly authorised by the Council or Mayor to make that communication;
 - when communicating with the public or the media, make it clear when they are expressing a personal opinion, and when they are speaking on behalf of Council; and
 - when communicating with the public or the media to express a personal opinion about a Council resolution, respect the democratic process by first acknowledging that Council resolutions represent the majority view of Council.

6.4 Council Employees

- 6.4.1 The Chief Executive Officer is authorised to speak to the media on any Council operational matter as required.
- 6.4.2 Directors are authorised to speak to the media on operational matters pertaining to their respective Directorate required.
- 6.4.3 The Media and Communications Officer is responsible for coordinating Council's media liaison and has delegated authority to respond to media enquiries on behalf of Council.
- 6.4.4 Should a Council staff member who is not an authorised officer be approached by the media they are required to direct the reporter to the Media and Communications Officer.
- 6.4.5 The Media and Communications Officer is responsible for issuing media releases regarding Council's activities. Officers are to supply content to the Media and Communications Officer that will then be used in official media releases.
- 6.4.6 The Media and Communications Officer is responsible for seeking approval from the spokesperson quoted in the release and final approval from the Chief Executive Officer, where necessary, before distribution.


- 6.4.7 On occasion it may be in the interest of Council that a personal, human face of Council be presented. In this case the Chief Executive Officer may authorise a staff member to participate in an interview. The staff member should be accompanied by the Media and Communications Officer.
- 6.4.8 Should a Council staff member be approached to organise a photo for the media, they are required to contact the Media and Communications Officer before the photo is taken. Staff must ensure they are wearing the appropriate uniform and personal protection equipment when being filmed or photographed by the media.
- 6.4.9 When the Media and Communications Officer is absent, any media requests should be directed to the Chief Executive Officer. This policy in no way prevents Council employees or volunteers from speaking to the media in a personal capacity, as long as it is made completely clear they are not representing Council.

7. Legal Parameters

None

8. Associated Documents

- Councillor Code of Conduct;
- Staff Code of Conduct; and
- Media Engagement Procedure.

DOCUMENT HISTORY AND STATUS					
Action	Name		Position	Signed	Date
Approved by Council	Alan Rayment		CEO		28/04/2020
Policy Version	5	Initial Version Adopted	27/01/2016	Current Version Adopted	28/04/2020
Maintained By	Mayor and CEO Office			Next Review Date	01/03/2024
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