

BACKGROUND

This Policy is part of a Media and Communications Framework. There are four parts to the Framework including:

- this public-facing Policy that sets out the rules for how Council communicates with stakeholders
- an internal staff Directive that sets out the rights and obligation of Council staff, as private citizens, when engaging with the media
- a Media and Communications Plan that outlines how Council will achieve its media and communications goals
- a Toolkit of resources to provide staff and elected members with media and communications support and guidance.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to define the way that Council communicates with stakeholders to make sure those communications are simple, transparent, consistent and timely.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all Council's media and communications activities. It applies to all elected members, Council staff, contractors, volunteers, and other people communicating with stakeholders for, or on behalf of, Council.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Elected Member Code of Conduct
- Code of Conduct
- Social and Other Media Directive
- Media and Communications Plan
- Media and Communications Toolkit
- Child Safety Policy (TBA)
- Access and Inclusion Policy (TBA)
- Community Engagement Policy

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Acts	<i>Local Government Act 1993 (Tas)</i>
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DEFINITIONS

Communications Team: The business unit responsible for managing and co-ordinating Council's media and communications.

Media: Includes established or traditional media channels such as film, television, radio, or print publishing and social media channels such as websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. These may include Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, on-line forums and discussion boards and blogs.

Stakeholders: All stakeholders to Council, including external (Local, State and Federal Governments, regulators, media outlets, ratepayers, residents, business/industry, community organisations, schools, sporting organisations and visitors to Glenorchy) and internal (staff, elected members, contractors and volunteers).

POLICY STATEMENT

Objectives

Council commits to build and maintain trust with all its stakeholders by communicating with them in a simple, transparent and consistent way and to ensure that there are clear roles and responsibilities for Council's elected members and staff when it comes to the media and communications.

This Policy aims to ensure Council's communications:

- protect, maintain and enhance Council's brand, reputation and values, and follow Council's corporate style guidelines
- are fact-based to educate and inform stakeholders
- are appropriately monitored and regulated
- are lawful and do not breach copyright, defamation or other laws
- are accessible, inclusive and respectful of other's views, opinions and privacy.

Media Statements

The Mayor is responsible for the approval of all statements for print and media interviews. The Mayor may consult with elected members, the General Manager or Council staff in the preparation of a media statement. When drafting media statements, members of the Communications Team will liaise regularly with the Mayor and General Manager.

Copies of all media statements released by Council will be provided to elected members, the General Manager, directors and managers and placed on Council's website as soon as practicable after they are released.

Media Requests

All staff members who receive media requests must pass the request on to the Communications Team.

All verbal or written comments, digital information and Council documents that are released to the media must be endorsed by the Mayor.

Social media

Social media is one of Council's communications channels. It is used in conjunction with other communications methods such as print, television and radio, to deliver key messages and important information to our community and to protect and enhance Council's brand and reputation.

The Communications Team is responsible for leading the implementation of Council's social media strategy and curating and moderating all social media content. However, the Communications Team may authorise staff from other areas of Council to post or moderate social media content as Administrators.

Council will generally only monitor social media and respond to posts during business hours.

Council reserves the right to remove content from its social media pages if that content:

- is offensive or abusive (including containing offensive language)
- makes any kind of threat towards council staff or elected members
- breaches copyright or intellectual property laws
- incites or encourages an illegal act
- contains unreasonable criticism of Council or its staff as determined by page administrators
- does not relate to issues impacting on Council or the Glenorchy community.

Where possible, Council will clearly outline what unacceptable content is and how it will be moderated on each of its social media platforms.

ROLES and RESPONSIBILITIES

The Mayor

Section 27 of the *Local Government Act 1993* provides that the Mayor is the official spokesperson of Council. The Mayor is the only person authorised to speak on behalf of Council. This function is not shared with the Deputy Mayor, other elected members or the General Manager unless the Mayor delegates it.

The Mayor may authorise the Deputy Mayor, an elected member or the General Manager to communicate on behalf of Council as the Mayor considers appropriate. Under law, this must be done by way of a written delegation for a specified period.

Any person delegated by the Mayor to act as Council's spokesperson must put Council's official position accurately.

Committee Chairs

Elected members appointed by Council as committee chairs are responsible for reporting committee minutes, recommendations, and events to Council for discussion and, if necessary, resolution. Committee matters are regarded as Council business. The appointment of an elected member as chair of a committee does not give authorisation to engage with media regarding Council business.

The Mayor may delegate a committee chair to communicate on behalf of Council on matters relevant to the committee. This delegation must be in writing and detail the subject matter to be communicated as well as being for a specified period. All such communications are to be consistent with any official position adopted by Council.

Elected Members

Elected members have a right to engage in public debate, speak with, or appear in the media . However, elected members must not act as spokesperson for Council without written delegation from the Mayor.

Whenever speaking with or appearing in the media, elected members must put Council’s position accurately when asked to comment on Council’s position on any matter; and when asked for their opinion on a matter and they put forward their personal view, they must clearly state that their opinion is personal and not the official position of Council. Personal opinions must not bring Council into disrepute.

When talking publicly about Council decisions, if a final decision of Council conflicts with the private view of an elected member, they should refrain from expressing a view that is contrary to the formal position of the Council. Expressing a view that opposes the agreed position of Council can lead to confusion and can lead the community to believe that council is divided. Elected members have the opportunity to express their views in the lead-up to a decision and during debate.

Communications Team

Council’s Communications Team is responsible for coordinating and monitoring Council’s media and communications activities. In practice, this includes dealing with the media and overseeing all media communications made on behalf of Council.

The Communications Team reports through the Manager Stakeholder and Executive who liaises with and provides advice on day-to-day communications matters and high-level strategic advice to the General Manager and Mayor.

Members of the Communications Team are the first point of contact for media enquiries. However, these officers are not able to authorise a person to communicate on behalf of Council (see the Mayor section).

Where staff are involved in the preparation of an event which may attract media attention, staff are required to liaise with the Communications Team who will coordinate any media activity associated with the event.

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Version:	1	Adopted	26/08/24	Commencement Date	27/08/24
Minutes Reference	Item 13 – 26/08/24			Review Period	4 Years
Previous Versions:	This Policy replaces the Media and Communications 2023 and Social Media 2021 Policies				
Responsible Directorate	Executive Office	Controller:	Manager Stakeholder and Executive		
ECM Document No.:	3411265				