

Communications and Media Policy

1 Document Information

Version Date <i>(Draft or Council Meeting date)</i>	24 July 2018
Author	Community Engagement & Development Manager
Owner <i>(Relevant director)</i>	The General Manager
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Minute number <i>(once adopted by Council)</i>	18/07/14

2 Summary

Cabonne Council acknowledges that strong two-way communication is the key to building positive and permanent partnerships with its community.

An effective Communications and Media Policy is a vital tool in building these partnerships and relaying accurate, timely and quality information to the community.

3 Approvals

Title	Date Approved	Signature
The General Manager		

4 History

Minute No.	Summary of Changes	New Version Date
06/11/08	Media Policy	7/11/06
10/10/16	Adopted by Council at October 2010 meeting	18 October 2010
13/09/30	Readopted as per s165(4)	17 September 2013
18/07/14	Social Media included. Section about Chairpersons talking to media on behalf of Council deleted. Section on wards deleted. Section on economic development taking precedence on Council website deleted. Job titles updated.	24 July 2018

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5 Reason

Council recognises the important role local, regional and community media play in communicating Council policy and strategy messages to its residents.

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Assist Council and confirm its commitment to communicate with the community and the media and, where applicable, to make accurate and timely public comment;
- Provide a protocol for informing the public through the media and other means about matters that may impact on them.

Council is committed to implementing protocols and practices that:

- Inform the community of key decisions, services, programs and initiatives;
- Promote the transparency and accountability of Council's decision making processes;
- Promote the accessibility of Cabonne Councillors and staff;
- Promote opportunities for public consultation and participation in Council's activities; and

Build pride in the community through the development of a positive image of Cabonne Council and Shire.

6 Scope

This policy applies to:

- Circumstances where the Council wishes to communicate with the community and the media to provide information about Council's activities and services;
- Instances when the media approaches Council for comment or to provide background information on matters applicable to Cabonne Council;
- All Councillors and Council employees and contractors;
- All comment to the media on Council business and policy.

To ensure that Councillors and staff present a consistent message and image of Cabonne Council and avoid contradictory statements in the public arena, the following protocol will apply to all media comment on behalf of Council.

In all forms of communication, Councillors and staff are expected to adhere to the highest standards of ethical practice and professional competence.

Any media comment by Councillors, outside the protocols outlined in this policy, must be clearly expressed as the personal view of those Councillors and not the official view of Cabonne Council.

7 Associated Legislation

Nil

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8 Definitions

Nil

9 Responsibilities

See Authorisations in Policy Statement

10 Related Documents

Document Name	Document Location
Media Kit Template	

11 Policy Statement

11.1 Authorisations

Only authorised elected members and staff should speak, comment or post comments on social media on behalf of Cabonne Council.

The Mayor and General Manager are the official spokespersons of Cabonne Council and the General Manager is the official spokesperson for all operational matters.

Where the Mayor is unavailable, the Deputy Mayor will generally fulfill the spokesperson role, or the Mayor or General Manager may authorise a spokesperson for particular topics.

With the approval of the Mayor, a Councillor may be authorised to comment on a matter where there is significant involvement by the Councillor.

Council recognises that Councillors are able to speak to the media in their capacity as individuals. However, as a matter of courtesy, Councillors should advise Council's General Manager and Community Engagement and Development Manager of any media dealings to ensure that a consistent message is conveyed to the public and to enable the Mayor and other Councillors to be informed.

The General Manager may delegate relevant staff to discuss specific issues and the Community Engagement and Development Manager to provide general comment on Council issues.

11.2 Media Releases

Council's Community Engagement and Development Manager will be responsible for co-ordinating, preparing and distributing all media releases and advising of photographic opportunities and media briefings.

All media releases and other information provided to media organisations must be approved by the General Manager and where appropriate with the Mayor.

With the approval of the Mayor, the Councillor may be authorised to make a statement on a specific matter during a direct interview by electronic and print media representatives.

Where possible Council's Community Engagement and Development Manager shall provide background and briefing notes to Councillors and employees being interviewed by the media and, when possible, be present during such interviews to provide assistance where needed.

With the approval of the Mayor, and where practicable, Council's Community Engagement and Development Manager will contact relevant Councillors to appear in media photographs that relate to issues, programs or services pertaining to the relevant issue.

All media inquiries should be handled efficiently and courteously to preserve Council's positive image while recognising the fact that media work to strict deadlines, which require prompt responses.

Any media release and comments made by an official spokesperson must accurately reflect the Council's position, as adopted in Council's minutes or included management plans, policies and strategies.

Councillors shall be provided with copies of all media releases at the time they are issued.

To ensure interaction with the media is co-ordinated effectively, all material prepared by Council's departments for public distribution should be forwarded to Council's Community Engagement and Development Manager to be edited for compliance and style prior to release.

11.3 Contact With The Media

Council officers contacted by the media should advise the Community Engagement and Development Manager by email or telephone, or refer the media representative to the Community Engagement and Development Manager. The Community Engagement and Development Manager is available for advice on any complex issues that needs to be discussed with the media. This will ensure a corporate, consistent and authorised view is presented.

Council employees may communicate with the media as private individuals provided:

- They do not comment on Council business or policy;
- They are not identified as Council employees;
- Their comments are not perceived as representing Council's official position or policy.

Council staff shall not engage in media activity which may be to the personal advantage or detriment of a Councillor.

During Local Government election campaigns, Councillors must ensure that their media comments are made as a candidate and are clearly distinguished from their role as a Councillor.

11.4 Letters to the Editor

Any Letters to the Editor or comments or replies on social media generated from within Cabonne Council, which are determined necessary to inform the community of a particular matter, are to be authorised by the General Manager and issued by the Community Engagement and Development Manager.

11.5 Public Speaking Roles

The Mayor shall be responsible for allocating public speaking roles at Council-organised events. In the absence of the Mayor this shall be referred to the Deputy Mayor or General Manager to allocate.

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11.6 Council's Website

Council's Community Engagement and Development Manager shall ensure that all media releases are posted on Cabonne Council's website and that the website's design and content are up to date and most effectively convey key information to the public.

11.7 Media Training

Council's Community Engagement and Development Manager shall organise relevant media skills training as required for Councillors and relevant staff to ensure co-ordinated, coherent, professional, accurate and reliable presentation.

Council may organise any other appropriate media training.

11.8 Conclusion

Cabonne Council's relationship with the media and their ability to convey information to the community is critical.

The protocols contained in this policy will assist in maximising a positive public image of Cabonne Council and the Shire.