

# Statements to the Media

## POLICY – ICT-CP-401



Directorate	Executive Services	
TRIM Ref	14/15160	
Status	Current	Effective from: 11/04/2017
Adopted	11/04/2017	Minute No: 17/079

### 1. OBJECTIVES

- a) To maintain effective communication between Council and the community as well as improve communication within the organisation.
- b) To ensure information is provided by those who are authorised to speak on Council matters.
- c) To maintain community confidence in the processes of Council.

### 2. STATEMENT

The media provides an important link between Griffith City Council and the community as a means of promoting the activities, projects and initiatives of Council.

The policy is designed to strengthen and build on Council's existing relationship with the media and to ensure there is consistency in the way that Councillors and Council staff deals with the media on a day to day basis.

Councillors and Council staff are encouraged to cooperate at all times with media outlets requests for interviews/photographs in line with the following policy.

### 3. PURPOSE:

1. To ensure all communication with the media is consistent, well informed, timely and appropriate and is a true representation of Council.
2. To clearly identify Council's authorised spokespersons and also identify the subjects upon which they are able to comment.
3. To improve communication with internal and external customers and enhance Council's public image.
4. To establish protocols and consistent methods for managing and monitoring communication to the media to ensure relevant and approved comments.
5. To positively promote the Council's role in the community and to assist the community to better understand that role.

#### **4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF MAYOR AND COUNCILLORS**

##### **4.1 MAYOR**

The Mayor is the official Council spokesperson on matters concerning policy and decision making. This includes speaking at civic occasions, community events, chairing public meetings and making major Council announcements.

The Mayor may, at any time, delegate this authority to speak to another Councillor

Whilst representing Council within a media interview, the Mayor shall not express a personal point of view but rather a view that is the general consensus of the Councillors. When approached by the media to speak on issues not of a Council nature, the Mayor is required to indicate whether they are speaking as a Councillor in accordance with this policy or if they are presenting their personal viewpoint as an individual.

##### **4.2 COUNCILLORS**

All Councillors should notify the Communications Officer of any contact with the media that relates to Council matters.

Councillors are not to use or disclose information gained during the ordinary course of business of Council in a way that may cause significant damage or distress to a person; damage to the interests of Council or a person; or confer an unfair commercial or financial advantage on a person or business when dealing with the media.

Councillors are, as individuals, free to talk to the media at any time on issues of interest. However, they should always do so with the best interests of the organisation in mind.

Councillors may communicate with the media as private individuals with the following restrictions:

- That they do not comment on Council business or policy
- That they are not identified as Councillors by the media organisation
- That their comments are not perceived as representing official Council position or policy.

When speaking with the media, Councillors are required to indicate whether they are speaking as a Councillor in accordance with this policy or if they are presenting their personal viewpoint as an individual.

##### **4.3 COUNCIL COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON**

Chairpersons of Council's Committees are the primary spokesperson on matters that have been discussed by such Committees. Priority should be given to the Chairperson to comment on Council decisions, projects and initiatives associated to the relevant Committee unless the Mayor elects to do so.

#### **5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAFF**

All requests for comments from the Media are to be directed to the Communications Officer to ensure the correct member of staff or Councillor is commenting on Council matters.

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Before comments are submitted to the relevant media outlet, comments should be provided in writing to the Communications Officer for checking and proofing.

All media interviews are to be coordinated by the Communications Officer.

Contact with the media should be done in the first instance (where possible) by Media Release.

All staff should notify the Communications Officer of any contact with the media.

Council employees are not to use or disclose information gained during the ordinary course of business of Council in a way that may cause significant damage or distress to a person; damage to the interests of Council or a person; or confer an unfair commercial or financial advantage on a person or business when dealing with the media.

Council employees may communicate with the media as private individuals with the following restrictions:

- That they do not comment on Council business or policy
- That they are not identified as Council employees by the media organisation
- That their comments are not perceived as representing official Council position or policy

### 5.1 GENERAL MANAGER

The General Manager is the official Council spokesperson on all matters concerning Council's operations including staff, administrative, election and industrial issues. In addition, the General Manager may act as the Council spokesperson in regard to technical or legislative matters and all issues relating to the day to day management of Griffith City Council.

### 5.2 DIRECTORS

At the General Manager's discretion, the approval of media releases or responding to enquiries on routine operational issues may be delegated to Directors or facility managers. In addition to this, the General Manager may delegate authority for other officers to communicate with the media on specific issues. All media requests are to be referred the Communications Officer.

### 5.3 FACILITY MANAGERS

After receiving approval from the General Manager or appropriate Director, managers of Council's Community, Leisure and Cultural facilities may speak with the media on matters relating to daily operations and events within their facility. In the absence of the facility manager, all media requests are to be referred their Director or the Communications Officer. This media contact should be notified.

### 5.4 STAFF

The media may, at times, approach individual staff in order to obtain a different perspective on a matter. Staff members are not to respond to media requests unless authorised to do so in accordance with this policy and under their specific media delegation within the delegated area of responsibility as defined by their Position Description. Please see Appendix 1.

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Outdoor and external staff approached by the media for information on the job/project on which they are working should refer those inquiries to their immediate supervisor who should then advise the relevant Director. Should the Director be unavailable, supervisors should notify the Communications Officer.

### 5.5 CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER

The Corporate Communications Officer may provide information to the media which is freely available to any member of the public. The information shall be provided in order to improve or clarify the media's understanding of issues.

The Corporate Communications Officer can comment to the media within the delegated areas of responsibility as defined by the Position Description of this position.

The Communications Officer should be advised of all media contacts and requests for information on Council matters to ensure a consistent message and representation of Council is given. This will also allow for the adequate monitoring of media coverage.

### 6. COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Members of Council's Committees are also bound by this policy. For the purposes of consistency, the nominated spokesperson for all council committees shall be the Chair.

Council committee members are not to use or disclose information gained during the ordinary course of their committee duties in a way that may cause significant damage or distress to a person; damage to the interests of Council or a person; or confer an unfair commercial or financial advantage on a person or business when dealing with the media.

Committee members may communicate with the media as private individuals with the following restrictions:

- That they do not comment on Council business or policy
- That they are not identified as Council Committee members by the media organisation
- That their comments are not perceived as representing official Council position or policy

All council committee members must notify the Communications Officer of any contact with the media where such contact relates to committee business.

As members of the community, Committee members are entitled to enter into public debate in their private capacity and make comment, provided they clearly state that such public comment reflects their own personal opinion and is not the view of Council or the committee on which they sit.

### 7. LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

All Letters to the Editor must be approved by the General Manager when relating to Council's operational issues or the Mayor when relating to decisions of the Councillors. In the latter instance, all councillors will be provided 24 hours to comment. All letters must be signed by either the General Manager or his delegate where applicable or the Mayor or his Deputy.

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Unless requested by the Mayor or Deputy Mayor (in the Mayor's absence) Councillors should not write Letters to the Editor on behalf of Council. Councillors are; however, free to write as individuals – providing in doing so they do not use the opportunity to discuss council related matters.

### Definitions

None

### Exceptions

None

### Legislation

None

### Related Documents

GC-CP-404 – Code of Conduct

GC-CP-411 – Internal Reporting Policy - Public Interest Disclosures

GC-CP-312 – Statement of Business Ethics

GC-CP-402 – Council Committees

### Policy History

Revision Number	Date of Adoption/Amendment	Minute Number
1	14/01/03	25
2	30/09/08	0393
3	11/05/10	0142
4	09/06/15	15/161
5	11/04/2017	17/079

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### Appendix 1

Department	Comments to Media Delegation
<b>MAYOR &amp; COUNCILLORS</b>	
Mayor	All
Councillors	Comments not perceived as representing official Council position or policy
Committee Chairpersons	Matters relating to Committee and/or defer to Mayor
Committee Members	Defer to Committee Chairperson
<b>GENERAL MANAGER</b>	All
<b>EXECUTIVE SERVICES</b>	
Manager Executive Service	Matters relating specifically to role
Corporate Communications Officer	As per Position Description
Compliance Coordinator	Matters relating specifically to Compliance on the authority of Manager Executive Services
<b>SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT</b>	
Director Sustainable Development	Matters relating specifically to role
Coordinator Land Use & Compliance	Matters relating specifically to role
Manager Planning & Environment	Matters relating specifically to role
Principal Planner Urban Design & Strategic Planning	Matters relating specifically to role
Environment, Health & Sustainability Coordinator	Matters relating specifically to role
Tourism & Economic Development Manager	Matters relating specifically to role
Customer Service Coordinator	Matters relating specifically to role on the authority of Director Sustainable Development
Economic Development Officer	Matters relating to economic development, investment attraction, skills and others as outlined in PD on the authority of Director Sustainable Development
Marketing & Promotions Officer	Matters relating to marketing Griffith on the authority of Director Sustainable Development
Events Coordinator	Matters relating to Council events on the authority of Director Sustainable Development
PPM- Curator	Matters relating to exhibitions and special events at Pioneer Park Museum
PPM - Business and Administration Coordinator	Matters relating specifically to role on the authority of Tourism & Economic Development Manager
Community Development Coordinator	Matters relating specifically to role including CDAT
Project Planner	Matters relating to urban design projects as required
Aboriginal Liaison Officer	On a case by case basis on the authority of Community Development Coordinator
Community Development Officer	On a case by case basis on the authority of Community Development Coordinator

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<b>BUSINESS, CULTURAL &amp; FINANCIAL SERVICES</b>	
Director Business, Cultural & Financial Services	Matters relating specifically to role
GRALC - Leisure Services Manager	Matters relating to Griffith Regional Aquatic Leisure Centre and West End Stadium with regard to operations. Matters relating to financials to be referred to Director
GRALC – Team Leaders	Matters relating to specific public programs at GRALC on the authority of the Manager
	Weekly program on Hit FM on the authority of the Manager
LIBRARY - Joint Library Managers	Matters relating to Griffith City Library with regard to operations. Matters relating to financials to be referred to Director
LIBRARY - People and Programs Team Leader	Matters relating to specific public programs on the authority of the Library Manager
THEATRE - Manager Griffith Regional Theatre & Art Gallery	Matters relating to Griffith Regional Theatre and Griffith Regional Art Gallery with regard to operations. Matters relating to financials to be referred to Director
GALLERY- Gallery Coordinator	Matters relating to exhibitions and public programs at Griffith Regional Art Gallery
<b>INFRASTRUCTURE &amp; OPERATIONS</b>	
Director Infrastructure & Operations	Matters relating specifically to role
Works Manager – Maintenance	Matters relating specifically to role
Works Manager – Construction	Matters relating specifically to role
Airport Coordinator	Matters relating specifically to role. Preferred contact Director Infrastructure & Operations
Parks & Gardens Manager	Matters relating specifically to role. Preferred contact Director Infrastructure & Operations
<b>UTILITIES</b>	
Director Utilities	Matters relating specifically to role
Waste Operations Manager	Matters relating specifically to role
Senior Engineer Operations	Matters relating specifically to role. Preferred contact Director Utilities
Road Safety Officer	Matters relating to road safety in Griffith and as sanctioned by RMS