

# Media Policy

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<b>Strategic Pillar</b>	Community Choice
<b>Responsible Branch</b>	Communications and Engagement

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## **1 OUTCOMES**

- 1.1 Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council (QPRC) has an important relationship with the media. This relationship provides Council with an opportunity to keep the community informed and involved in its activities and programs. It also promotes mutual understanding between Council and its stakeholders

## **2 SCOPE OF THE POLICY**

- 2.1 This policy applies to all Council officials, members of Council's committees, including s.355 committees, contractors and delegates.
- 2.2 It does not apply to the submission of personal letters to the editor or promotional material where the user makes no reference to Council or any of Council's employees, contractors, other Council officials, related entities or any other person or organisation providing services to or on behalf of Council.

## **3 DEFINITIONS**

- 3.1 Council business — any activity, function, role, resolution, decision or statutory obligation undertaken by Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council.
- 3.2 Council official — include councillors, members of staff of Council and other approved delegates, including volunteers and chairs of Council committees.
- 3.3 Media — various means of published communication, including but not limited to television, radio, newspaper, journals, newsletters, magazines and on-line news websites, which are published or circulated in the community.
- 3.4 Offensive language – contains
- (a) inappropriate or vulgar language
  - (b) profanities
  - (c) discriminatory content
  - (d) slanderous or defamatory content
  - (e) content that is deemed to be offensive to stakeholders, including obscene or sexually explicit language
  - (f) content that is derogatory to QPRC and/or its stakeholders
- 3.5 Publication — the distribution of information via print or electronic media including, but not limited to, newspapers, magazines, journals, radio, television, newsletters and the internet.

## 4 LEGISLATIVE OBLIGATIONS AND/OR RELEVANT STANDARDS

- 4.1 Council complies with the following legislative and mandatory directives impacting on local government operations:
- *Copyright Act 1968*
  - *Defamation Act 2005*
  - *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*
  - *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*
  - *Local Government Act 1993*
  - *State Records Act 1998*
  - Procedures for the Administration of the Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW
- 4.2 This policy is to be read in conjunction with the following QPRC documents:
- Code of Conduct
  - Public Interest Disclosures Policy
  - Statement of Business Ethics
  - Complaints Management Policy
  - Records Management Policy
  - Privacy Policy and Plan
  - Social Media Policy

## 5 CONTENT

- 5.1 Council encourages open communication with the community through a range of media channels, with an emphasis on promoting a positive, progressive and professional image of Council and staff.
- 5.2 The Mayor and the CEO are the official spokespersons of Council.
- 5.3 To ensure that information released publicly about Council is accurate, reliable and in the best interests of the organisation, all staff media contacts are to be coordinated through the QPRC Communications and Engagement team, regardless of whether the media representative has contacted another member of staff in the first instance. The Communications and Engagement team will liaise with the relevant party (CEO, Mayor or Portfolio General Managers) to coordinate a response.
- 5.4 CEO/Portfolio General Managers may delegate the responsibility for responding to media enquiries to relevant staff members.
- 5.5 In the case where a member of staff is the subject matter expert and is the most appropriate person to undertake a media interview, the Communications and Engagement team will liaise directly with the staff member.
- 5.6 Council officials should refrain from using the media to make negative comments which are likely to undermine public confidence in the Council or local government generally.

- 5.7 Staff should make factual comments and must not make political or controversial statements in the media about Councillors, Council business, decisions or events.
- 5.8 Confidential information must not be released by Council or Council officers to the media.
- 5.9 In all forms of communication, staff and councillors are expected to adhere to the highest standards of ethical practice and professional competence.
- 5.10 Council will openly discuss matters of interest with the media unless disclosure of certain information contravenes Council's obligations of confidentiality, privacy, duty of care, or could infringe other laws or regulations that govern Council's operations.
- 5.11 Councillors are entitled to enter into public debate in their private capacity and make comment on Council affairs, provided they clearly state that such public comment reflects their personal opinion and not that of the Council or a committee of the Council.
- 5.12 Individual staff should not be identified by any Councillor or any authorised staff in any media comment.
- 5.13 If, in the opinion of the CEO or Portfolio General Manager, it is deemed that an individual staff member should be identified for the legitimate purpose of the communication, then such identification may only occur after consultation with the relevant staff member to ensure there are no unintended consequences. The identified staff member must be referred to in the context of their formal position in the organisation.
- 5.14 In the event that information is published and is incorrect or has a personal or corporate reputational risk, the CEO will investigate the matter, and if necessary, issue a statement that conveys the correct information.

## **6 COMPLIANCE WITH POLICY**

- 6.1 Any breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action which may include termination of employment or termination/non-renewal of contractual arrangements.
- 6.2 Other disciplinary action that may be taken includes, but is not limited to:
- issuing a warning
  - suspension
  - temporary or permanent disconnection of access to all or part of Council's computer network.