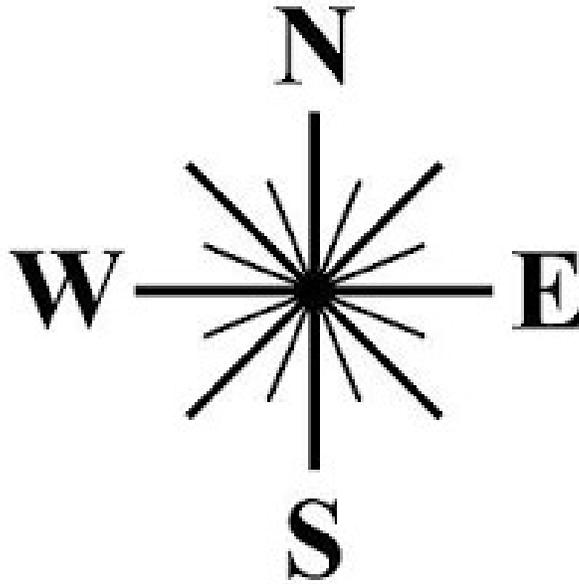
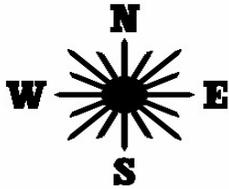


CENTRAL DARLING



SHIRE COUNCIL

MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY



Central Darling Shire Council

Title of Policy	Media Relations Policy		
This applies to	All Staff, Management, Media and Councillors (Administrator)		
Author	Jennie Geerdink	Date approved:	27 October 2021
Position of Author	Community Engagement Officer	Authorised by:	General Manager
Legislation, Australian Standards, Code of Practice	<i>Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009</i> <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> <i>Privacy and Personal information Protection Act 1998</i> <i>State Records Act 1998</i>		
Related Policies/Procedures	Online (Digital and Social Media) Policy 2020 Community Engagement Strategy		

1. INTRODUCTION

This Policy provides a framework for Councillors and staff to use to promote coverage of Council affairs that is consistent, fair, accurate and reliable. This Policy applies to Councillors (Administrator), Council officers, volunteers, consultants, and contractors.

2. POLICY OBJECTIVE

The Media Relations Policy has the following objectives:

- To ensure consistency by Councillors (Administrator) and staff in dealing with the media.
- To promote open exchange of information between Council and the media.
- To limit the publication of inaccurate information which could cause conflict or embarrassment for employees and Councillors (Administrator).
- To limit the possibility of miscommunication and reputation risk.
- To promote positive media relationships.
- To clearly indicate Council's authorised spokespersons.
- To ensure appropriate authorisation and responsibility for information provided.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

The following guidelines should be observed at all times when interacting with media:

Authority to speak to the media

The General Manager and the Mayor (Administrator) have authority to speak to the media. Council staff must not speak to the media about matters related to Council unless authorised by the General Manager to do so.

Media Enquiries

All media enquiries should be directed to the General Manager or Community Engagement Officer.

Enquiries of a nature which cover legislative, statutory or contentious issues must be made in writing. They must be directed to the General Manager and the Community Engagement Officer. A written response should be provided within three (3) working days. If this is not possible, the media outlet requesting the information should be advised that the issue is being investigated and a response will be forthcoming. All written requests from media should be resolved within five (5) working days.

Staff and Media

Council employees may not provide any comment or information to the media with the intention of contesting or undermining Council policy or casting Council, Councillors (or Administrator) or Council staff in a negative light.

Council employees may speak to the media or write Letters to the Editor as private individuals providing they do not comment on Council business or policy, and do not identify themselves as Council employees.

From time to time it may be necessary for a Letter to the Editor to be written as an official Council communication to inform the community about a particular matter. Such letters must be issued through the Community Engagement Officer, subject to the approval of the Mayor (Administrator) and/or General Manager.

In the event of an industrial dispute (or an incident likely to lead to an industrial dispute), statements on behalf of Council employees should be issued via the relevant union.

When appropriate, a member of Council staff may be nominated by the General Manager to act as the sole spokesperson on a specific issue, event or initiative within their operational portfolio, to ensure consistency of message. The nominated staff member should speak with the Community Engagement Officer prior to speaking with the media to ensure messaging and responses are clear.

Council staff should treat all media outlets equally and avoid giving one outlet preferential treatment. Media releases should be distributed to all media outlets at the same time.

Council staff should never provide information “off the record” during media interviews or discussions. Anything said to a media representative at any time can be used in a news story.

Contractors, volunteers or service providers employed by Council must refer all media enquiries relating to Council to the Community Engagement Officer.

Media Releases

Staff may prepare draft media releases, but they must be forwarded to the Community Engagement Officer for editing, formatting and distribution to ensure consistency in communication with media.

Media releases should never be issued without the Community Engagement Officer’s knowledge, and the prior approval of the General Manager or the Mayor/Administrator.

A media release should never be issued quoting a member of staff without that person’s knowledge and the approval of the General Manager.

If a media release relates to a funded project, the requesting officer must notify the Community Engagement Officer at the time of the request for media, particularly where third party approval is required prior to distribution.

Media releases must be approved by the General Manager or Mayor/Administrator before posting on the Council website or social media.

Media requests should be submitted to the Community Engagement Officer using the Media and Communications Request Form which can be found in Council’s official records management system.

Media Alerts

Any Councillor or staff member who is aware of a Council matter that may be of interest to the media should immediately contact the General Manager and/or Community Engagement Officer.

Complaints about the Media

Staff complaints about incorrect or unfair media content regarding Council matters should be forwarded to the Community Engagement Officer. Official complaints about media, or requests for a correction can only be made with the authorisation of the General Manager.

Emergency Communication

Council recognises that ill-considered and uninformed comments can cause dire consequences and have legal implications in the event of an emergency, disaster, crisis or other sensitive issue.

In the event of an emergency in the Council area involving serious injury to and/or death of residents, the Mayor/Administrator or Council employees, or involving significant damage to Council assets or private property, or involving significant law enforcement activity on Council property, the following procedures will apply:

The General Manager’s Office must be notified immediately of details of the incident or activity.

Details of the incident or activity must not be discussed with any media representatives unless approved in advance by the General Manager.

Requests by the media to film, photograph or interview Council employees or Council assets involved in the emergency situation must be referred to the General Manager’s Office.

Crisis Management

In communications planning, a crisis is regarded as an emergency due to an actual or imminent occurrence (such as fire, flood, storm, earthquake, explosion, terrorist act, accident, epidemic or war like action) which creates an emergency that requires a significant and coordinated response.

A crisis is defined as a situation that:

- endangers, or threatens to endanger, the safety or health of persons or animals in the Local Government Area and;
- destroys or damages, or threatens to destroy or damage, any property in the Local Government Area.

If the District Emergency Management Committee enacts the District DISPLAN, requests must be referred to the General Manager’s Office. The General Manager will be guided by the advice of the District and Local Emergency Operations Controllers.

4. IMPLEMENTATION

Roles and Responsibilities

The following Council officers are responsible for the implementation and the adherence to this policy:

Authorised Officer	Roles and Responsibilities
Mayor (Administrator)	Council’s official spokesperson on all strategic and policy matters. Authorised signatory for Letters to the Editor on policy issues.
General Manager	Council’s official spokesperson on all policy, operations, strategic, and administrative issues. Authorised signatory for Letters to the Editor on these issues.
Directors/ Department Managers	May make statements on behalf of Council as a designated spokesperson if authorised by the General Manager.
Community Engagement Officer	Responsible for coordinating responses and providing information and press releases to the media.
General Staff	No media role unless authorised by the General Manager to act as a designated spokesperson.

The Mayor (Administrator) and the General Manager are Council's official spokespersons on all matters.

The Community Engagement Officer is responsible for co-ordinating media liaison and issuing press releases, and may respond to media enquiries on behalf of Council on the direction of the General Manager.

No staff member, other than those authorised by the General Manager, are to handle an enquiry from the media without prior approval.

Information given to the media of a controversial, legal, or ethical nature requires the approval of the General Manager and/or the Mayor (Administrator).

All staff, Councillors, volunteers and contractors must abide by Council's Code Of Conduct when speaking with the media.

Communication

This policy will be communicated to staff and displayed on the Central Darling Shire Council website.

5. REVIEW

Review of this policy will occur every two (2) years or sooner as required by legislation, Council or the General Manager. The Community Engagement Officer is responsible for the review.