

Media Relations

Council Policy Number	055
Date adopted	18 May 2022
Scheduled for review	May 2026



1. Preamble

The use of media is one tool used by Council to communicate key messages to the community.

Liaison with media outlets including print, television and radio is one of the core roles of the Communications team to ensure information provided is clear, accurate and assists Council in sharing information with its communities.

Council values the role of the media and will develop and foster positive relationships with journalists, editors and photographers.

2. Purpose

This policy outlines the approach to and resources available for managing media relations.

The policy aims to:

- ensure a clear and effective presentation of Council's message to the media and the community;
- ensure a clear and understood strategy for communicating a consistent message to the media; and
- avoid any misunderstandings, misquotes or overtly negative coverage.

The Manager Communications and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) have responsibility for implementation of this policy, and for ensuring that Council's communication practices meet its Council Plan commitments and Council's obligations in respect to open and accountable local government.

It is expected that both the Mayor and CEO will work in partnership to support the release of key messages on behalf of Council. At the commencement of each Mayoral term, the CEO and Mayor will agree on the parameters and approach to respond to media enquiries and ensure awareness of proposed media releases and their key messages in advance of being issued.

The Mayor, councillors and staff are required to work with the Communications team to identify opportunities to engage in a positive or meaningful way with media outlets.

3. Definitions

Media	Refers to any media organisation including print, online, radio and television.
Relevant Councillor	Councillor nominated to speak.

4. Policy Statement

4.1. Principal Council Spokesperson

The Mayor is the principal spokesperson of for the Council in relation to Council decisions, policy, projects, changes to service levels or any major issue in the community. The Mayor has responsibility for ensuring that the views of the elected Council are appropriately represented.

In most cases, media releases will be drafted quoting the Mayor. By discretion, the Mayor may delegate spokesperson authority to a fellow councillor when the matter relates to a specific ward, a councillor portfolio, a Notice of Motion raised by a councillor, if the Mayor is unavailable.

In the event that the media release relates to an organisational matter, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) will be quoted, unless the CEO determines that another officer would be more appropriate in the circumstances.

Council staff must not provide information directly to the media unless authorised by the CEO or the Manager Communications. In this case, statements and appropriate information should be provided to the Manager Communications so it can be recorded, checked for consistency and agreed format and issued to the appropriate media outlet.

Off the record statements should not be made. All comments to media should be considered "on the record".

4.2. Media Releases

Media releases are designed to raise the interest of journalists by providing information about a Council decision, project or issue. There is no guarantee information provided in a media release will result in a story being published or broadcast. Ensuring media releases are concise, interesting and newsworthy will add to the chances of it being published.

The appropriate spokesperson for statements made in the media release will be based on section 4.1 of this policy.

All media statements should be approved by the Mayor, CEO or their nominees before release. The Communications team is responsible for issuing the media release to appropriate media outlets.

Similarly, media releases issued by other organisations on behalf of Council should be provided to the CEO prior to release, to ensure consistency in the delivered message.

If media seek additional information to that contained in the media release, the Officer / Councillor nominated in the release should gather the information and provide it to the Communications team.

4.3. Media Enquiries

The Communications team is the first point of contact for all media enquiries.

Staff and Councillors must refer media enquiries to the Communications team who will log the questions, try to ascertain from the journalist what type of story will be written, whether the journalist has spoken to any other party and if the journalist has the appropriate background information. The deadline will also be established.

By fielding enquiries in this manner staff can ensure consistency in information provided to the media. This is particularly important if the organisation has already responded to a similar enquiry.

The Communications team will then identify the most suitable person in the organisation to provide a response. That person will be fully briefed and key messages formulated, taking into account the type of story being written, any links to messages in ongoing strategies, previous information provided and so on. The Communications team will also identify possible issues that could arise.

The Communications team will provide relevant background information to journalists, as may be required.

If in the rare situation that an appropriate Council staff member cannot be contacted because of deadline issues, but the correct information is available, the Communications team will respond on behalf of the organisation. This does not apply to policy or political issues, just operational issues. This is to avoid the journalist writing "the Campaspe Shire Council did not respond."

4.4. Media Interview Requests

If there is a television, radio or press interview request, the Mayor or their nominee is the first choice for spokesperson.

It is recognised that there will be instances when staff will be required to interact with the media and respond to requests for interviews. In the instance of responding to "voice grabs" for radio, the Communications team, in consultation with the CEO or General Manager, will authorise the appropriate staff member to fulfil the request. The staff member will be briefed as to the key messages and possible angles.

In the case of 'face to face' interviews, the councillor and/or staff member will be briefed as to key messages and potential angles the journalist may take. If appropriate, the Communications Manager will accompany the interviewee.

The Communications team will handle all contact with the media, with the exception of comment at or after Council meetings. This will allow effective briefings and advice to councillors and staff and support their effective interaction with the media.

4.5. Issues and/or Crisis Management

The Communications team is responsible for monitoring media activity and identifying potential issues. If a councillor or officer becomes aware of an issue that has the potential to impact upon Council they should bring it to the attention of the CEO, relevant General Manager or the Communications Manager.

Statements made to the media may have far reaching effects and can be used later in legal proceedings against Council. Informal comment or discussion might prejudice Council's ability to manage its response to the media in the most appropriate way.

In the event of a crisis or unexpected issue the Communications Manager, in conjunction with the CEO, will manage Council's communication with the media. This includes identifying and briefing the most appropriate spokesperson. This will generally be the Mayor or the CEO who will comment on Council's behalf. The designated spokesperson will liaise with the Communications Manager, and, if appropriate, the Governance Manager, to determine the most appropriate response, including key messages.

5. Exclusions

Nil

6. Human Rights

This policy has considered and complies with the Human Rights and Responsibilities contained in the Victorian Charter of *Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.

7. Related Legislation

Nil

8. Related Policies, Procedures and Strategies

Council Policy 131 – Social Media

Councillor Code of Conduct

Employee Code of Conduct

9. Attachments

Nil

10. Review Period

Four years

Responsible officer

Manager Communications

11. Administrative Updates

It is recognised that, from time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this document. Where an update does not materially alter the policy, such a change may be made administratively. Examples include a change to the name of a Council department, a change to the name of a Federal or State Government department, and a minor update to legislation which does not have a material impact. However, any change or update which materially alters this document must be by resolution of Council.

12. Approval History

Adopted	28 January 1999	Minute Book Reference No	3383 (Item 13.1)
Revised	8 July 1999	Minute Book Reference No	3737 (Item 12.1)
Revised	12 September 2000	Minute Book Reference No	4658 (Item 12.1)
Revised	11 September 2001	Minute Book Reference No	5565 (Item 12.2)
Revised	13 August 2002	Minute Book Reference No	6305 (Item 12.1)
Revised	16 October 2007	Minute Book Reference No	11542 (Item 9.1)
Revised	21 October 2008	Minute Book Reference No	12868 (Item 9.5)
Revised	21 August 2012	Minute Book Reference No	1057 (Item 4.16)
Revised	17 December 2013	Minute Book Reference No	1664 (Item 6.4)
Revised	16 August 2016	Minute Book Reference No	731 (Item 6.2)
Revised	17 October 2017	Minute Book Reference No	2865 (Item 6.3)
Revised	25 June 2019	Minute Book Reference No	1988 (Item 7.1)
Revised	22 February 2021	Administrative update to apply	consistent references to

Revised 18 May 2022

Campaspe Shire Council ('Council') and abbreviations
Minute Book Reference No (Item 9.1)

Chief Executive Officer:

Date:

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