

MEDIA AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

ES250



NARRANDERA SHIRE COUNCIL POLICY

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MEDIA AND PUBLIC RELATIONS



Policy No:	ES250
Policy Title:	Media and Public Relations
Section Responsible:	Executive Services
Minute No:	14/186
MagiQ No:	8385
Next Review Date:	As required

Objective

- To provide clarity for the role of the Narrandera Shire Council spokesperson and his/her responsibilities when dealing with the media and public relations opportunities.
- To deal openly and effectively with controversial, crisis and sensitive information, while maintaining confidentiality where appropriate.
- To utilise the media to its full advantage in promoting the efforts of Council and its achievements.
- To utilise the media to its full advantage in promoting Narrandera's liveability and supporting tourism and commercial business activity
- To ensure coordinated, accurate and up to date information is provided.
- To foster a positive and professional public image for the Narrandera Shire Council.

Policy Statement

Proactive media relations and well managed public relations are essential if Narrandera Shire Council is to achieve its strategic outcomes in relation to improving resident satisfaction with Council. Council will consistently promote Council's key messages and corporate priorities through news releases and other proactive and reactive media and public relations activity.

Scope

This policy applies to Councillors, employees, volunteers and Section 355 Committee Members

Definitions

Media – Official, registered publications and official, registered online news sites

Public Relations material – official speeches, promotional literature, website content

Political	Issues pertaining to decisions of the council and or council policy
Topical	Issues which are current and of a local interest (not necessarily related to Council business)
High profile	Issues which have generated a high media profile and therefore strong community interest (may not be related to Council business)
Operational	Issues relating to the day to day running of Council that are not deemed to be political or likely to come before the council
Technical expertise	Refers to the underlying knowledge and skills that are necessary to carry out duties or complete a task.
Online material	All of Council's online material including the websites and social media presence.

Related Legislation/Guidelines/Narrandera Policies and Associated Procedures

The following legislation and policies are applicable to this policy:

- Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009
- Copyright Act 1879
- Defamations Act, 2005
- Privacy and Personal Information Act, 1988
- Narrandera Shire Council Code of Conduct
- Narrandera Shire Council Disciplinary Policy
- Narrandera Shire Council Community Engagement Policy (when adopted)
- Narrandera Shire Council Web Site and Social Media Policy

Roles and Responsibilities

The Mayor is the official spokesperson on political issues, policy issues, topical issues or issues that have generated high media interest. If unavailable, delegate to the Deputy Mayor.

Councillors may provide media comment, identifying that it is provided as their own opinion and not representing the official position of Council. Councillors are encouraged to seek the assistance of the General Manger prior to making public statements to ensure the information is factually accurate.

The General Manager is the official spokesperson on all operational and administration issues. The General Manager may nominate specialist members of staff to respond to technical questions on operational issues only. This may include a joint approach with the Mayor or Director. The General Manager approves all media releases. The General Manager and the Mayor will confer as to who is the most appropriate person to speak to the media when issues cross over political and operational lines.

Directors and designated staff provide media comment on issues within their portfolio as delegated by the General Manager. Directors and designated staff to make themselves or a member of their team available to brief the Mayor and General Manager on any technical issues relating to a particular media issue. Directors and designated staff are to pro actively prepare media releases and identify opportunities for public relations.

The Executive Officer is responsible for co-ordinating responses and providing information to the media on behalf of Council and organising media/photo opportunities and preparing speeches for the Mayor..

PA to the General Manager and the Mayor is responsible for distributing all written media comment to media outlets.

Designated Staff will be responsible for ensuring the website content, and approved social media content, related to their activities is kept up to date and relevant to the needs of the community. They will ensure all promotional material and presentations is of a high standard of professional content and format.

Directors are responsible for approving all website content before it is uploaded to the live site.

The IT Manager is responsible for maintaining the technical aspects of approved Council websites.

Council staff who receive requests direct from media representatives are to decline to comment and report the request to the Executive Officer.

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

- That they comply with Council's Code of Conduct
- That they do not comment on Council business or policy
- That they are not identified as Council employees
- That their comments are not perceived as representing Council's official position or policy.

Official spokespersons are to be offered media training.

All official spokespersons are to ensure they do not defame or slander another person either verbally or through the written word, that they do not misrepresent Council, that they do not release unauthorised material and that they comply with the Code of Conduct at all times.

Councillors and staff members may expose themselves to legal actions or sanctions under these requirements unless complying with this policy and procedure.

Breaches of this policy will be addressed in accordance with Council's Code of Conduct and Council's Disciplinary Policy.

Variation

Council reserves the right to review, vary or revoke this policy.

Policy History

Endorsed by relevant Committees (name) and date

Adopted by MANEX June 2014

Adopted by Council 29 April 1997

Reviewed by Council 16 August 2006

Amended by Council 12 December 2006

Amended by Council 17 February 2009

Amended by Council 15 July 2014

Adopted by Council 19 August 2014



Signed: General Manager

Date: 17 September 2014