

7. NOTICES OF MOTION

7.1. NOTICE OF MOTION - MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY

COUNCILLOR Cr Abigail Noli

NOTICE OF MOTION

I hereby give Notice of my intention to move the following Motion at the Council meeting scheduled for Tuesday 25 July 2023:

"I move that Council adopts the Media Relations Policy as attached."

ATTACHMENTS

1. Media Relations Policy [7.1.1 - 4 pages]

MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY

Purpose

This policy outlines a formal process for all media releases, statements and enquiries relating to Douglas Shire Council and Elected members.

Scope and application

The Policy provides a framework to promote consistent and accurate coverage of Council and the Elected Members through traditional and digital media.

Objectives

The Media Relations Policy has the following objectives:

- To ensure good governance by promoting transparency and accountability in all communications in line with local government principles (Section 4 Local Government Act 2009).
- To ensure consistency by Councillors and Council staff in working with the media.
- To mitigate the risk of inaccurate or inconsistent information being communicated to the media.
- To protect the reputation of the organisation.
- To include all elected members consistently and regularly in media and to utilise the elected members in their areas of expertise or interest.
- To ensure that transparency and full dissemination of Council business is consistently achieved.
- To eliminate bias or political promotion of any Elected member.

Roles and Responsibilities

- The Mayor is the official Council spokesperson on all matters of policy and decision-making inquiries. This includes civic occasions, community events and major Council announcements.
- When the Mayor is unavailable or absent, the Deputy Mayor will be the official spokesperson on official matters.
- The Mayor may authorise Councillors to function as a spokesperson for the Council when appropriate.
- The Senior Media and Communications Officer or delegate, is responsible for co-ordinating media liaison and issuing approved media releases and has been delegated authority to respond to media enquiries on behalf of Council but not on behalf of elected members.
- Councillors may speak to media in their capacity as Councillors.
- Councillors are not authorised spokespersons on behalf of Douglas Shire, however, as Elected Members of the community, Councillors are entitled to make statements of opinion regarding Council affairs.
- Councillors must use their best endeavours to ensure that when expressing an opinion on a matter that it is clearly stated as such.
- The CEO or a delegated spokesperson is the official Council spokesperson on all matters relating to Council's operations including staff, administration, and industrial matters.

Working with the Media

It is vital that all media inquiries be treated efficiently and courteously with due regard to the fact that all media work to stringent deadlines which require prompt responses.

The Council's Media and Communications Unit has the expertise in media affairs and is well versed in handling inquiries from print and electronic media and is responsible for the flow of a wide range of information between Council and the community.

- All staff must direct any media enquiry to Media and Communications (usually through the Senior Media and Communications Officer) which has the programmes in place to provide responses to the media in a timely manner.
- Council's depots and administration centre shall not be used for any media activity which does not benefit Council or may be for the personal advantage of an elected member or staff member. All media activity at any Council worksite is to be coordinated through the Media and Communications Unit.
- The Senior Media and Communications Officer shall issue statements only on matters of approved Council Policy, or at the Mayor's or the Chief Executive Officer's discretion, on issues of direct benefit to the Council as a whole.
- Media releases must be approved by the Mayor, CEO, Manager, or the delegated authority before posting on Council's website.
- Media releases and communication will be widely disseminated to all media outlets without restrictions.
- 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 Senior Media and Communications Officer subject to first informing the Elected members of the intended letter.

Staff

Council employees may speak to the media or write Letters to the Editor or engage in social media platforms as private individuals with the following restrictions:

- They do not comment on Council business or policy.
- They do not identify themselves as Council employees.
- Their comments are not likely to be perceived as representing official Council position or policy.
- All new employees are to be made aware of Council's Media Relations Policy as a part of the induction process.
- Contractors or service providers employed by Council must refer all media enquiries relating to Council to the Senior Media and Communications Officer. (As per Staff and Supplier Code of Conduct).
- The Media and Communications Unit shall not engage in any media activity which is deemed by the Chief Executive Officer to be specifically for the personal advantage of any elected member, or staff member.
- Media releases where appropriate and whenever possible, should include statements and input from Councillors or recognised delegated spokespersons.

Councillors

- When communicating with the public or the media to express an opinion about a Council resolution, respect the democratic process by first acknowledging that Council resolutions represent the majority view of Council.
- Elected members may not use their Councillors personal social media to publish inaccurate information pertaining to Council or other Elected members.

- Councillors will adhere to the Code of Conduct for Councillors in Queensland when making statements.

Social Media

- The establishment of new Douglas Shire Council online presences must first be authorised by the Elected Members.
- Only publicly available information is to be disclosed and it is the responsibility of the publisher/editor to ensure that only this information is displayed.
- Any information provided must be factually accurate and comply with all Council policies. Publishers/editors should only offer information on topics that fall within their area of responsibility.
- Councillor comments and use of any Council publications will be prohibited during the election “Caretaker Period”, as defined in the Local, Government Act, to avoid publications falling within the definition of “election matter” under the Act.
- Information posted must not be libellous, defamatory, abusive, obscene, discriminatory or infringe Equal Employment Opportunity, Fair Treatment policies, information privacy or conflict of interest policies or any other legislation.
- An individual’s personal information is not to be disclosed.
- Council media will not re-post any individual elected member's online posts nor will Council social media tag any individual elected member's social media.
- All councillors should be recognised in Council social media and media when they attend official events.
- Douglas Shire Council believes in open and frank discussion in social media. In Council social media, only defamatory comments will be delated.
- All video social media will conform to the above guidelines.

Related Legislation

- *Local Government Act 2009*
- *Local Government Regulation 2012*

Related Documents (Local Laws, Policies, Forms)

- Councillor Code of Conduct
- Acceptable Request Guidelines
- Advertising Spending General Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Supplier Code of Conduct
- Caretaker Period Policy

Policy Review

This policy is to be reviewed whenever legislation changes, or every year if no changes have been required to be enacted, at the direction of the Chief Executive Officer.

Policy Details

Policy Name	Media Relations Policy
Policy Number	

Policy Version	1
Document Number	
Endorsed by	Chief Executive Officer
Policy Type	Council
Approval Authority	Council
Date Adopted	
Time Period	Annually
Review Date	
Policy Department	People & Community
Link to Corporate Plan	
Revoked/Superseded	

This policy is to remain in force until otherwise determined by Council.