



Media Policy

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Authorisation	Council, 23 June 2015
Expiry date	30 June 2017
Responsible officer	Customer Engagement Manager
Policy owner	Communications Coordinator

1. Purpose

This document sets out Melton City Council's policy on protocols for Councillors and Staff when dealing with the media.

Effective communication with the media is an important component of Melton City Council's ability to meet its strategic objectives, to promote effective engagement with residents and stakeholders and to advocate for and on behalf of the community.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all Melton City Council Councillors, Staff, contractors, sub-contractors, volunteers and all interactions with external news media.

Refer to the Online Engagement Policy regarding social media and the Melton Municipal Emergency Management Plan regarding media relations during an emergency.

3. Definitions

Word/Term	Definition
Media	For the purposes of this policy, the term media refers to all external news channels, including television, radio, newspapers, magazine and online news services. It also includes journalism students. It does not refer to social media such as blogs and social networking tools such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and You Tube. (Refer to the Online Engagement Policy).

4. Policy

The Council Plan 2013-2017 states that Council wants to 'provide information about Council services and associated activities through a range of communications tools' and 'provide the community with balanced and objective information, to assist them in understanding Council's directions and decisions'. Council also wants to 'support transparency through public access to relevant information, decision making and strategic documents'.

The following policy has been established to ensure Councillors and Staff understand and respect the role of the media, and to ensure that timely, accurate and newsworthy information is provided to the media.

To communicate clear and consistent messages through the media it is important to have a coordinated approach. The impacts of information repeated through the media are far reaching and it is necessary that we have a policy in place to effectively manage the information and comments provided to media sources.

This policy provides clearly defined processes for Melton City Council to manage, monitor and coordinate dealings with the media.

4.1 Media enquiries

The Communications unit is the primary liaison point between the media and the organisation.

4.1.1 Staff

All media enquiries must be referred to the Communications unit. If Officers are contacted directly by a journalist they must notify Communications immediately.

Communications will research the enquiry and a draft response will be formulated by the relevant Manager or General Manager in cooperation with Communications and discussed with the spokesperson for approval.

The response will be provided to the journalist in one of two formats:

- A written response attributed to the appropriate spokesperson; or,
- A verbal response by the appropriate spokesperson

Communications will at times provide journalists with background information, but are not spokespersons in the first instance.

However, if the very rare situation arises that an appropriate Council Officer cannot be contacted because of deadline issues, but the correct information is available, the Media and Communications Officer or Communications Coordinator will respond on behalf of the organisation. (Note: this does not apply to policy or political issues, only operational).

4.1.2 Councillors

As elected community representatives it is expected that the media will contact Councillors directly at times to provide comment on issues.

If a Councillor is contacted about an issue that is the subject of a pending Council decision or pending policy, the Councillor must be careful in not stating a position prior to the Council meeting.

Councillors are encouraged to inform the Mayor, CEO or the Communications unit regarding advice on key messages or issues prior to responding to media enquiries.

In making comments to the media, any personal views of Councillors on issues that may be contrary to a Council adopted position or on matters yet to be considered by Council, should be clearly identified as the personal views of that Councillor.

All comments to the media should portray the Mayor and Councillors as a united team working for the betterment of the city.

The Councillors Code of Conduct is applicable regarding this media policy.

4.2 Approaching the Media

The Communications unit is responsible for issuing media releases, organising photo opportunities, media briefings, pitching news and human interest stories, letters to the editor and contacting journalists about potential issues.

Communications identify and plan media relations activities which are set out in a strategic weekly update to Councillors and Executive.

The Communications unit liaises with Council Staff on identifying media stories. Likewise Staff are encouraged to contact Communications to advise of any potential media stories.

4.2.1 Councillors

All Councillor initiatives should go through Council (for example in a motion with notice or without notice at a Council meeting) before being expressed in the media.

The Councillors Code of Conduct is applicable regarding this media policy.

4.3 Official Spokespersons

The Mayor is Melton City Council's official spokesperson on political issues and decisions of Council.

It is not the role of the Mayor to discuss operational or organisational issues. Only the Chief Executive Officer, or appropriate General Manager or Manager can provide official comment to the media about operational issues on behalf of Melton City Council.

Managers are the relevant spokespeople for operational issues. Liaison between Communications unit and the relevant manager may determine if an officer is to be quoted for a specific program or event.

4.4 Media monitoring

The Communications unit is responsible for monitoring media activity and identifying potential issues. Council undertakes a strategic approach to issues management and it is important that issues are brought to the attention of Communications.

If a Councillor or Officer becomes aware of an issue that has the potential to develop into a media issue, this should be brought to the attention of the Chief Executive Officer, relevant General Manager or Communications unit as soon as possible.

Communications provides a weekly media monitoring report to the CEO and Councillors. Also, if the Communications unit becomes aware of a possible media issue, it will alert Councillors and the CEO on an ad hoc basis where needed.

5. Responsibility /Accountability

5.1 Councillors

- Understand and comply with the provisions in this policy
- Seek advice from the Communications Unit on media relations
- Seek training and development for media relations
- Seek advice from the CEO or the Communications Unit if unsure about applying the provisions of this policy

5.2	Executive <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and comply with the provisions in this policy • Promotion of adherence of this policy to Management team and Staff • Seek advice from the Communications Unit on media relations • Seek training and development for media relations
5.3	Staff, Contractors, Sub-contractors and Volunteers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and comply with the provisions of this policy
5.4	Business Unit Managers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure contractors and staff are aware of this policy and comply with its requirements • Approve media releases • Provide draft media responses in a timely manner in liaison with Communications
5.5	Contractors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure sub-contractors are aware of this policy and comply with its requirements
5.6	Communications Unit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect the reputation and image of Council • Provide advice on media relations and media training • Educate Councillors, Staff , volunteers and contractors about this policy and their responsibilities in undertaking media relations • Undertake media monitoring • Establish and maintain effective relationships with the media • Seek legal advice as appropriate where an issue is likely to be contentious or may create legal risk for Council

6. References and links to legislation and other documents

Name	Location
Council Plan 2013- 2017	www.melton.vic.gov.au
Code of Conduct (Councillors)	Policy and Procedures Intranet www.melton.vic.gov.au
Code of Conduct (staff)	Policy and Procedures Intranet
Council Employment Contracts	
Council Online Engagement Policy	Policy and Procedures Intranet
Council Corporate Style Guide	Policy and Procedures Intranet
Enterprise Risk Management Policy	Policy and Procedures Intranet
Photography Policy	Policy and Procedures Intranet

Name	Location
Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP)	www.melton.vic.gov.au
<i>Defamation Act 2005 (Vic)</i>	www.legislation.vic.gov.au
<i>Evidence Act 2008 (Vic)</i>	www.legislation.vic.gov.au
<i>Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Vic)</i>	www.legislation.vic.gov.au
<i>Information Privacy Act 2000 (Vic)</i>	www.legislation.vic.gov.au
<i>Local Government Act 1989 (Vic)</i>	www.legislation.vic.gov.au
<i>Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)</i>	www.legislation.vic.gov.au
<i>Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)</i>	www.austlii.edu.au
<i>Protected Disclosure Act 2012 (Vic)</i>	www.legislation.vic.gov.au
<i>Public Records Act 1973 (Vic)</i>	www.legislation.vic.gov.au