

MEDIA MANAGEMENT POLICY

INTENT This policy outlines a formal process to ensure all media releases, statements and enquiries relating to Cairns Regional Council are managed professionally and appropriately.

SCOPE The Policy provides a framework to provide consistent and accurate information to the community through positive working relationships with media organisations, and Council's social media channels.

OBJECTIVES

The Media Policy has the following objectives:

- To promote good governance consistent with local government principles (*Section 4 Local Government Act 2009*).
- To ensure consistency by Councillors and staff in dealing with the media.
- To mitigate the risk of inaccurate or inconsistent information being communicated to the media.
- To clearly indicate Council's authorised spokespersons.
- To ensure appropriate authorisation and responsibility for information provided.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Openness: We will ensure that we promote an open exchange of information between our council and the media.

Consistency: We will ensure consistency by all councillors and staff when communicating with the media.

Accuracy: The information we share with the media will be a source of truth for our council and community and we will prioritise the need to correct inaccuracies when they occur.

Timeliness: We will ensure that we respond to media enquiries in a timely manner.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- The Mayor is Council's official spokesperson for all matters, unless the matter is strictly operational or staff related. If the Mayor is unavailable, the Deputy Mayor may act as the Council's spokesperson.
- The Mayor may delegate a Councillor or the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to act as a spokesperson for the Council when appropriate.
- The CEO is the official spokesperson for matters concerning Council staff and contactors, and for the operational activities of Council.
- The CEO may delegate to a Director or staff member on a particular matter.

- The Media Coordinator, or delegated Account Manager, is responsible for co-ordinating media liaison and issuing media releases and has the delegated authority to respond to media enquiries on behalf of Council with the appropriate approvals.
- Directors should make themselves available to answer enquiries from the Media Coordinator or delegate where such enquiries affect their immediate area of operations, and such answers should be confined to operational issues and approved Council Policy.
- No staff member or Councillor can speak to the media about an item to be considered at a meeting of Council prior to the meeting, unless approved by the Mayor or Chief Executive Officer.

MEDIA COORDINATION

It is the responsibility of the Marketing & Communications branch Media Coordinator to coordinate all media enquiries about Council matters.

The Media Coordinator's role is to:

- a) be the lead point of contact for all media enquiries, requests for interviews, requests to film or photograph council staff, facilities or events for news and current affairs purposes
- b) be responsible for preparing all media statements prior to their release
- c) liaise with relevant staff members within the organisation where appropriate
- d) ensure that media statements are approved by the Mayor and/or CEO prior to their release
- e) maintain a record of all media enquiries and responses
- f) ensure that media organisations and their representatives are treated professionally, equally and without bias
- g) ensure that media enquiries are dealt with promptly
- h) provide guidance to councillors approached by the media for comment to avoid communication of misinformation, and
- i) ensure that all media releases are published on the Council's website.

ENGAGEMENT WITH THE MEDIA

Councillors

When engaging with the media, Councillors must:

- Ensure all interactions are consistent with the relevant legislation and policies, including the Code of Conduct of Councillors.
- Not purport to speak for the Council unless authorised to do so.
- Clarify when speaking to the media if they are expressing their personal views as an individual councillor and that they are not speaking for the Council
- Uphold and accurately represent the policies and decisions of the Council
- Not disclose confidential Council information
- Seek information and guidance from the Media Coordinator where appropriate before providing comment to the media to ensure they have the most up-to-date and relevant information and have considered reputational or other risks.

Where Councillors (including the Mayor) become aware of potential issues that could result in media interest, they should provide this information to the Media Coordinator or the Executive Manager, Marketing & Communications.

Council Staff

Council staff must not speak to the media about matters relating to the Council unless authorised by the CEO to do so.

If Council staff receive a media enquiry or they are invited to comment to the media on a matter relating to the Council, they must refer the enquiry to the Media Coordinator.

Council staff are free to express their personal views to the media on matters that do not relate to the Council, but in doing so, must not make comments that reflect badly on the Council or that bring it into disrepute.

If authorised to speak to the media, Council staff:

- must uphold and accurately represent the policies and decisions of the Council
- must not disclose Council information unless authorised to do so by the Media Coordinator, and
- must seek information and guidance from the Media Coordinator where appropriate before providing comment to the media to ensure they have the most up-to-date and relevant information and have considered reputational or other risks

Where Council staff become aware of potential issues that could result in media interest, they should provide this information to the Executive Manager/Media Coordinator.

Standards of conduct when engaging with the media

All interactions with the media must comply with the relevant code of conduct when engaging with the media in an official capacity and must be conducted in a professional, timely and respectful manner.

Further, interactions must not include information or comments through either direct or indirect mechanisms that:

- breaches the privacy of any individual
- commits the Council to any action
- is specifically for the advantage of any elected member, or staff member

Council Facilities

Council depots, venues 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 Marketing and Communications Branch.

Use of media during emergencies

- During emergencies, such as natural disasters or public health incidents, the Media Coordinator will remain responsible for coordinating media releases and statements on behalf of the Council.
- Councillors, Council staff and other Council officials must not provide comment or information to the media that is inconsistent with official advice issued by the Council and any other agency coordinating the emergency response.

Election and Caretaker Provisions

For guidelines pertaining to media management in advance of a local government election, including during the caretaker period, please refer to the *Local Government Election and Caretaker Provisions* General Policy.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Council officers manage several social media platforms and use them to inform and engage with the local community. All official Cairns Regional Council social media accounts (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, TikTok or X) must be authorised by the Executive Manager Marketing & Communications, or the Digital Media Officer.

Only information intended for the public is to be disclosed and it is the responsibility of the publisher / editor to ensure that only this information is displayed. Information must be factually accurate and comply with all Council policies.

All information posted must comply with relevant legislation and Council Policies.

Councillors can maintain personal social media accounts and to interact on social media, noting that this is articulating their personal view and not that of council.

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

Director Responsible for Review:

People & Organisational Performance



ORIGINALLY ADOPTED: 24/10/2002

CURRENT ADOPTION: 25/10/2023

DUE FOR REVISION: 25/10/2027

REVOKED/SUPERSEDED:

**Mica Martin
Chief Executive Officer**