

Media Policy

Council Policy



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| Policy Name | Media Policy | | |
| Type | Council Policy | | |
| Owner | Elected Members | | |
| Responsible Officer | Chief Executive Officer | | |
| Authorised | Chief Executive Officer | Approval Date | 23/11/2021 |
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1 Purpose

This policy sets out a framework for Members dealing with media, whilst also recognising the role of the media in keeping the community informed, getting feedback on important issues and ensuring a transparent and open Council.

The purpose of this Policy is to provide guidance to Council members in the conduct of Council business in a way that protects the Council's reputation by mitigating risk and ensuring consistency and accuracy in the information Council places in the public realm.

The term 'media' is used in this Policy to refer to both traditional (including print, broadcast, radio) and new (including social media, blogs, messaging, video/pod cast, forums and discussion boards) forms of media.

2 Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

| Term | Definition |
|---------|--|
| CEO | The Chief Executive Officer of the Alice Springs Town Council |
| Council | Alice Springs Town Council |
| MCO | Media and Communication Office of the Alice Springs Town Council |
| Member | An Elected Member of the Alice Springs Town Council |

3 Policy Statement

The media may be interested in the work of the Council from time to time and will therefore want to speak to Members about issues of public interest.

Members are expected to adhere to the highest standards of ethical practice and professional competency when it comes to communicating with the media, whether it is verbal, print or digital communication.

The Council are committed to communication practices that:

- promote transparency and accountability of Council's decision-making processes;
- inform the community of key Council decisions, initiatives, programs and services;
- promote community access to Members;
- build community pride and inclusiveness through a positive image of Alice Springs; and
- promote opportunities for the community to participate in Council activities.

Members are expected to demonstrate standards of conduct and behaviour that are consistent with the policies and procedures of Council, including the Code of Conduct and Obligations of Council Members policies.

To ensure the Council is delivering services that are aligned with the community's expectations, the Council communicates with stakeholders through a range of channels to appreciate their needs, concerns and ideas.

The Council accepts the important role of the media to report on issues of interest to the community and its right to scrutinise Council activities.

4 Policy

4.1 Media relations

The Council recognises that media relations are an important source of information for the community. Media agencies and journalists are regularly engaged to ensure their articles and messaging about the Council and its activities is accurate and positive.

The Council is committed to providing comment and responses to all media enquiries. The Council has a no 'no comment' approach to media relations.

Engagement with media agencies and journalists occurs exclusively between the Mayor and the CEO.

4.2 Media enquiries

The Council's Media and Communications Office (MCO) will always be the first point of contact for media enquiries. The MCO reports to the CEO and is responsible for the preparation of media releases and responses so as to inform and educate the public about Council's positions, programs or decisions. All media releases on behalf of Council are issued from the MCO only.

4.3 Spokesperson(s)

The Mayor is the official spokesperson in relation to any media enquiries that relate to strategic issues. If the Mayor is unavailable, the Deputy Mayor can act as official spokesperson.

With the permission of the Mayor, where queries are related to matters falling under the strategic remit of the Council's Community Development, Corporate Services or Technical Services, these matters will be addressed by the relevant Member. Matters of significant complexity or authority should be dealt with by the Mayor.

The CEO is the official spokesperson in relation to any media enquiries that relate to operational issues. The CEO can delegate this responsibility as necessary.

All official comment made on behalf of the Council shall reflect the decisions made by Council as stated in its adopted resolutions or the positions taken by Council as articulated in its strategic and policy documents.

This policy is not intended to restrict Members from expressing personal views. However, the Member must clearly identify the view as their own, either from a personal or professional standpoint.

4.4 Inappropriate use of media

The use of personal communication devices to engage with traditional or new media (including by way of messaging) during Council meetings is never appropriate.

Whenever using media, Elected Members must:

- only disclose or discuss publicly available information
- not make any comment or post any material that might cause damage to the reputation of another Elected Member or Council generally.

Any instances of non-compliance with this policy should be directed to the CEO for attention.

4.5 Member presence in media

Members, as community representatives, must always be mindful that their personal or professional site (be it a website or social media platform) may be viewed as a public site, especially when reference to the Member's position is included. Therefore, when expressing a personal view, this should be identified and care taken not to show disrespect for the Council, its decisions, decision making process or other Members, Council staff and the community.

4.6 Potential legal liability

Members are reminded that statements purportedly made on behalf of the Council may in some circumstances attract legal ramifications for the Member and/or the Council.

Members are also reminded that any meeting attended in their civic capacity may be recorded (audio and/or visual) by either the media for publication, or the Council.

4.7 Council policies superseded

This policy supersedes all previous versions of CEO 001 Elected Members Media (including social media) Usage and 110 Media Relations policies.

4.8 Communication tools

The Council uses a variety of communication tools to provide the community as well as the media with timely information.

Communication tools are only for the use of Alice Springs' projects, events and strategic priorities. However, there may be occasions where a partnership with the Commonwealth or Northern Territory Government requires joint communication. If this is the case, joint communications will be done in accordance with the relevant terms of that partnership or funding agreement.

4.9 Media releases

Media releases are a key communication tool. A protocol for quoting in media releases is outlined as follows:

- strategy-oriented stories are to quote the Mayor;
- stories arising from the work of a committee are quoted on by the Mayor, or by delegation to the relevant Member, or by the CEO;
- contentious council matters are quoted on by the Mayor or CEO; and
- operational issues are quoted on by the CEO or as delegated.

Media releases are distributed to media outlets, posted on the Council's website and distributed to Council members, staff and a subscribed distribution list.

Joint media releases with the Commonwealth or Northern Territory Governments or other local government bodies may only be issued with appropriate approvals.

Joint media releases with third parties are not encouraged. Approvals for such media releases will only be given in certain circumstances. The media release must be on a Council template and include a quote from the third party.

Media releases will be sent to Elected Members at the same time as other parties.

4.10 Media alerts

Media alerts are to be issued by the Council to media outlets prior to a media event to ensure their attendance. The media alerts will outline location, spokesperson(s), key opportunities, Workplace Health and Safety requirements and photographic or footage opportunities or entry conditions as relevant.

Media alerts are distributed to media outlets, Council Members and staff, and a subscribed distribution list.

4.11 Social media platforms

The Council recognises that social media is an effective tool to engage with the community.

Members are encouraged to share Council's content on their personal social media accounts in a positive way but are not obligated to do so. When doing so, Members are participating and expressing their views in an individual capacity and should consider the values and behaviours outlined in the Code of Conduct.

So as to not blur the lines between personal opinion and official comment, Members' personal social media accounts should make it clear that all content shared is personal opinion.

Any breach of a Code of Conduct via digital communication or social media platforms will be dealt with in accordance with the Breach of Code of Conduct Policy.

5 Related Documents

- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Obligations of Council Members Policy

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6 Communication and Training

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| Will this policy be communicated through internal communications? | Yes |
| Where will this policy be available? | Intranet, Content Manager, hard copy in each workplace, copy with every new employee engagement / contract |
| Will training needs arise from this policy? If yes, who will be responsible. | Yes, Director Corporate Services |

7 Management Sign off

APPROVED:


Robert Jennings
Chief Executive Officer

Date: 25 02 22