



Media and Communications Policy

Policy Number: 2.32

1. Authority

Local Government Act 2009

2. Policy Statement

The Cassowary Coast Regional Council is committed to providing timely, accurate and consistent information to the community.

3. Principles

This policy outlines the formal process to ensure all media releases, statements and enquiries about Cassowary Coast Regional Council issues are managed professionally and appropriately.

It has been developed to:

- (a) Establish protocols and methods for managing communication with the media to provide a professional presence;
- (b) Ensure that all communication with the media is well-informed, timely and appropriate;
- (c) Ensure Council is continually presenting a consistent message across any particular topic or issue;
- (d) Help to maximise publicity opportunities for Council;
- (e) Ensure Council's media statements are communicated in an easy-to-understand format; and
- (f) Ensure Council's corporate integrity is maintained through media relations.

4. Scope & Responsibility

This policy applies to Councillors and to all individuals employed or contracted by the Cassowary Coast Regional Council. It sets out the Council's commitment to a consistent and practical system.

5. Definitions

Media Releases: Information/statements that Council sends to media outlets on corporate letterhead

Public comment: Public speaking engagements, comments to radio, television, print media, online media outlets, views expressed in letters to newspapers, journals, notices where it might be expected that the publication of the comment will spread to the community at large.

6. POLICY

6.1 Media and Communications Officer's Role

The Media and Communications Officer will liaise with the media on behalf of Council. The officer has expertise in media affairs and is well-versed in handling enquiries from print and electronic media.

If staff members receive an enquiry from the media, they are not to respond directly to the request except as authorised within this document. The request must be directed to the Media and Communications Officer.

This officer will determine the nature of the enquiry and the most appropriate method of response, and will liaise with relevant staff and undertake any research necessary to prepare a response.

The Media and Communications Officer will issue media releases that have been authorised by the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer, on issues of direct benefit to the Council as a whole.

If the Media and Communications Officer is absent, media requests should be forwarded to the Chief Executive Officer's Executive Secretary.

6.2 Official Spokespersons

The Mayor and the Chief Executive Officer are the official spokespersons for Council.

The Mayor is an official spokesperson for all matters relating to Council policy and decision-making, and is the only Councillor authorised to make official public comment in relation to Council's overall operations. The Mayor is also responsible for communicating Council's political responses and responses to, or on behalf of, community advocacy issues.

The Chief Executive Officer is the official Council spokesperson on all matters relating to Council's operations including staff, administration, election and industrial matters. The Chief Executive Officer should be consulted if there is any doubt about handling a media issue.

While the Mayor is the official Councillor spokesperson, other Councillors are likely to be approached by the media. Councillors can make public comment, as a Committee Chairperson, on matters that relate to their committee provided the comments reflect established policy or decisions made by Council as a whole. Councillors can comment on other issues as long as they specify that they are speaking on their own behalf, rather than Council's behalf, and they distinguish between their personal opinions and resolutions of Council or agreed Council decisions.

It is the Councillor's responsibility to ensure that any comment made to the media in their capacity as a Councillor is accurate, not prejudicial to Council's legal standing, and is not in any way defamatory to other Councillors, officers or other persons.

For significant issues Councillors should, as a matter of courtesy, advise the Mayor, Chief Executive Officer or Media and Communications Officer if they have provided comment to the media. This will assist in Council providing relevant and accurate responses.

6.3 Staff as Delegated Spokespersons

The Chief Executive Officer may, from time to time, give delegated authority to a specific employee, such as a Director or an officer with specialist expertise, to make a statement to the media. These statements will be coordinated through the Media and Communications Officer.

If staff members receive an enquiry directly from the media, they are to direct it to the Media and Communications Officer.

6.4 Media Releases:

Media releases, where appropriate, will include statements and input from the Mayor and from the Committee Chairperson and/or divisional Councillors, or recognised delegated spokespersons.

Media releases will be drafted, where appropriate, in conjunction with staff and Councillors, and will be distributed in final form to all Councillors at the time they are distributed to media outlets. They will also be distributed to relevant Council officers.

Staff members are encouraged to contact the Media and Communications Officer to advise of activities or issues that could be publicised. The Media and Communications Officer will advise, if necessary, on the most appropriate forms of publicity (i.e. media release, advertising, flier).

Last reviewed on: 12 May 2016
Resolution Number: 1260
Policy Review: Every two years or as determined by Council or the CEO.
Date of next review: May 2018