

**Policy Title:** Media Relations  
**Classification:** Communications

**Date Adopted by Council**

08 February 2017

**Council Minute Number**

2017/02/08.08

**Effective Date**

08 February 2017

**Review Date**

08 February 2018

**Responsible Officer**

Communications and Marketing Manager

**Responsible Department**

Communications and Marketing Department

**Revokes:**

Policy Number: 2015.15  
Policy Name: Media Relations Policy  
Adopted: 08 February 2017

**INTERNAL USE ONLY**

**Policy Number: 2015.15      Version:**

**INTERNAL USE ONLY**

Policy No: 2015.15 - Classification: Communications

- 1 -

Adoption Date: 8 February 2017

Revokes: POLC-ES-CEO-011 Media Relations Policy adopted 8 February 2017

**NOTE: This cover page is not to be included when submitting a report to a Council meeting**

## 1. BACKGROUND AND PRINCIPLES

Whitsunday Regional Council aims to provide consistent and factual information to the community in a timely manner utilising various modes of *media*.

## 2. SCOPE

This Policy applies to all Councillors, including the Mayor, and *employees* of the Whitsunday Regional Council.

## 3. POLICY OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this policy are to:

- provide public image of Council in line with corporate objectives;
- ensure consistent and factual information is provided to the community through the media;
- ensure Council presents a consistent message;
- maximise media opportunities for Council's achievements and programs; and
- maintain Council's corporate integrity including with the media.

## 4. POLICY STATEMENT

- 4.1 Council recognises the needs and desires of its community to access factual, accurate and timely information regarding issues that affect or interest them.
- 4.2 Council considers that it is vital that all media enquiries be treated efficiently and courteously with due regard to the fact that all media work to stringent deadlines which require prompt responses.
- 4.3 Any media request or response contravening this Policy may damage the relationship between Council and media outlets and may result in incorrect information being communicated to the public.
- 4.4 Whitsunday Regional Council, within the capacity of its resources, shall:
  - (a) provide the community with information that is timely, clear, accurate and concise;
  - (b) respond to local issues raised in the media in a timely and appropriate manner;
  - (c) proactively provide information to the community through various modes of media;

### INTERNAL USE ONLY

Policy No: 2015.15 - Classification: Communications

- 2 -

Adoption Date: 8 February 2017

Revokes: POLC-ES-CEO-011 Media Relations Policy adopted 8 February 2017

- (d) regularly issue information through various modes of media in order to communicate various messages and statements on issues of interest to the community;
- (e) be mindful of sensitivities experienced by members of the local community when providing information;
- (f) provide technical or legal information in a simple, easy to understand format and ensure Council publications are written in plain English;
- (g) utilise various modes of media as appropriate to ensure maximum information dissemination opportunities; and
- (h) maintain a professional relationship with the media by directing enquiries through a centrally coordinated Communications and Marketing Department to ensure the provision of accurate and timely information to the media.

#### **Media enquiries and releases**

- 4.5 Council shall encourage all media to direct initial enquiries to the Communications and Marketing Department (via phone or [communications@whitsundayrc.qld.gov.au](mailto:communications@whitsundayrc.qld.gov.au)) who is responsible for liaising with media and coordinating responses to media enquiries.
- 4.6 The Communications and Marketing Department shall manage and coordinate all media relations and communications strategies.
- 4.7 Written statements to the media on behalf of Council shall be issued through the Communications and Marketing Department and shall be on corporate press release letterhead.
- 4.8 The CEO must approve any media releases or responses containing sensitive information. A copy of the proposed media release or response must be provided to the CEO for approval prior to its issue.
  - 4.9 The CEO shall remain the ultimate authority in questions of doubt in relation to handling media enquiries.
- 4.10 All quotes included in media releases must be approved by the relevant spokesperson.

#### **The Mayor**

- 4.11 The Mayor shall be the official spokesperson for all Council policies and decisions, including major Council announcements and civic receptions. If the Mayor cannot serve as Council

spokesperson, the opportunity is offered first to the Deputy Mayor, and then to the divisional Councillor. The Mayor can also delegate to CEO or a senior officer as per Acceptable Request Guidelines.

- 4.12 The Mayor and/or delegated councillor must ensure that, when making *comment* to the media, he/she clearly distinguishes between his/her own personal opinion and resolutions of Council or agreed Council decisions.
- 4.13 The Mayor and/or relevant spokesperson must ensure that he/she does not pre-empt decisions of Council when making comment to the media.
- 4.14 The Mayor and/or relevant spokesperson must not disclose material classified as confidential in reports presented to Council.

#### **Councillors**

- 4.15 Council recognises the desire of the community for Councillors to make statements in the media on a range of issues and as such Councillors may make comment on issues or policies directly relating to their division or other issues that do not conflict with council policy or views..
- 4.16 Councillors may be appointed as spokespersons on particular issues or topics by the Mayor or full Council.

#### **Employees**

- 4.17 The CEO, COO, Directors and Communications and Marketing Manager may provide public comment, providing it relates to technical matters relevant to their respective departments and in keeping with Council policy and resolutions. The CEO, Mayor and the Communications and Marketing Department should be advised if such statements are made, preferably prior to the statement being made.
- 4.18 The CEO, COO and Directors may nominate other staff to act as spokespeople for Council, provided the issue is of a general nature and relevant to their area of expertise.
- 4.19 Employees within the Communications and Marketing Department are responsible for coordinating Council's media responses and may respond to media enquiries on behalf of Council provided that the enquiry is general in nature and is information freely available to the public.
- 4.20 Employees shall not respond directly to media requests except as authorised within this policy. If an employee receives a request or enquiry directly from the media, the employee shall refer

the enquiry to the Communications and Marketing Department.

4.21 Employees, including employees within the Communications and Marketing Department, shall not engage in any media activity which is deemed by the CEO to be specifically for the personal advantage of the Mayor, Councillors or an employee.

4.22 No employee shall make any statement to the media on Council's behalf other than as approved within this policy. Contravention of this policy may result in disciplinary action as a breach of Council's Code of Conduct.

## 5. RELEVANT LEGISLATION

*Local Government Act 2009*

*Local Government Regulation 2012*

## 6. DEFINITIONS

**CEO** shall mean a person who holds an appointment as Chief Executive Officer of the Whitsunday Regional Council under section 194 of the *Local Government Act 2009*. This includes a person acting in this position.

**Council** refers to the Whitsunday Regional Council.

**Employee/s** includes a permanent, temporary, casual or contract member on Council's staff.

**Media** means all mediums used for communication including but not limited to, television, radio, newspaper, newsletter, magazine, internet, social media (blogs, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn etc).

**Comment** includes but is not limited to public speaking engagements, comments to radio, television, press, online media outlets, views expressed in letters to newspapers or in books, journals and notices where it is expected that the publication or circulation of the comment will spread to the community at large.

**Sensitive** information is defined as information or data that must be protected from unauthorised access to safeguard the privacy or security of Council.

## 7. RELATED DOCUMENTS

Confidentiality Policy for Councillors

Councillor Code of Conduct Policy

Council's Code of Conduct

## 8. DATE REVIEWED

8 February 2017

**9. NEXT REVIEW**

February 2018

**INTERNAL USE ONLY**

Policy No: 2015.15 - Classification: Communications

- 6 -

Adoption Date: 8 February 2017

Revokes: POLC-ES-CEO-011 Media Relations Policy adopted 8 February 2017