

Policy

Media Relations

2021



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1	27 October 2021	New policy adopted by Council [res. TBA]

Further Document Information and Relationships	
Related Legislation*	<i>Local Government Act 1993 Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 Copyright Act 1968 Defamation Act 1974</i>
Related Policies	Code of Conduct (D19/5709)
Related Documents	Nil

**Note: Any reference to Legislation will be updated in the Policy as required. See website <http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/> for current Acts, Regulations and Environmental Planning Instruments.*

1 Objective

This Media Relations Policy (“this Policy”) provides guidance to ensure communication by Liverpool Plains Shire Council (“Council”) with the media, through all its forms, is consistent, well informed, timely, appropriate and newsworthy. This Policy aims to:

- Clearly indicate Council’s authorised spokespersons and define roles and responsibilities within Council for working with the media;
- Ensure appropriate authorisation and responsibility for information provided;
- Assist the media by clarifying the level of service they can expect regarding access to Council officials, provision of information and responses to enquiries;
- Limit the reputation risk and communication of inaccurate information; and
- Provide effective communication of Council affairs to the public through the media.

2 Commencement

This Policy is effective from date of resolution by Council and shall remain in force until repealed by resolution of Council.

3 Scope and Application

The Policy applies to all Council officials in situations where Council officials:

- Communicate with the media about Council affairs;
- Attend public speaking engagements; or
- Make public comment on Council affairs and other Council officials.

This Policy is applicable to all communication with the media using all communication platforms, including traditional and online platforms.

4 Definitions and Interpretation

In this Policy, the following terms shall be interpreted to have the following meanings:

Term	Definition
Authorised spokespersons	means those Council Officials authorised under this Policy to engage and communicate with the media on Council’s behalf.
Code of Conduct	means Liverpool Plains Shire Council’s Code of Conduct.
Council	means Liverpool Plains Shire Council.
Council affairs	means matters before the Council or other Council business, Council policy, interpretation of policy, management of Council business, management of Council staff or actions or matters that may commit the Council’s resources to any purpose.

Councillor	means a person elected to the governing body of Liverpool Plains Shire Council as per section 222 of the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> .
Council Officials	means Council officials as defined in Council's Code of Conduct, including Councillors, Council officers, and delegates of Council, including contractors, consultants, volunteers and external persons appointed to committees of Council.
General Manager	means the General Manager of Liverpool Plains Shire Council appointed under section 334 of the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> .
Media	includes all print, broadcast and online media mediums used for communicating information to the public domain, including, but not limited to, newspapers, magazines, internet publishers, radio and television broadcasters.
Public comment	Includes any information, opinion or view communicated to a public audience via a public medium or medium where it is reasonably foreseeable that the publication or circulation will enter the public domain, including, but not limited to, media releases, press statements, interviews with the media, public speaking engagements, opinion pieces and letters to the editor.
Publication	is the distribution of information via print or electronic media including, but not limited to, newspapers, magazines, internet publishers, radio and television broadcasters.

4 Policy Statement

Council is committed to keeping the Liverpool Plains community informed about our decisions, services, programmes, events and activities. We recognise the important role the media plays in communicating with the community we serve, and the value of establishing and maintaining a strong working relationship with the media and facilitating an open exchange of information between our organisation and the media.

The aim of public engagement through the media is to communicate and build the organisation's reputation and to maximise positive news and editorial coverage of our decisions, services, programs, events and activities, with an emphasis on promoting a positive, progressive and professional image of Council and its staff.

Council officers must support Council decisions and all Council Officials must refrain from using the media to make negative personal reflections on each other, or comments that could be interpreted as such and which are reasonably likely to undermine public confidence in the Council or local government generally.

4.1 Public Comment by Councillors

Council will openly discuss matters of interest with the media and provide public comment to the media unless disclosure of certain information contravenes Council's obligations of confidentiality or privacy, duty of care, or could infringe on laws or regulations that govern its operations.

When making public comment, Councillors must uphold and represent accurately the policies and decisions of Council.

When making public comment, Councillors must make clear to the media that comments:

- (a) are being made as an individual;
- (b) are not necessarily the view of the Council; and
- (c) may relate to matters that have not yet been determined by Council.

4.2 Authorised Spokespersons

The Mayor is the authorised spokesperson to the media on decisions made by Council and committees of Council.

In the absence of the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor is the authorised spokesperson to the media on decisions made by Council and committees of Council.

The General Manager is the authorised spokesperson to the media on all administrative and operational matters.

The General Manager may delegate to other Council officers the authority to speak to the media on administrative and operational matter where comment of a technical nature is required. Council officers will generally be used as authorised spokespeople when public comment about specific decisions, services, programs, events and activities relevant to the spokesperson's area of expertise or responsibility is required.

The Communications and Media Officer is an authorised spokesperson on matters of fact or clarification. When responding to media enquiries, the Communications and Media Officer will request that media credit their responses to "a Council spokesperson", unless expressly credited to the Mayor, General Manager or other authorised spokesperson.

Authorised spokespersons are entitled to decline comment.

4.4 Media Liaison

Council will only proactively engage with accredited journalists or members of the media. We reserve the right to exercise discretion when liaising with non-accredited representatives.

The Communications and Media Officer is the principal liaison between Council and the media and is responsible for managing media enquiries and requests for interviews. This assists in ensuring accurate, responsible and relevant information is provided to the media and ensure the most positive and appropriate coverage of Council affairs is achieved.

All media enquiries should be directed to the Communications and Media Officer in the first instance.

Media organisations and their representatives will be treated equally and without bias.

Media enquiries and requests for interview will be actioned promptly and efficiently and with a view to meeting the media's deadlines.

Council spokespersons will not knowingly provide information to the media, which is misleading, untruthful or inaccurate. The Communications and Media Officer will ensure all information provided to the media is checked for accuracy and relevance prior to being distributed.

Any Council officers not authorised to liaise with the media under this Policy must not provide any comment and refer the enquiry to the Communications and Media Officer for response.

4.5 Confidential information

Consistent with the *Local Government Act 1993* and Council's Code of Conduct, Council Officials must not disclose or distributed material classified as confidential to the media.

4.6 Breaches

Council Officials will not provide public comment unless expressly authorised to do so under this Policy. Breaches of this Policy will be dealt with in accordance with Council's Code of Conduct.