

Policy



STRATEGIC

MEDIA RELATIONS

Head of Power

Local Government Act 2009

Key Supporting Council Document

Lockyer Valley Regional Council Corporate Plan (2012-2017) Lockyer Council “Working together to create a high performing organisation with a customer focus”.

Definitions

Council staff - employees, contractors, volunteers and all others performing work on behalf of council. The policy applies whether Councillors or staff are at work or at home.

Media - includes formal media channels such as print, television, radio.

Policy Objective

The aim of this policy is to provide timely and accurate information to the media in a way that is professional, enhances Council’s public image, limits the possibility of misinformation and maintains positive relations with the media.

Policy Statement

Lockyer Valley Regional Council (Council) encourages open, honest and prompt communication with the media.

The Mayor and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) are authorised to comment on Council’s behalf. Where a Councillor has portfolio responsibilities they are able to comment on behalf of Council with regard to a matter within their portfolio of responsibility. The Mayor is to be notified where practicable prior to Councillors making statements to the media on portfolio matters. In addition, major announcements are to be made by the Mayor or delegate regardless of portfolio responsibilities.

All media is to be coordinated through the Marketing, Communications & Engagement Unit. A content expert can be sourced from within Council to provide content advice to the media on approval from the Mayor and/or CEO in consultation with the Manager Marketing, Communication and Engagement. The content expert is not permitted to discuss Council policy or speculate on future decisions.

Outside portfolio responsibilities, Councillors are not permitted to comment to the media on behalf of Council unless authorised to do so by Council. Council acknowledges that as elected representatives, the media will from time to time call on Councillors for personal comment. In this instance, Councillors must refer those requests, where practical, to the Marketing, Communications & Engagement Unit. A Councillor wishing to make statements to the media must inform the journalist:

- that comments are made as an individual
- that comments made do not necessarily represent the views or beliefs of Council or other Councillors
- that the matter is before Council
- that the matter has or has not been determined by Council.

It is important to note that Parliamentary Privilege does not extend to local government. That is, statements made in Council Chambers are open for civil prosecution. When making a statement, either in or out of Council Chambers, Councillors are reminded that defamation laws apply and it could be considered defamatory to harm another person's reputation either in written form or verbally.

Councillors electing to make personal statements must consider the broader ramifications of such statements. Negative comments on Council initiatives could damage teamwork, credibility and unity within the organisation.

Council will only write a media release for Council initiatives and projects or for external not-for-profit organisations where Council is a partner or where Council officially supports a particular project.

Council staff are not permitted to discuss Council matters with the media either during work hours in a work capacity or out of work hours in a personal capacity unless authorised to do so by the CEO.

Where a staff member is contacted by the media, they must be polite, courteous and refer the media to the Marketing, Communications & Engagement Unit. If no one is available at the time, email the media person's name, media outlet they represent, nature of the call and deadline to the Marketing, Communications & Engagement Unit. Where the issue is urgent, refer the media person to the CEO.

No media statement is to be released without approval from the Manager Marketing, Communications & Engagement and the CEO and/or Mayor. The Manager Marketing, Communications & Engagement and CEO will determine who should approve the document.

Related Documents

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