



Media & Social Media Policy

Responsible Officer	Chief Executive Officer
Relevant Delegations	Director Corporate Services
Legislation and References	Local Government Act 1999

1 Purpose of this Policy

The Council is committed to upholding the principles of transparency and accountability and recognises its duty to keep the community informed on matters before the Council.

The purpose of this Policy is to formally state Council's position regarding communicating with the media and use of Social Media. Compliance with this Policy will ensure that Council effectively promotes and responds to the media in a professional, timely and positive manner.

2. Scope and Definitions

This Policy applies to all Council Members and Council employees, volunteers and contractors.

'Media' means all forms of the public media and press including television, radio, newspapers and other publications for public dissemination. Media also includes social media.

Social Media means all forms of electronic social media on any and all platforms, including but not limited to blogs and newsletters and comments on published online media articles.

'Employee' or 'Staff' is any person who is employed by the Council, but also includes any contractors, volunteers (including Committee members), trainees, work experience students and consultants undertaking work for, or on behalf of the Council whether they are working in a full-time, part-time, casual capacity or unpaid capacity).

3. Legislative Framework

Mayor

Section 58 of the Local Government Act 1999 states that the Mayor is Council's principal spokesperson, unless otherwise resolved by Council. (Refer Part 5)

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Council Members

Section 75E of the Local Government Act 1999 directs that Council Members must comply with the Behavioural Standards for Council Members (gazetted 17 November 2022) which states “1.5 When making public comments, including comments to the media on Council decisions and Council matters, show respect for others and clearly indicate their views are personal and not those of Council.”

Employees

Employees must only make comment in relation to their duties when specifically authorised to do so and restrict such comments to factual information and professional advice.

4. Principles

The following principles will ensure a consistent and positive approach is maintained:

- Clearly indicate Council's authorised spokespersons.
- Maintain positive relations with the media by providing them with accurate and timely information.
- Improve communication with internal and external customers and enhance Council's public image.
- Establish protocols and consistent methods for managing communication to the media to ensure relevant and approved comments.
- Limit the possibility of miscommunication and maximise the effectiveness of staff by ensuring comments to the media are made only through authorised persons.
- Establish guidelines for effectively communicating and publicising news about the Council to the media.

5. Policy

Authorised Spokespersons

The Mayor and the Chief Executive Officer are nominated as the official spokespersons for Council and have the authority to make comments on behalf of Council.

Only the official spokespersons, or employees authorised by the Chief Executive Officer for specific situations, may give any information or speak to the media on behalf of Council.

Responding to Media Enquiries

If the Mayor or the Chief Executive are contacted directly by the media, they have the authority to respond as an official spokesperson for Council. All other media

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enquiries, in the first instance, must be directed to Council's Media Liaison Officer who will coordinate Council's response.

If a media outlet contacts an employee directly, the employee is required to refer the enquiry to the Chief Executive Officer. No employee, other than those authorised by the Chief Executive Officer is permitted to respond to an enquiry from the media.

Responses from employees and Council's official spokespersons will be confined to factual information, reflect Council's position and not include personal commentary or opinion.

All media representatives will be treated equitably, efficiently and courteously.

Role of Council Members

Council Members are free to make personal comments to the media and on private social media and online platforms, but cannot speak on behalf of Council and must comply with the Behavioural Standards for Council Members..

When Council Members speak to the media or interact on private social media and online platforms, they speak as individual Councillors and not on behalf of Council, and must make this clear. The Council Member must state that they are communicating their personal views, which do not necessarily reflect the position of Council. When the Mayor is not speaking on behalf of Council, he/she must make it clear that he/she is speaking as an individual.

Comments must not include information brought to Council in confidence.

Individual Council Members contacted directly by the media may direct the enquiry to the Chief Executive Officer.

Written Material for Media

All official communication will be prepared and distributed by Council's Media Liaison Officer or in consultation with the Media Liaison Officer. Official communication relating to a specific department, area of expertise or projects will be prepared in consultation with the relevant manager / officer.

Media releases will list the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer as the spokespeople for Council and will be approved by the Chief Executive Officer (or delegate) prior to release.

When media releases and newsletters are distributed, they are also distributed to Council Members, all staff, and are made available on Council's website.

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Where a media release is prepared by another organisation, which relates to a Council project or in which Council is involved, the Council employee involved must ensure that a copy of the draft media release is provided to Council's Media Liaison Officer and the Chief Executive Officer prior to being circulated to the public.

Use and Moderation of Social Media and Online Platforms

Official Council social media accounts and online platforms will be owned by Council and operated by Council employees and Council's Media Liaison Officer who have delegated authority from the Chief Executive Officer.

Only employees and Council's Media Liaison Officer with delegated authority are able to post or upload content or respond to comments on Council's social media and online platforms.

Council retains the right to remove content that does not adhere to the guidelines. Where individuals are noted for breaching these guidelines, they may be blocked from providing further comment.

Inappropriate content or behaviour with respect to a Council controlled communication tool should be referred to the Chief Executive Officer.

The following is not permitted under any circumstances:

- Abusive, profane or sexual language
- Commentary which is false or misleading
- Confidential information about Council or third parties
- Discriminatory material in relation to a person or group based on age, colour, creed, disability, family status, gender, nationality, marital status, parental status, political opinion/affiliation, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, health, race or social origin, religious beliefs/activity, responsibilities, sex or sexual orientation
- Illegal material or materials designed to encourage law breaking
- Materials that could compromise Council, employee or system safety
- Materials which would breach applicable laws (defamation, privacy, trade practices, financial rules and regulations, fair use, trademarks)
- Material that would offend contemporary standards of taste and decency
- Material which would bring the Council into disrepute
- Personal details or references to Elected Members, Council employees, Committee members or third parties, which may be inconsistent with Council's Privacy Policy.
- Statements which may be considered to be bullying or harassment.

Any doubts or concerns about applying the provisions of this policy should be referred to Chief Executive Officer before using social media to communicate.

Depending upon the nature of the issue and potential risk, it may also be appropriate to consider seeking legal advice.

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Employees Use of Social Media and online platforms

Employees must not use private social media accounts or online platforms to make adverse comments about the Council or its programs, services, projects, Council Members, other Staff, Volunteers, contractors, community members or decisions. Non-compliance with this policy by Council staff will be managed through the Code of Conduct and disciplinary systems.

6 Review & Availability

This policy will be reviewed every four years, or as required.

The public may obtain a copy for a fee fixed by Council

The policy is available on Council's website www.claregilbertvalleys.sa.gov.au

7 Document History

Approved by	Issue Date	Minute Reference – Details of Review
CGVC	10/12/18	Renewed to incorporate Media and Social Media Policy Adopted by Council
CGVC	14/12/22	Policy Reviewed by Council

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