



**GEORGES
RIVER
COUNCIL**

Communications and Media Management Policy

December 2017

POLICY ADMINISTRATION

Dates	Policy approved 18/12/2017 This policy is effective upon its approval. Policy is due for review December 2021.
Approved by	Council Meeting 18/12/2017 Council Resolution CCL238-17
Policy Owner	Director Community and Culture, Community and Culture
Related Documents	Georges River Council Media Management and Communications Procedures Georges River Council Code of Conduct Georges River Council Social Media and Communication Devices Policy
References & Legislation	N/A
Document Identifier	Policy #: Pol-044.01 Doc #: D17/171588
Breaches of Policy	Breaches of any policy will be dealt with and responded to in accordance with adopted codes and/or relevant legislation.
Record Keeping	All documents and information obtained in relation to the implementation of this policy will be kept in accordance with the <i>NSW State Records Act 1998</i> , Georges River Council's Corporate Records Policy and adopted internal procedures.

PURPOSE

The Communications and Media Management Policy provides a framework to enable Council officials to promote a positive image of Council. It also outlines the appropriate channels for communicating internally with staff members, or externally with the community and members of the media.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with Council's Code of Conduct, Communication Strategy and Council's Media Management and Communications Procedures.

SCOPE

The policy applies to all Council officials and the functions that relate to Council's internal and external communications, and media management procedures, including:

- Producing media releases and speeches
- Producing promotional materials
- Lodging advertisements
- Responding to and interacting with members of the media.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Term	Meaning
Council	Georges River Council
Media	All media outlets – local, state, national or international. This also includes trade media publications, freelance journalists and bloggers.
Social Media	Any websites and applications, which enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Facebook● Twitter● Instagram● Snapchat● YouTube● Google+● LinkedIn
Media user	Any person or account using media or social media to comment, post, or message in public, including online, or directly to Council.

Interview Requests	Consists of any invitation from the media to talk directly with a journalist where their comments will be broadcast live, pre-recorded or in print.
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POLICY STATEMENT

1. Council’s Spokespeople

Staff members are not authorised to comment to the media and should refer the journalist or media outlet directly to the Communications Team.

The only authorised members of Council that can speak directly with the media are:

- **The Mayor** – Council’s official spokesperson on all Council matters, projects, initiatives and matters of public interest
- **The Deputy Mayor** – Council’s second authorised official spokesperson on all Council matters, projects, initiatives and matters of public interest, only if the Mayor is unavailable
- **Councillors** –
 - Every Councillor has a right to express a private opinion on any issue, whether or not that opinion reflects Council’s official position, but Councillors must carefully identify the role in which they speak or write.
 - Whenever Councillors publicly express their own opinions they must make it clear they are speaking for themselves and not for council, unless they are delegated by the Mayor and supporting a Council position.
 - When Councillors speak “for the Council” when delegated by the Mayor, they must express and support Council’s entire policy on the issue at hand.
 - Councillors must refrain from undertaking their own announcement of a Council initiative, promotion or event prior to an official announcement being made by the Mayor or his/her delegate. However, once the official announcement has been made, Councillors can then promote the Council initiative, promotion or event.
- **The General Manager**
- **Directors** – as delegated by the General Manager to speak on operational matters
- **Manager of Communications and Customer Service** – as delegated by the General Manager and Director Community and Culture

2. Responding to the Media

All media requests must be raised with the General Manager to determine if a response is required. In the case a media request will be responded to, it must be addressed as a priority in order to meet a media outlet’s nominated deadline and to ensure Council is represented in the news piece.

Only members of the Communications Team are authorised to receive and respond to media enquiries outside of Council's designated spokespeople.

2.1 Interview Requests

Where a request is made to a Council representative for a radio or television interview, both the Mayor and the General Manager must be informed via the Office of the General Manager to determine if they will proceed with the interview.

The Communications Team will assist with all interview requests.

2.2 Requests for comment outside of business hours

Any enquiries outside of business hours (8.30am – 5.00pm Monday to Friday) must be dealt with as a priority on the following business day. If the media request relates to an urgent matter, emergency communication will be carried out in accordance with Council's Business Continuity Plan. For all emergency management processes, Council's Local Emergency Management Officer should be contacted, who will then advise the General Manager.

2.3 Requests for Contributions

A request for a contribution from Council can consist of any invitation from a media organisation to produce and publish content within a publication.

Only Council's General Manager and Mayor are authorised spokespeople and are permitted to produce content for publication. Other members of Council will require the permission of the General Manager.

Should a request for a contribution be received, the Communications Team will provide assistance.

2.4 Presenting at Conferences

For all Council staff members, approval for presenting at conferences must be given by the General Manager.

3. Producing content

3.1 Media Releases or Statements

Only members of the Communications team can draft and distribute media releases or statements to the media.

All press releases and media releases must be approved by a Director or General Manager and, if necessary, the Mayor.

While the Communications Team will openly explore opportunities to promote Council initiatives, projects or activities, Council staff members are also encouraged to raise ideas for press releases.

3.2 Speeches

All speeches must follow a set format and be within a set template, and as such must be drafted by the Communications Team to ensure those requirements are met. Refer to the accompanying procedural document for this policy to see this set format.

4. External Publications

4.1 Newsletters and Publications

All of Council's authorised publications – including *Community* – are produced by the Communications Team.

All publications must be made available for members of the community via all of Council's Service Centres, Libraries, and Childcare Centres and via Council's website.

4.2 Promotional Materials – Posters, Flyers and Brochures

All promotional materials required must be completed by Council's Graphic Designer. Council's Graphic Designer will ensure that appropriate Corporate Branding is applied and Council's material reflects a consistent look and feel.

In the event that an event is being jointly shared with an external organisation or group and promotional materials are required, it is preferred that the content is created by Council's Graphic Designer. However, in the instance where the external group has their own Graphic Designer wishing to do the work, Council's Communications Team must proofread the document and provide approval prior to distribution. The document should also have Council's correct logo visible.

4.3 Council's Corporate Branding and Logo

All authorised Council publications must have Council's correct logo displayed – the red dragon. The logo must be produced with the correct colours which are red, teal and grey.

Council's logo must not be handed out without approval from the Office of the General Manager or the Director Community and Culture.

5. Advertising

Council uses advertising as an additional channel for communication and to meet statutory requirements.

All advertisements must be placed with the relevant publication by the Communications Team. Refer to the accompanying procedural document for how to lodge advertisements.

6. Internal staff communications

6.1 Newsletters

Only authorised internal staff newsletters can be distributed across Council, for example:

- *General Manager's Message* – fortnightly
- *Connect* – Monthly
- *News Briefs* – As needed

These newsletters are drafted by members of the Communications Team.

6.2 Council-wide emails

Occasionally a Council-wide email may need to be sent out. Staff members must seek permission of their Manager and Director prior to issuing a Council-wide email.

Staff members should not send Council-wide emails for:

- Announcing holidays
- External social events
- Selling personal items

Instead, staff members should only email their relevant department / team regarding holidays or flex leave. The social Yammer feed available through Georges River Council's intranet, *Rivernet*, can also be used for these topics.

7. Social Media

7.1 Council-Owned Accounts

Council's official social media accounts are monitored and managed by the Communications Team and other teams within the organisation as delegated. Only designated staff members are authorised to post material across these social media accounts.

Staff members must not:

- Imply that they are authorised to speak as representatives of Council, nor give the impression that the views expressed are those of Council on a social media space
- Use the identity or likeness of another Council worker in a social media space
- Use their Council email address or any council logos or insignia that may give the impression of official support or endorsement of their personal comment via a social media space.
- Use their position with Council when providing online recommendations or referrals for friends or associates via a social media space in any way that would expose them or Council to a conflict of interest.
- Use or disclose any confidential information or personal information obtained in their capacity as a worker of Council via social media.
- Post any material that is, or might reasonably be construed as, offensive, derogatory, threatening, harassing, bullying, hateful, racist, sexist or discriminatory via social media. Harassment in this context also includes sexual harassment which is deemed unlawful.

7.2 Use of Personal Social Media Accounts

Staff members are welcome to inform people of their affiliation with Council in a professional capacity via social media. Although, in line with Council's Code of Conduct, all staff members are to refrain from making negative comments about Council and other staff members via social media accounts.

Staff are also not to act as a spokesperson on Council issues or comment on Council issues. This is reserved for Council's designated spokespeople. Any posts, comments or messages which can be deemed as harassment, derogatory, threatening, or bullying in nature towards another member of Council will be addressed in line with Council's Code of Conduct.

Members of Council should not disclose any confidential, sensitive, or non-public information via social media accounts. Any member of Council found to be doing so will be addressed in line with Council's Code of Conduct.

Personal social media accounts should be accessed via personal devices. Council permits a reasonable use and access to social media during work hours.

7.3 Council's Yammer Account

Council's Yammer account is for staff members only. It is not to be accessible or accessed by non-staff members. This includes Councillors and Mayors.

Council's Yammer account, accessible via the staff intranet platform Rivernet, is for professional intra-Council communication. Only the designated social Yammer feed is for non-work related communications. Any comments deemed as harassment, derogatory, threatening, or bullying in nature will be addressed in line with Council's Code of Conduct.

8. Council Devices

Council-issued devices, including mobile phones, tablets and computers remain the property of Georges River Council.

8.1 Mobile Devices

Work phones and devices must be used in a professional capacity. All mobile phones and devices are monitored for internet usage and all calls and texts.

Staff members are responsible for accounting for, and payment, of any personal use of Council mobiles in excess of any nominated allowances.

8.2 Computers and Laptops

Council computers and laptops must be used in a professional capacity. All work computers and laptops are monitored for internet and email usage. Reasonable personal use of Council's internet browsing and e-mail facilities is a privilege and, as such should be used in staff members' own time and kept to a minimum.

All Council business that requires the use of a computer/laptop must be done so through a Council-owned computer/laptop.

8.3 Inappropriate use of Devices

It is not acceptable to intentionally create, send or access information that could damage the Council’s reputation, be misleading or deceptive, result in victimisation or harassment, lead to criminal penalty or civil liability, or be reasonably found to be offensive, obscene, threatening, abusive or defamatory.

Any comments deemed as harassment, derogatory, threatening, or bullying in nature will be addressed in line with Council’s Code of Conduct.

9. Email

All email messages and their attachments are corporate records. They serve to document Council’s business and activities and need to be retained as evidence of those actions.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Position	Responsibility
<i>Director Community and Culture</i>	To review policy when required.
<i>Manager Communications and Customer Service</i>	To ensure the policy is rolled out across the organisation.
<i>Local Emergency Management Officer</i>	Must advise the General Manager of all emergency management processes
<i>Communications team</i>	Receiving and responding to media enquiries outside of Council’s designated spokespeople Providing assistance to authorised staff in preparing for interview requests Drafting and distributing media releases or statements Producing authorised Council newsletters and publications
<i>Graphic Designer</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing any promotional material
<i>All staff</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referring any media requests directly to the Communications team • Referring any urgent media enquiries received outside of business hours to Council’s Local Emergency Management Officer • Raising ideas for press releases • Gaining appropriate approvals as required under this policy, for example gaining the approval of Manager and Director prior to publication.

VERSION CONTROL AND CHANGE HISTORY

Version	Amendment Details	Policy Owner	Period Active
1.0	Complete new Georges River Council Communications and Media Devices Policy	Director Community and Culture	18/12/2017