



**CORANGAMITE
SHIRE**

Media Relations Policy

Corangamite Shire

April 2017

Council Policy



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Media Relations

Introduction

The media is critical to Corangamite Shire Council's operations, is an important source of information for our communities and provides those same communities with a public platform to advocate to Council.

News agencies have the means to convey information to readers, listeners and viewers that is independent of Corangamite Shire and therefore uncompromised in content. This provides a useful and meaningful communication tool for the Council.

Corangamite Shire releases, on average, 150 media releases annually and responds to enquiries from media outlets on a daily basis. It provides content to the print, radio and television media in addition to a number of township newsletters.

This policy seeks to ensure that Councillors, at all times, communicate openly and honestly with the media in order to maintain our commitment as an open and accountable organisation. As an organisation that is accountable to its community, effective and open communication between the Council, its residents, ratepayers and other stakeholders is a priority recognised within the Council Plan.

Through adherence to this policy, Corangamite Shire will maximise its ability to effectively communicate decisions, policies, programs, services and activities to the community by encouraging high standards, consistency and professionalism within the organisation.

Purpose

To guide the relationship between Corangamite Shire and the media to ensure that information is provided in a consistent, timely and accurate manner.

Scope

This policy is applicable to Councillors in all of their dealings with the media and is complimented by the Council's Social Media Policy, Councillor Code of Conduct, the Customer Service Charter, Complaints Handling Policy, Equal Opportunity Policy and other key documents governing Councillor activities.

Definitions

- Council officer – refers to any employee of Corangamite Shire Council
- Councillor – refers to elected Corangamite Shire Councillors
- CEO – refers to the Chief Executive Officer
- Director – refers to second-level management
- Community Relations Manager – refers to the officer responsible for the policy
- Communications Officer – refers to officers delegated to liaise with the media

Policy Detail

Official Council Spokespersons

The Mayor and the Chief Executive Officer are the official spokespeople for Corangamite Shire and are the appropriate people to make statements to the media on Council policy, political matters, service levels and major decisions. This relates to all Council departments and teams, both at the Civic Centre in Camperdown and those that are located off site, such as children's services, depots and swimming pools.

As official spokespeople, the Mayor, CEO and approved Council officers must represent the Council (whole of organisation) view, not their personal view. Councillors may speak to the media however they must portray the general position of Council or they are expected to indicate when any statement they make is their personal view and not that of the Council.

The Mayor may also delegate authority to a fellow Councillor to comment on matters in which they hold a delegated role, such as special committees and Ward specific issues.

Council Meetings

All media are welcome to attend Council Meetings. All media requests before and after the meetings are to be directed through the Community Relations Manager. In their absence, the CEO will take the requests and follow protocols to satisfy the enquiry.

Media releases

Media releases are prepared and distributed by the Community Relations Manager and Communications Officers. Where appropriate, Corangamite Shire will distribute media releases to the following news outlets:

- Warrnambool Standard
- Camperdown Chronicle
- Cobden Timboon Coast Times
- Terang Express
- Colac Herald
- The Weekly Times
- Ballarat Courier
- The Age
- The Herald Sun
- ABC Ballarat
- ABC Warrnambool
- ABC Melbourne
- Mixx FM
- 3CS
- Coast FM
- 3YB
- 3BA
- Power FM
- The Pyrenees Advocate
- Prime TV
- Geelong Advertiser
- WIN TV
- Southern Cross Ten
- Western District Farmer
- Voice FM
- Hamilton Spectator
- South West Biz
- Simpson and District Newsletter
- Derrinallum News and Natter
- Skipton Community News
- Lismore News
- Port Campbell Beacon.
- What's Noo (Noorat Community News)

All media releases must be written on the Council's standard media release template. They must be filed in Records Manager, posted on the website, published on social media and emailed to all Councillors.

Before any media release is distributed it must have approval from the CEO, relevant Director, Manager Community Relations or when delegated, relevant Manager. The communications team will also look to involve Councillors in media releases via quotes and photos where relevant e.g. Ward specific issues or releases revolving around a committee of Council.

Media conferences

In consultation with the CEO and the Community Relations Manager, the Council may decide to hold a Media Conference on an appropriate issue. The CEO, or delegate, Mayor, or delegate, and appropriate operational staff are to be present at all Media Conferences. Media kits on the issue are to be provided to all media present and every effort made to satisfy the additional requirements of the broadcast media.

Media meetings

All meetings with the media on a particular issue are to be organised through the Community Relations Manager and approved by the Mayor, CEO or a delegated Director.

Issues and/or crisis management

In the event of a crisis or unexpected issue, the Community Relations Manager will put into place appropriate crisis communication procedures to ensure Council's communication with the media is timely and well managed. In times of crisis or emergency, Councillors will refrain from media comment unless authorised by the Community Relations Manager or CEO.

Public Notices

Under the *Local Government Act 1989*, Council is required to nominate a newspaper that it will issue public notices in. Information that appears in the public notice section can include but is not limited to planning applications, Council Meetings, the sale of Council assets and the sale of Council owned land.

To ensure compliance with the Act, the Warrnambool Standard is endorsed as Council's official newspaper for public notices. Additional notices can be placed in other newspapers as Council sees fit to ensure the community is informed regarding various Council decisions and activities.

All public notices will also be uploaded to the Council website as required by the *Local Government Act 1989*.

It is considered that this Policy does not impact negatively on any rights identified in the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act (2006)*.

Review Date

April 2020.