

Media Relations

Corangamite Shire

April 2024



**CORANGAMITE
SHIRE**

Council Policy



Media Relations

Introduction

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

Media agencies have the means to convey information to readers, listeners and viewers that is independent of Corangamite Shire. This provides a useful and meaningful communication tool for the Council but can also represent a risk. Corangamite Shire releases, on average, 150 media releases annually and responds to enquiries from media outlets daily. It provides content to the print, radio and television media in addition to several township newsletters.

Effective and open communication between the Council, its residents, ratepayers and other stakeholders is a priority in the Council Plan 2021-2025. This policy seeks to ensure that Councillors, always, communicate openly and honestly with the media to ensure Corangamite Shire remains transparent and accountable.

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 Council and the media to ensure that information is provided in a consistent, transparent, timely and accurate manner.

Scope

This policy is applicable to Councillors in all of their dealings with the media and is complemented 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.
- ELT – refers to the Executive Leadership Team, which consists of the CEO and Directors
- Manager Governance & Civic Support – refers to the officer responsible for the policy.
- Communications Coordinator/Officer – refers to officers delegated to liaise with the media

Policy Detail

Official Council Spokespeople

The Mayor and the CEO 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 and not their personal views. 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 fellow Councillors 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 to the Manager Governance & Civic Support, in their absence, the Communications & Customer Service Coordinator will take the requests and follow protocols to satisfy the enquiry. This may be overseen by the CEO.

Media releases

Media releases are prepared and distributed by the Communications Team. Council distributes media releases to a range of traditional and online news agencies that are based locally, regional or nationally. The level of distribution will depend on the topic/nature of the media release.

All media releases must be written on the Council's standard media release template. They must be filed within Council's document management system, posted on the Council website, published on Council managed social media and emailed to all Councillors.

Before any media release is distributed it must have approval from the CEO, relevant Director, Manager Governance & Civic Support or when delegated, the 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 Manager Governance & Civic Support, 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 Communications Team and approved by the Mayor, CEO or delegated Director.

Unexpected Issues and/or Emergency & Crisis Management

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

Gender Impact Assessment

It is considered that this policy does not adversely impact community members or employees of different genders and has been developed in accordance with the *Gender Equality Act 2020*.

Human Rights

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 2028