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# MEDIA POLICY

## ***INTENT***

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This policy outlines a formal process to ensure all media releases, statements to the media and inquiries from media organisations regarding Cook Shire Council issues are managed professionally and appropriately.

## ***POLICY OBJECTIVE***

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The policy will:

- guide the Council, managers and staff in maintaining positive relations with the media;
- ensure that all communication with the media is consistent, well informed, timely and appropriate;
- establish protocols and consistent methods for managing communication to the media to ensure relevant and approved comments;
- define the Council's authorised spokespersons; and
- establish guidelines for effectively communicating and publicising news about Cook Shire Council with the media.
- Help maximise publicity opportunities for Council

## ***SCOPE***

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This policy relates to Councillors, staff and contractors of Cook Shire Council.

This policy has been developed with recognition and acknowledgement of the:

- Community Engagement Policy
- Advertising Expenditure Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Councillor Code of Conduct
- Employee Code of Conduct
- Confidentiality Policy and Procedures for Councillors

This policy references: Disaster Management Plan Media A11.

Media includes but is not limited to: radio, media releases, television, newsletters, newspapers, email broadcasts, magazines, flyers, brochures, online forums, direct advertising, websites, social media, speeches and presentations.

## ***PROVISIONS***

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### **Authorised spokespersons**

Council has nominated the following persons to act as official spokespersons to the media:

- The Mayor is the official Council spokesperson on all matters of policy and decision-making inquiries. This includes civic occasions, community events and major Council announcements. The Mayor may delegate as appropriate to another Councillor in his absence or where the Mayor deems the media inquiry to be relevant to a Councillor's representation on a Committee, project or a portfolio area.
- Councillors are not authorised spokespersons for Cook Shire Council. However, Councillors are permitted to make statements of personal opinion to the media (see below).
- The CEO is the official Council spokesperson on all matters relating to Council's operations including staff, administrative and industrial matters. The CEO may also act as spokesperson in regard to technical and legislative matters affecting policy or may delegate to another officer as appropriate;
- The Media Officer may provide information to the media which is freely available to the public. This information may be provided in order to improve or clarify the media's understanding of an issue. No other staff member may make statements to the media or publicly (including on social media) where their statements may be seen as speaking on behalf of Council.

### **Making personal statements – Councillors**

It is likely that the media will approach Councillors in order to obtain their views on a matter. Only the Mayor and CEO are authorised to speak on behalf of Council. Individual Councillors remain free to make personal comments to the media but are not authorised to speak on Council's behalf. There will be occasions that a Councillor argues and votes against a proposition put to the Council which is ultimately passed by the Council. The fact that the Councillor voted against it may be a matter of public record. It is acceptable for the Councillor to explain to the media and the public that he/she had argued and voted against the measure.

It is the Councillor's responsibility to ensure that any comment made to the media in their capacity as a Councillor is accurate, not prejudicial to Council's legal standing, and is not in any way defamatory to other Councillors, officers or any other persons.

For significant issues Councillors should advise the Mayor, Chief Executive Officer and Media and Communications Officer before providing comment to the media where possible. This will assist in Council providing consistent, timely and accurate responses.

### **Dealing with media inquiries**

Media inquiries are to be treated efficiently and courteously. All media inquiries are to be directed to the Media and Communications Officer in the first instance, who will then direct the inquiry to the appropriate authorised spokesperson.

Information given to the media by a delegated spokesperson of a controversial, legal or ethical nature requires the approval of the CEO and/or Mayor.

### **Media approval and distribution**

All advertisements and brochures prepared by staff must be approved by the Media and Communications Officer to ensure accuracy, quality and corporate style. The Media and Communications Officer will also arrange for advertisements and media statements/information to be placed in the appropriate media and authorise, through the appropriate Divisional Director, advertisements, public notices, fact sheets, e-newsletters, social media, publications and brochures for printing and disbursement.

Non compliance with the Social Media Policy by Councillors or staff will be managed through the relevant Code of Conduct disciplinary systems.

***THIS POLICY IS TO REMAIN IN FORCE UNTIL OTHERWISE DETERMINED BY COUNCIL.***

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Officer responsible for review:	Chief Executive Officer
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