

# Council Policy



two ways :: one outcome

Title	Media Policy	<b>P02</b>	
Type	Council Policy		
Document Owner	Chief Executive Officer		
Approval Date	29 July 2020	Review Date	30 March 2023
MaGiQ Document ID	344767	Council Resolution Number	OC086/2020

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to:

1. Make sure the Council speaks with one strong voice
2. Ensure that all communication with the media is consistent, well-informed, timely and appropriate
3. Promote and protect the good reputation of the Council
4. Make clear who can be the voice of the Council

## SCOPE

The Media Policy applies to all Council elected members, local authority and committee members, employees, contractors, and volunteers.

## LEGISLATION AND REFERENCE

Local Government Act, 2008

## POLICY STATEMENT

Central Desert Regional Council acknowledges that effective communication is the key to building informed audiences, knowledgeable consumers and encouraging them to become active citizens.

Central Desert Regional Council is committed to providing information to the media in a timely, accurate and newsworthy manner to maximize positive editorial coverage of Council events, programs, services, decisions and other aspects of operation and policy matters.

### 1. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

#### 1.1 Dealing with Media Enquiries

The President and CEO are the Council's official spokesperson on all matters. The CEO may nominate other staff to act as spokesperson for particular operational aspects of the council.

The CEO is responsible for coordinating media liaison and will be delegated authority to respond to media enquiries of behalf of CDRC. No staff member, other than CEO is to handle an enquiry from the media.

The CEO will be responsible for issuing media releases about CDRC's activities, decision and plans.

#### 1.2 Elected Members and the Media

Every Elected Members has a right to express a private opinion on any issue, whether or not that opinion reflects Council's official position however, Councillors must carefully identify the role in which they speak.

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Whenever Elected Members publicly express their own opinions they must make it clear they are speaking for themselves, and not for Council, unless they are supporting a Council position.

When Elected Members speak "for the Council" they must express and support Council's entire policy on the issue at hand.

## 1.3 Staff and the media

No staff member is authorised to speak to the media on any Council issue without the prior approval of the Chief Executive Officer.

The Chief Executive Officer has the authority to designate Council staff to talk to the media when a matter is:

- i. Operational
- ii. Relevant to their particular Council responsibilities
- iii. Requested by individual media.

A general priority guide for staff selection will be:

1. Chief Executive Officer
2. Directors
3. Managers
4. Specific key staff

In all cases the decision on who will speak to the media rests with the Chief Executive Officer.

It may be appropriate, for reasons of expediency, or gravity of subject matter, for the Chief Executive Officer to officially speak direct to the media to ensure the overall reputation of Council is protected and/or enhanced.

## 2. MEDIA ISSUES PROTOCOL

Media enquiries and requests for interviews should be directed to the Chief Executive Officer. The Chief Executive Officer will liaise with the President or Elected Members on media request received and prepare Council's response.

The Chief Executive Officer will make the decision if a media enquiry or request received is an opportunity for positive media exposure for Council as a whole.

Elected Members, local authority and committee members and staff are not to use or disclose information gained in the ordinary course of business of Council, in a way that may cause significant damage or distress to a person; damage to the interests of the Council or a person; or confer an unfair commercial or financial advantage on a person or business when dealing with the media.

As a representative of the community, elected members need to be not only responsive to community views, but to adequately communicate the attitudes and decisions of the Council.

In doing so, elected members should acknowledge that:

- i. as a member of the Council there is respect for the decision making processes of the Council which are based on a decision of the majority of the Council;
- ii. information of a confidential nature must not be communicated until it is no longer treated as confidential;

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- iii. information relating to decisions of the Council on approvals or permits should only be communicated in an official capacity by a designated officer of the Council;
- iv. information concerning adopted policies, procedures and decisions of the Council is conveyed accurately;
- v. when speaking to the community, or the media, they make it clear whether or not they are representing Council in accordance with an adopted Council position, policy or procedure, or if they are presenting a personal viewpoint as an individual;
- vi. when expressing personal views care is taken not to show disrespect for the Council, its decisions, decision making process or other elected members and staff.

All aspects of communication by staff (including verbal, written or personal), involving council activities should reflect the status and objectives of the Council. Communications should be accurate and professional.

## 3. MEDIA RELEASES

The Communications Officer will prepare media release on behalf of the Council. Other staff are also encouraged to prepare their media releases but they must be forwarded to the Communications Officer for review, editing and formatting to ensure that they maintain the Council's style and consistent with Council messages.

All media releases must be approved by the CEO. All media releases will be posted on the Council's website.

## 4. LIAISING WITH THE MEDIA

All media enquiries are to be dealt with promptly and should be directed to the CEO. Media organisations and their representatives will be treated equally and without bias.

## 5. BREACHES OF THIS POLICY

It is not acceptable for any member of staff to talk to the media on any council matter without the prior approval of the Chief Executive Officer. Breaches of this Policy may result in disciplinary action being taken against the employee in accordance with Council's Policy.

### REVIEW HISTORY

Date	Details
3 September, 2008	Original adoption by Council
3 February, 2012	Rewritten to reflect current operational practices. Includes new statement allowing staff members to talk to the media provided they have prior approval from the President and they restrict their comments to areas that they have operational responsibility. OC268/2012
5 February, 2016	Extensively reviewed and revised – includes clarification of roles and responsibilities and includes reference to media releases. OC023/2016
29 July 2020	Reviewed and adopted by Council OC086/2020