

Policy No. 49: Media Communications

POLICY MANUAL

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Media Communications

Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to provide rules and processes that manage how Meander Valley Council Workers communicate on and with Media.

Department

Governance and Community Wellbeing

Author

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12 August 2025

Minute Reference

111/2025

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August 2029

POLICY

1. Definitions

Council Worker

Any person who has been engaged by, or is part of, the Council as any of the following:

- a. an employee;
- b. a councillor or any other elected official;
- c. a committee member or office holder, whether elected, appointed, or otherwise engaged;
- d. a volunteer;
- e. a contractor, subcontractor, or consultant; and
- f. a trainee, apprentice, intern, placement student, or any other person engaged in work experience.

Media

Includes all offline and online platforms or channels that are, or could reasonably be, used to disseminate information to the public, a broad audience, or an audience not subjected to confidentiality requirements. This includes, but is not limited to, television, print publications, radio, podcasts, websites and Social Media.

Official Communication

Communication:

- a. that occurs through Council-managed platforms and channels, such as websites and Social Media;
- b. that occurs in the course, or as a result, of the person's role with the Council;

- c. that conveys information the person received in the course, or as a result, of the person's role with the Council;
- d. when the Council Worker is reasonably identifiable as holding their role with the Council; or
- e. when the Council Worker's opinions or views may reasonably be attributed to the Council or are given greater weight or attention due to the person's role with the Council.

Social Media

Any online websites, platforms, or apps that enable users to engage and communicate by creating and sharing content. This can include, but is not limited to, newsletter and blog platforms like Substack, wikis like Wikipedia, social networking sites like Facebook and content-sharing sites like YouTube.

The Act

The *Local Government Act 1993*.

2. Objective

This Policy provides Council Workers with a framework for communicating on and with Media. It acknowledges and is consistent with the roles and responsibilities of the Mayor, Councillors and the General Manager as outlined in the Act.

3. Scope

This Policy applies to Council Workers.

4. Restriction on Engaging in Official Communication

Council Workers must not engage in Official Communication on or with Media unless acting as the Council's spokesperson, as Councillor, or with written authority, in accordance with this Policy and the Act.

5. Authorisation to Engage in Official Communication

5.1 Council's Spokesperson

- a. The Mayor is the authorised spokesperson for all Council matters.
- b. The Mayor may delegate the function of spokesperson:
 - i. to the Deputy Mayor, a Councillor or General Manager for a specified period or specific matter; or
 - ii. after consulting with the General Manager – to a Council Officer for a specific operational matter.
- c. If the Mayor, for whatever reason, is unavailable, a spokesperson can be nominated by:
 - i. the Deputy Mayor, or
 - ii. if the Deputy Mayor is unavailable, the General Manager.

- d. The spokesperson must consult with the General Manager before engaging in Official Communication about operational matters.

5.2 Councillors

In accordance with the Act and this Policy, Councillors are authorised to engage in Official Communication on Media if that communication is to:

- a. share their personal views and endorsements, provided those personal views and endorsements are clearly and expressly delineated from the Council's decisions, policies, positions, commitments, views and endorsements; or
- b. facilitate general communication between the Council and the community, provided those communications:
 - i. accurately represent the Council's decisions, policies, positions, views or endorsements; and
 - ii. do not comment on the Council's operational matters.

5.3 Other Authorisations

The General Manager and the Mayor may consult and agree to give any Council Worker authority to engage in Official Communication on or with Media, if that authorisation is captured in writing and defines a process or scope for the communication.

6. Process for Engaging in Official Communication

If a Council Worker receives or becomes aware of a question or enquiry from or on Media, the response to which would require engaging in Official Communication, that Council Worker must refer the question or enquiry to Manager Governance and Legal.

The Manager Governance and Legal will then consult with the General Manager and Mayor to ensure the response is managed in accordance with this Policy.

7. Content of Communication

When engaging in Official Communication on or with Media, Council Workers must comply with the rules in table 1 below.

Table 1: Communication Rules for all Council Workers	
✓ Council Workers MUST	✗ Council Workers must NOT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confine communication to matters that are within the authorised scope of that communication. • Maintain decorum and civility. • Be respectful, polite and considerate. • Act in a way that is consistent with the Council's decisions, values, policies, positions, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misrepresent or inaccurately convey the Council's decisions, policies, positions, views or endorsements. • Commit, or appear to commit, the Council's resources to any activity without prior Council resolution. • Disclose any information received in the course, or as a result, of the person's role with the Council unless: prior consent is given by the General Manager, or the

<p>commitments, views and endorsements.</p>	<p>information has previously been made public by legal means.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make any admission about Council's legal liability in any matter. • Breach any laws or Council policies. • Bring the Council into disrepute. • Defame any person. • Share personal views and endorsements, unless that person is a Councillor acting in accordance with 5.2.
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8. Legislation and Related Standards

Local Government Act 1993

Meander Valley Council – Councillor Code of Conduct

Meander Valley Council – Code of Conduct Policy

9. Responsibility

Responsibility for the operation of this Policy rests with the General Manager.