

Kyogle Council

Media Policy



DOCUMENT CONTROL

For controlled copies of this Document the copy number is shown below and initialled in RED by the issuing officer. (Uncontrolled copies are not numbered.)

This document is a public document and should only be displayed or reproduced in its entirety. No part of this document may be reproduced in isolation without the prior permission in writing of the General Manager.

Contents

1	Introduction:	3
2	Validity:	3
3	Purpose:	3
4	Speaking to the Media and Making Comment on Social Media:.....	4
5	Media Releases:	5
6	Role of Councillors:.....	5

1 Introduction:

The media (which includes all social media platforms) is a channel to the public and a means by which Kyogle Council can promote itself and its various projects and initiatives to the community through the use of interesting, factual and up-to-date information.

The following policy is designed to strengthen and build on Council's existing relationship with the media and to ensure there is some consistency in the way that individual Councillors and Council staff deal with the media on a day to day basis.

Councillors and staff are encouraged to familiarise themselves with Council's Code of Conduct before making comment on Council business through the media.

2 Validity:

This policy was adopted at Council's Ordinary Meeting held 12 June 2018 (Resolution CO/0618/4).

3 Purpose:

Council recognises that a well-run, competent, ethical and reputable organisation is the best way to promote a favourable image and that any public relations program is only as good as the organisation behind it.

Kyogle Council will take advantage of interest from the media to further its reputation and inform the public about Council's activities. Council will also distribute information to the media to communicate information about Council activities and decisions. In dealing with the media, Councillors and Council officers must be careful to communicate accurate information.

Council will endeavour to:

- Be a reliable source of information
- Promote a professional and consistent corporate image
- Provide prompt responses to requests wherever possible
- Be as co-operative as possible
- Be available; including outside normal working hours where appropriate
- Provide up to date information

4 Speaking to the Media and Making Comment on Social Media:

1. The Mayor and General Manager are Council's official spokespersons on all matters. The General Manager may nominate other staff to act as spokespeople for the Council.

Council officers can speak to the media about specific projects and initiatives only with the approval of the General Manager.

2. Councillors and staff providing comment or information to the media must not contest or undermine Council policy or cast Council, Councillors or Council staff in a negative light.
3. When appropriate in official Council media releases, a Councillor or member of staff should become sole spokesperson on a specific issue, event or initiative to ensure consistency of message.
4. Councillors are free to talk to the media at any time on issues of interest. However, they should always do so with the best interests of the organisation in mind and should avoid making personal criticisms of other Councillors or Council staff. If speaking as individuals Councillors and Council staff should also make it clear where their views differ from those of the Council.
5. Councillors and Council staff are encouraged to co-operate at all times with media outlets and requests for interviews/photographs. Councillors and Council staff should respond to media enquiries at the earliest possible opportunity.
6. Councillors and Council staff should treat all media outlets equally and should avoid giving one outlet preferential treatment. Media releases should be distributed to all media outlets at the same time (unless they have been prepared for a specific publication).
7. Councillors and Council staff are encouraged at all times to be proactive, as opposed to reactive, in their use of the media.

5 Media Releases:

1. Media releases should be used to:
 - Promote specific Council projects and initiatives;
 - Assist with the relay of accurate and up-to-date information to residents and visitors to the area;
 - Congratulate/commend individuals and organisations;
 - Defend Council from unwarranted criticism.

Council media releases should be for the benefit or information of the community and not the aggrandisement of any individual.

2. All media releases on behalf of Council should be issued in consultation between the General Manager and Mayor.
3. Elected representatives are free to issue their own media releases as individuals but should do so with the best interests of the Council in mind and must not make personal attacks on other Councillors and Council staff.
4. Media releases issued on behalf of Council as an elected group must be approved by the Mayor or (in his/her absence) the Deputy Mayor. A draft copy should also be forwarded to all Councillors for comment prior to release where practical.
5. Media releases issued by Council staff must be approved by the General Manager. Copies of media releases should be forwarded to all Councillors.
6. Media releases can be developed and released in conjunction with other groups/agencies but should be approved by a representative of both agencies.

6 Role of Councillors:

It is common place for Councillors to be asked by the media to comment on Council policy or decisions. Only the Mayor and General Manager are permitted to speak on behalf of Council. Individual Councillors remain free to make personal comments to the media, but not to speak on Council's behalf.

Defamation law covers Councillors as it does everyone else. It could be considered defamatory to harm another person's reputation verbally or through the written word.