



# G.26 Communication and Media Policy

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## 1 OBJECTIVE

This policy is intended to clarify the appropriate process for the following:

- a) Preparing/releasing media statements (proactive);
- b) Responding to media enquiries (reactive);
- c) Use of official titles;
- d) Communication of Council official decisions and positions; and,
- e) Communication of personal statements as a Councillor.

## 2 SCOPE

This policy applies to all staff and contractors of Quilpie Shire Council, and any individual who may at any time potentially be perceived as communicating on behalf of Quilpie Shire Council, including Councillors, committee members and other stakeholders.

This Policy does not address paid advertisements, community notices, date claimers, or promotional material prepared by Council. Furthermore, this Policy does not address political or electioneering media statements during the local government elections (defined as the period between the date nominations open, to the publication of the results of the poll).

## 3 STATEMENT

### 3.1 PRINCIPLES

The following principles are applicable to this policy:

- a) Council acknowledges the important role that media interaction plays in community engagement;
- b) Council respects the principle of freedom of the press and the right of media outlets to report on Council matters in a manner that they consider appropriate;
- c) Council respects the principle of freedom of speech and the right of individuals to express their personal opinion. Council expects individuals to do so in a respectful, constructive and non-discriminatory manner;
- d) Council acknowledges its statutory responsibilities under the Queensland Anti-Discrimination Act 2001;
- e) Council recognises that editorial and/or public comment cannot be controlled and may not always support and endorse the actions of Council; and,
- f) Council will not publicly respond to editorial and/or public comment unless it is to correct misinformation.

### 3.2 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Mayor and Chief Executive Officer are Council's official spokespeople and have primary responsibility for communicating decisions of Council, or its position on a particular issue.

The Mayor will be responsible for communicating Council's policy, strategy, service levels, and political responses to, or on behalf of, community advocacy issues.

The Chief Executive Officer will be responsible for communicating with the media on operational and corporate matters.

If the matter being reported relates to Council business in which a Councillor holds specialised knowledge, that Councillor may be nominated as Council's spokesperson by the Mayor at the Mayor's discretion.

If the matter being reported relates to Council business in which an officer holds specialised knowledge, that officer may be nominated as Council's spokesperson by the Chief Executive Officer.

If the matter being reported relates to a resolution carried by Council that has been recommended by an advisory committee, the Chair of that advisory committee may be nominated as Council's spokesperson by the Mayor or Chief Executive Officer.

### 3.3 COMMUNICATING WITH THE MEDIA

All external media enquiries and requests for media comment on official Council position or policy should be directed to the Chief Executive Officer in the first instance.

All written media releases are approved by the Chief Executive Officer and/or Mayor.

A Councillor who wishes to represent Council and communicate with the media on a particular issue of council business, must seek delegation from the Mayor.

Councillors are not permitted to distribute in any way, any documentation pertaining to the Council and Council business, without first seeking approval from the Chief Executive Officer to determine if a document is available to the public.

All communications to the media or media statements must be compliant with copyright, confidentiality, privacy, defamation, contempt of court, discrimination, harassment, trademark and any other applicable laws. All reasonable steps must be taken to ensure that the statements are accurate, factual and not prejudicial to Council's legal standing.

### 3.4 USE OF OFFICIAL TITLES

A Councillor may use their official title when conducting Council business, such as representing Council at a function, conference or course, or having been authorised to communicate with the media on council business.

Any use by a Councillor of their official title is to accompany a disclaimer (which is obvious to the audience either in the written or spoken sense), that the opinion and/or comments provided are those of the Councillor and not those of the Quilpie Shire Council.

A Councillor must consider whether using their official title may lead audiences to assume that the Councillor is commenting on behalf of Council, and it is the responsibility of the Councillor to ensure this is clear to the recipient of the information.

3.5 PERSONAL STATEMENTS BY COUNCILLORS

This policy does not restrict Councillors from making statements or from responding to media enquiries, in their capacity as a Councillor, about their personal opinion regarding a Council matter that has not been the subject of a Council decision. Should Councillors intend to make statements as above reflecting their personal opinion, such remarks should be clearly qualified accordingly.

It is the sole responsibility of the Councillor to ensure, when communicating with the public or media, that it is clear when they are expressing a personal opinion and that it is clear when they are speaking on behalf of Council.

3.6 RECOMMENDED DISCLAIMER

The following email disclaimer, which is in line with policy, is recommended if a Councillor is sending an email with their official title attached:

*This message (including attachments) is intended for the addressee named above. It may also be confidential, privileged and/or subject to copyright. Any unauthorised use, alteration, disclosure, distribution or review of this email is strictly prohibited. Any unauthorised use of this material is prohibited. If you have received this message in error please notify the sender immediately, delete the message and destroy any printed or electronic copies. Any privilege or confidentiality attached to this message is not waived, lost or destroyed because you have received this message in error.*

**4 HUMAN RIGHTS COMPATIBILITY STATEMENT**

This Policy has been assessed as compatible with the Human Rights protected under the Human Rights Act 2019.

**5 DEFINITIONS**

Communication	includes all forms of communication to both the media and public, for example, but not limited to, interviews, press statements, emails, facsimiles, letters, phone calls, tweets, etc
Council Business	includes any matter that has been, or is being, considered by Council as having appeared in Council’s business papers or can be reasonably expected to appear in Council’s business papers. This includes the time between when a decision of Council is made and when the resolution is communicated to stakeholders via ‘Official Correspondence’
Official Correspondence	pursuant to the Local Government Act 2009, the Chief Executive Officer is responsible for conducting correspondence between Council and other persons. Official correspondence is that which is signed by the Chief Executive Officer or delegate
Official Title	the title afforded to the Councillor by virtue of the Local Government’s election, or in the case of an Officer, the title of the position held by the Officer

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Personal Statement	a statement made which is made from the perspective of the individual, as a Councillor
Editorial and/or Public Comment	statements, written or verbal, expressing privately held opinions relating to Council business, made by journalists or members of the public
Misinformation	information that is, whether intentionally or unintentionally, incorrect or misleading

**6 RELATED POLICIES | LEGISLATION | OTHER DOCUMENTS**

Local Government Act 2009  
 Queensland Anti-Discrimination Act 2001  
 Local Government Regulation 2012

IX #	Details

**7 VERSION CONTROL**

V1	15-Jan-24	Developed and adopted
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