

POLICY



Media Policy

1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish protocols for managing communication between Council and media, including who is authorised to respond to media enquiries and on what issues.

The aim of the policy is to protect and enhance the reputation of Council by ensuring the coordinated, coherent, professional, accurate, and reliable presentation of Council and Council business.

2 Scope

This policy applies to all Councillors, including the Mayor, all Youth Councillors and all Council employees.

For the purposes of this Policy the reference to Council employees includes—

- Full-time, part-time and casual employees;
- Contractors and agency personnel;
- Members of Council committees including Advisory Committees; and
- Volunteers.

3 Definitions

Council	means Hindmarsh Shire Council
CEO	means Chief Executive Officer
Media	For the purposes of this policy, the term media refers to, but is not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• print and digital outlets and associated online channels (including newspapers and magazines)• TV news and other broadcast programs• Online news outlets• Radio stations
Media Release	It does not refer to Social Media (refer to the Social Media Policy). means any information the Council proactively provides to Media, including via the Council's website.
Social Media	means the online technologies, platforms and practices that people use to share content, opinions, insights, experiences, perspectives, and media themselves. This is media for social interaction enabled

by a plethora of web technologies.

4 Policy

1. Based on the principles of democracy, Hindmarsh Shire Council encourages open, prompt, and accurate communication with the media, with an emphasis on promoting a positive, progressive and professional image of Council.
2. It is vital that all media enquiries are treated by the official spokespersons, efficiently and courteously with due regard to the fact that all media work to stringent deadlines, that require prompt responses. All enquiries by media received by persons other than an official spokesperson must be passed on to the relevant official spokesperson as soon as practicable. A
3. Council will maintain good working relationships with all media organisations. To maintain these relationships, there will be no exclusive stories provided to individual media outlets. Doing so has the potential to damage relationships with other media outlets and restricts Council's ability to achieve the best coverage possible for stories that promote the work and services of Hindmarsh Shire Council.
4. The Mayor and Chief Executive Officer are the official spokespersons on all matters relating to Council decisions, policy, interpretation of policy, or reaction to external matters. Where appropriate or expedient for a specific issue, the Mayor or CEO may authorise another Councillor to make a statement (on behalf of Council). This includes instances where a Council decision is made and the Mayor is absent due to a declared conflict of interest. In the absence of the Mayor, the Acting spokesperson shall be nominated in the following order:
 - Deputy Mayor, and
 - Any other elected member at the discretion of the Mayor.
5. The CEO is the official spokesperson for staffing and other organisational matters. Other Council employees may be delegated by the Chief Executive Officer to discuss a specific issue.
6. Media comment by the official spokespersons must accurately reflect Council's position on the topic as determined by Council in adopted documents, including the Council Plan and Vision, Strategies, Policies, Budget and Minutes.
7. In the case of matters with possible legal consequences, any statements made to the media must be authorised by the Chief Executive Officer.
8. Any person who wishes to make a personal statement on a topic must clearly inform the media:
 - their comment is being made as an individual
 - their comments are not necessarily the 'official' view of the Council
 - the matter has (or has not) been determined by the Council, and
 - the majority of Council may hold a different opinion.

Persons should consider the short- and long-term impact of such personal comments, and the possible detrimental impact on Council credibility and unity. Comments which are critical of majority Council decisions or Councillors will damage credibility and unity. Comments by Councillors must be in accordance with the Councillor Code of Conduct. Comments by employees must be in accordance with the Employee Code of Conduct.

9. All decisions made in open Council are public and can readily be quoted, or made available, to the media. Matters of staff, personal privacy, contract and legal proceedings may be restricted, as their discussion may contravene Council's duty of care, contractual obligations, or legislation. Councillors and Council employees are required to comply with the statutory requirements contained in the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2015* and *Local Government Act 2020*, which prohibit the disclosure of personal and confidential information. Matters raised in closed Council sessions are confidential and cannot be discussed with the media.
10. Council employees will not engage in media activity that may be to the personal advantage of a Councillor (i.e. during an election campaign). During local government election campaigns, Councillors must ensure that their media comments as a candidate are clearly distinguished from their role as a Councillor. During this period, Council's Election Period Policy shall apply.
11. All media releases distributed by Council will be produced according to Council's *Media Release Process*.
12. All items of advertising must be approved by the Chief Executive Officer prior to submitting to the media.
13. In relation to social media, the Social Media Policy applies.
14. Breach of this policy may lead to disciplinary action under the relevant Code of Conduct.

5 Administrative Updates

It is recognised that, from time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this document. Where an update does not materially alter this document, such a change may be made administratively. Examples include a change to the name of a Council department, a change to the name of a federal or state government department, and a minor update to legislation which does not have a material impact. However, any change or update which materially alters this document must be by resolution of Council.

6 Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006

This policy has been reviewed against and complies with section 13 of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*, as this policy aligns with and provides for the protection of an individual's right not to have their privacy unlawfully or arbitrarily interfered with. It is also in line with section 18, which recognises a person's right to participate in the conduct of public affairs.

7 Related documents

Council Documents
<p>Hindmarsh Shire Council Social Media Policy</p> <p>Hindmarsh Shire Council Media Release Process</p> <p>Hindmarsh Shire Councillor Code of Conduct</p> <p>Hindmarsh Shire Council Employee Code of Conduct</p> <p>Hindmarsh Shire Council Policy Framework</p> <p>Hindmarsh Shire Council Governance Rules and Election Period Policy</p> <p>Municipal Emergency Management Plan</p> <p>Privacy Policy</p>
Legislation
<p><i>Local Government Act 2020</i></p> <p><i>Privacy and Data Protection Act 2015</i></p> <p><i>Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006</i></p>

8 DOCUMENT CONTROL

Media Policy		Policy Category	COUNCIL
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	December 2017	1.2	Update of Policy
	December 2020	1.3	Review of Policy
	March 2023	1.4	Policy Review