

## Media and Communications Policy

**Keywords:** Media, TV, Newspaper, News, Communications, Radio

<b>Classification:</b>	<i>Executive Services – Public Relations – Media and Communication Policy</i>
<b>First Issued/Approved:</b>	<i>26<sup>th</sup> August 2008</i>
<b>Review Frequency:</b>	<i>The effectiveness of this policy will be reviewed every four years or as necessary</i>
<b>Last Reviewed:</b>	<i>October 2023</i>
<b>Next Review Due:</b>	<i>October 2027</i>
<b>Responsible Officer(s):</b>	<i>Chief Executive Officer</i>
<b>Council File Reference:</b>	<i>Council Policies (P)</i>
<b>Applicable Legislation:</b>	<i>Local Government Act 1999, Section 58(1)(c). Privacy Principles Freedom of Information Act</i>
<b>Relevant Policies:</b>	<i>This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Delegations Register;</i></li> <li>• <i>Customer Service Charter</i></li> <li>• <i>Council Representations and Delegations Policy</i></li> <li>• <i>Electronic Communications Policy</i></li> <li>• <i>Berri Barmera Council Style Guide</i></li> </ul>
<b>Related Procedures:</b>	<i>Not subject to Public Consultation</i>
<b>Delegations:</b>	<i>Mayor; Berri Barmera Council Delegations Register</i>

### 1. Purpose

Council recognises that it is imperative to ascertain the needs, wishes and ideas of its staff and constituents to ensure efficient and effective service delivery.

The purpose of this document is to articulate strategies that Council intends to implement to achieve this effective two-way communication.

The policy covers two sections – internal and external strategies. The former is focused on interactions with employees and contractors of Council, whilst the latter deals with Council's relationships with external stakeholders – residents, ratepayers, community groups, peak industry groups and government agencies.

### 2. Definitions

Media	includes print, radio, television, website and social media channels.
Employees	is any person who is employed by the council, but also includes any contractors, volunteers, committee members, work experience students and consultants undertaking work for, or on behalf of the council.
Council	means Berri Barmera Council

### **3. Principles**

- to ensure all communication with the media is consistent, well-informed, timely and appropriate;
- to clearly indicate Council's authorised spokespersons;
- to maintain positive relations with the media by providing them with accurate, timely information;
- to improve communication with internal and external customers and enhance Council's public image;
- to establish protocols and consistent methods for managing communication to the media to ensure relevant and approved comments;
- to limit the possibility of miscommunication and to maximise the effectiveness of staff by ensuring comments to the media are made only through authorised people;
- to establish guidelines for effectively communicating and publicising news about Berri Barmera Council with the media;

### **4. Policy Statement**

#### **4.1. Framework for Policy**

Corporate communications liaise with the media on behalf of Council with the objective of promoting a positive and authoritative image of Council, as well as an understanding of Council policies. Council's dealings with the media are aimed at projecting a consistent and united image.

To ensure that this occurs, it is essential that a coordinated approach be taken to releasing information to the media and responding to enquiries. The following points outline how this is to occur:

1. The Mayor is the official Council spokesperson on all matters of policy and decision-making enquiries including civic occasions, community events and major Council announcements.
2. The Chief Executive Officer is the official Council spokesperson on all matters concerning Council's operations including staff, administrative, election and industrial matters. Additionally, the CEO may act as the Council spokesperson in regard to technical or legislative matters affecting policy.
3. At the CEO's discretion, approving media releases or responding to enquiries on routine operational issues may be delegated to Department Managers. Furthermore, the CEO may delegate the authority for other officers to communicate with the media on specific issues.
4. Management shall provide information to the media which is freely available to any member of the public. This information shall be provided in order to improve or clarify the media's understanding of the issues.

The media may approach individual Elected Members or staff in order to obtain a different perspective on a matter. Staff members are not to respond to media requests except as authorised in accordance with this policy. Likewise, Elected Members are not authorised to speak on behalf of Council other than as outlined in this policy.

The CEO should be advised of any media request for information on Council matters to ensure a single, coordinated response is provided.

Individual Elected Members speaking to the media on their own behalf must clearly convey this to the media and avoid any perception that their views are not necessarily those of Council.

If there is any doubt in the application of this policy or how to respond to a media request, the matter is to be referred to the CEO or the Mayor, as appropriate, to determine.

#### **4.2. Regarding communications between the CEO, Management and Elected Members**

1. Elected Members can communicate directly with the CEO. The Elected Members can communicate directly with Department Managers unless agreed to by the CEO. Likewise, the Department Managers are able to communicate with Elected Members. (Refer *Local Government Act*, Section 61(2)).
2. Elected Members are unable to give direction to staff.
3. The CEO and Mayor will be copied in on any written communications that may occur between Elected Members and Department Managers, so they are aware of any issues.
4. Staff are unable to approach Elected Members in relation to Council matters.
5. If a Department Manager has a concern of any kind with any communication from an Elected Member, they will raise it with the CEO who will take it up with the Mayor.
6. If Elected Members have any problem with communications from any Department Managers, they will take them up with the CEO and Mayor.

Elected Members may still require a meeting with the CEO on a regular basis. Where possible Elected Members should provide the CEO with sufficient notice should an issue require researching.

#### **4.3. Record Keeping**

The Records Officer maintains records of media enquiries and responses, copies of media releases and background information.

All media releases are placed on file at reception. Copies of all statements made to the media are also kept on file.

This affords some protection against misinterpreting.

All staff are requested to pass on published information relating to Council activities so that detailed records may be kept. Staff who read publications in languages other than English are especially encouraged to pass on articles mentioning Berri Barmera Council.

#### **4.4. Promoting Council Activities**

The CEO is responsible for issuing media releases about Council's activities, decisions and plans. All staff are required to pass on important information to the CEO which could be used as the basis for a press release. The CEO, in consultation with other staff members, will decide if the event warrants a media release and/or photo.

#### **4.5. Designing Advertisements/Brochures**

Council staff must pass on planned media advertisements and brochures to their Departmental Manager for approval and to check accuracy, quality and corporate style.

Council has a corporate identity which enables publications or advertisements constructed in this style to be easily identified and associated with Berri Barmera Council. The corporate style will enable a consistent image for Berri Barmera Council and communicate most effectively with the community and follow the Berri Barmera Council Style Guide Guidelines.

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