

POLICY



Media Policy

1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish protocols for managing communication between the Council and media, to ensure coordinated, coherent, professional, accurate, and reliable presentation of Council and Council business.

2 Scope

This policy applies to all Councillors, including the Mayor, and 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

Media	For the purposes of this policy, the term media refers to all mainstream external news channels, including newspapers, radio, television, online news services, and magazines. It does not refer to Social Media (refer to the Social Media Policy).
Media Release	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 inquiries are treated by the official spokespersons, efficiently and courteously with due regard to the fact that all media work to stringent deadlines, which require prompt responses. All inquiries by media received by persons other than an official spokesperson must be passed on to the relevant official spokesperson as soon as practicable.
3. The Mayor and Chief Executive Officer are the official spokespersons on all matters of Council 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).
4. 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.
5. Media comment by the official spokespersons must accurately reflect the Council's position on the topic as determined by the Council in adopted documents, including the Council Plan, Strategies, Policies, and Minutes.
6. In the case of matters with possible legal consequences, any statements made to the media must be authorised by the Chief Executive Officer.
7. 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 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.
8. 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 which 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.
11. All items of advertising must be approved by the Chief Executive Officer prior to submitting to the media.
12. In relation to social media, the Social Media Policy applies.
13. 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 Related documents

- Hindmarsh Shire Council Social Media Policy
- Hindmarsh Shire Councillor Code of Conduct
- Hindmarsh Shire Council Employee Code of Conduct
- Hindmarsh Shire Council Policy Framework
- Hindmarsh Shire Council Governance Rules
- *Local Government Act 2020*
- *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2015*

7 DOCUMENT CONTROL

Media Policy		Policy Category	Council
Version Number	3.0	Policy Status	APPROVED
Approved/Adopted By	Council	Approved/Adopted on:	COUNCIL
Prepared By	CEO		
Version History	Date	Version	Description
	November 2009	1.0	Creation of Policy
	6 December 2017	2.0	Update of Policy
	17 December 2020	3.0	Review of Policy