

S-HR2 Communications Policy

Purpose	The purpose of this policy is to provide clear guidelines for Flinders Council's elected members and officers when communicating Council matters with the community and stakeholders in the media.	
Department	Community Development	
File No.	COM/0800	
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Review History	114.04.2023	26 April 2023

1. Definitions

Authorised representative - a councillor or council officer authorised to comment on behalf of Council by the adoption of this policy or by the Mayor or General Manager.

Councillor - An elected member of Council who is known as a Councillor, Mayor or Deputy Mayor or who otherwise meets the definition of a "councillor" as defined in section 3 of the Local Government Act 1993. (TAS)

General Manager - The Council's general manager, as appointed under Section 61 of the Local Government Act of 1993. (TAS).

Council Officer - A person who, other than a Councillor, is employed as an employee of Council.

Media - A combination of internet, audio-visual, and print-based tools that enable interactive information sharing and discussion, including social media, householders, newspaper, radio and television.

Community Platform - Social Media Sites

2. Objective

To make sure that Council's reputation and branding is protected by:

- effectively promoting Council's decision, services, programs and projects;
- clearly defining what is expected of Council officers and elected members when communicating in the media;
- setting appropriate standards, roles and responsibilities in relation to creating and managing Council's communications.

3. Scope

The scope of this policy applies to:

- Elected Members of Flinders Council
- General Manager of Flinders Council
- Council Communications Officers who are an authorised representative to manage or moderate social media on behalf of Flinders Council
- All Council Officers

4. Policy

It is Council Policy that all communications relating to council activities posted in all forms of media:

- comply with relevant laws and regulations;
- adhere to codes of confidentiality and privacy guidelines;
- contribute to the strengthening of Council's core values, reputation, and integrity; and
- are made by an authorised representative of Council.

5. Roles & Responsibilities

Mayor

The Mayor is the official spokesperson for Flinders Council regarding decisions of Council, strategic vision for the community and issues and matters affecting the municipality.

As the spokesperson of Council, the Mayor may:

- articulate and explain Council decisions;
- promote awareness and utilisation of Council services;
- encourage involvement in democratic processes and understanding of decisions;
- safeguard the Council's reputation against unfavourable or bad publicity, as well as inaccurate media coverage; and
- encourage residents and visitors to take part in community life.

The spokesperson's role does not include discussing operational or organisational issues, including:

- the planning and organisation of day-to-day Council activities;
- difficulties or problems with the provision of Council services;
- matters relating to employment within the Council;
- operational decisions made by the General Manager; and
- staffing arrangements or duties;

Elected Members

As the Mayor is the official spokesperson of Council, elected members are to:

- avoid speaking on behalf of the Council unless requested by the Mayor;
- communicate Council related matters via councillor profile or include disclaimer after personal comment on any community platforms; and

- include a disclaimer that a point of view is their own and not speaking on behalf of Council when providing personal comment on Council matters on community platforms.
- use their real identity when communicating through media.

General Manager

The General Manager is to:

- act as a source of advice to the Mayor and Elected Members on all external communications;
- approve the use of Flinders Council branding;
- act as Council's spokesperson on operational and organisational issues; and
- ensure Council Officers' responsibilities/delegations in relation to communications are clearly defined.

Delegated Council Communications Officer

- Manage all external communications on behalf of Council Officers;
- Follow Council Style Guide when using Flinders Council branding;
- Undertake the role of Administrator for Council's social media; and
- Manage and maintain media activity records.

Council Officers

- Must not convey information relating to Council as obtained during the course of their work duties.

5. Risk Management

The High Court of Australia has ruled that an organisation or person opening a site or post to comments by others may be liable for any defamation in the comments others then make (Fairfax & Others v Voller [2021] HCA 27)

6. Procedure / linked documents

Communication Framework
Mobile Phone Policy
Flinders Council Style Guide

7. Legislation

Personal Information Protection Act 2004
Defamation Act 2005
Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth)
Anti-Discrimination Act 1998 (TAS)
Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)
Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)
Local Government Act 1993 (TAS)
Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)
Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)
Work Health & Safety Act 2012 (TAS)

- *Workers Rehabilitation & Compensation Act 1988 (TAS)*

8. Responsibility

The responsibility of this Policy rests with the General Manager.