



COUNCIL POLICY

Dealing with Media

POLICY NO	029
DEPARTMENT	Community & Client Services
PROGRAM	Corporate Communications & Marketing
ADOPTED BY COUNCIL	11 July 2018 Folio Number 57386

1.0 Scope

This guideline applies to any staff member, councillor or contractor employed by Mackay Regional Council (MRC).

2.0 Purpose

To provide guidelines to staff and councillors on their roles and responsibilities in dealing with media requests in an effort to facilitate a coordinated response and make every effort to deliver positive, factual media coverage on council issues, facilities and programs.

3.0 Reference

This document forms part of MRC's Communication & Marketing Strategy 2018-2020.

4.0 Background

To its residents and the community, MRC is seen as one organisation delivering many services – not as we see it from an internal perspective, as a series of operational units or programs.

It is important from a public perception that we uphold this image and communicate as one organisation, to ensure we deliver a concise and consistent message.

MRC recognises the media is an important part of its broad communications strategy and has developed guidelines to ensure a responsible and consistent approach to all media relations and requests for media interviews.

5.0 Operational process

Mayor and Councillors

The councillors are the parties who represent council to the public and as such are the primary spokespersons of the organisation.

The Mayor will be the official spokesperson for all council policies and decisions. This includes major council announcements and civic occasions.

The Mayor can delegate this responsibility to the Deputy Mayor or a councillor.

It is preferable that when comments are made as the official spokesperson, an email is issued to all councillors to keep them abreast of issues.

The Mayor and Deputy Mayor or a delegated councillor are to be quoted on all major projects, major council events, and civic receptions.

Elected members have the right to make comment on any issue, providing there is no confidential matters relating to the issue.

Should such statements/comments be provided, the Mayor should be advised, preferably before such comment is made.

Councillors have established three strategic working groups and areas of interest have been identified for each councillor within each working group. The relevant councillor will become the spokesperson, be quoted or interviewed when the topic or issue relates to those areas of interest.

These areas of interest are linked to the Corporate Plan

To ensure media deadlines are adhered to and a response is provided, if the councillor is unavailable within the required deadline, the CEO will be consulted to decide who best to handle the enquiry.

Councillors are representatives on a range of Advisory Committees. It is recommended, where possible, if an issue or matter relates to a specific Advisory Committee, then the Chair from the Advisory Committee should be quoted in media releases or responses.

Should a Director or Manager Corporate Communications & Marketing make any statements/comments, the CEO and Mayor should be advised, preferably before such comment is made. This includes the development of media releases.

Management and staff

The CEO will be the official spokesperson for technical organisational and staff matters or any other matter as delegated by council or the Mayor. Should such statements/comment be provided, the Mayor should be advised, preferably before such comment is made.

Directors, and the Manager Corporate Communications & Marketing, can also provide comment, providing it relates to technical matters relevant to their respective departments and is in keeping with council policy.

The CEO, Director, or Manager Corporate Communications & Marketing may nominate other managers to act as spokespeople for MRC, provided the issue is general in nature and relevant to their area of expertise.

Wherever possible, the councillor related to the Area of Interest should be given an opportunity to be the spokesperson.

Staff should only comment on their area of expertise, and only if approved by the Director or CEO.

The Manager Corporate Communications & Marketing, and the Communications Team, are responsible for coordinating MRC's media liaison. The Manager Corporate Communication & Marketing, and Communications Coordinator, have delegated authority to respond to media enquiries on behalf of MRC, providing it is general in nature and is information freely available to the public

Staff members are not to respond directly to media requests except as authorised within this document. The Corporate Communications & Marketing team or the relevant manager should be advised of any media request, where practical.

5.1 Authorised Spokespersons

- Mayor / Deputy Mayor or his or her appointed delegate
- Councillor, relating to Area of Interest
- Advisory Committee Chair/Member
- Chief Executive Officer
- Director of nominated manager
- Manager Corporate Communications & Marketing
- Communications Coordinator

Following council meetings, the Mayor becomes the first point of contact relating to council decisions. This can then be deferred to the councillor, if the issue relates to their Area of Interest.

Requests from media/responses

Any requests received directly from the media to MRC officers should be directed to the Corporate Communications & Marketing team immediately. The Corporate Communications & Marketing officers then liaise with the Mayor, Area of Interest Councillor, CEO or relevant Director to arrange the appropriate person.

All media releases or formal responses quoting the Mayor or Area of Interest Councillor must be approved in the first instance by the relevant councillor and Director.

The CEO must approve any releases containing sensitive, legal, ethical or confidential information and must be provided a copy of the proposed media release before it is issued.

If the CEO or relevant Director is unavailable, the Manager Corporate Communications & Marketing has authority to approve media releases or media responses to ensure media deadlines are adhered to, providing it is general in nature and does not contain potential sensitive information.

Coordinators of Sarina Sugar Shed, Artspace Mackay, Mackay Regional Botanic Gardens and MECC are permitted to talk about upcoming exhibitions, activities or events within their facility, subject to the approval of the relevant Director or the Manager

Communications & Marketing. The Director or Manager Communications & Marketing is to determine whether the relevant Area of Interest councillor should be the person interviewed or quoted, prior to giving approval to a staff member.

5.2 Social Media

Organisational Responses on Social Media

MRC respects the right of councillors to maintain personal social media accounts and to interact on social media, noting that this is articulating their personal view and not that of council.

MRC officers manage a number of social media platforms and utilise them to inform and engage with the local community.

Authorised MRC staff will respond to messages or posts in a timely manner and will source the required information

The Corporate Communications and Marketing team are responsible for monitoring all social media pages operated by MRC and its facilities. Any response to a post or question should be checked with the Corporate Communications and Marketing officers, prior to posting the reply.

Authorised MRC staff will remove any posts or images determined to breach MRC's Terms of Use.

Elected members, who believe an organisational response is required to comments made by other parties on MRC's social media pages should refer the matter to authorised MRC staff in the first instance and not respond directly.

6.0 Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed when any of the following occur:

1. The related documents are amended or replaced.
2. Other circumstances as determined from time to time by a resolution of Council

Notwithstanding the above, this policy is to be reviewed at intervals of no more than three years.

Version Control:

Version	Reason / Trigger	Change	Endorsed / Reviewed	Date
1	New Policy		Council	11.07.2018