



9. GOVERNANCE

Policy 9.12

MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Version 2

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1 OBJECTIVES:

- a) To provide a policy for the release of information relating to Council business through media outlets.
- b) To endorse Council's use of social media for the dissemination of information and to facilitate discussion as part of a community engagement strategy.
- c) To clearly identify authorised spokespersons on behalf of Council.
- d) To provide guidelines to those authorised spokespersons when making statements regarding Council business.

2 DEFINITIONS

Media

The term commonly given to various means of communication that reaches a broad cross-section of the community such as television, radio and newspaper.

Social media

The term commonly given to web-based tools that allow users to interact with each other in some way – by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests online. As the name implies, social media involves the building of online communities or networks to encourage participation and engagement.

This includes blogs, message boards, social networking websites (such as Facebook, twitter, LinkedIn, MySpace) content sharing websites (such as Flickr, YouTube) and many other similar online channels.

3 PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to inform the community of Lithgow City Council's use of media and social media platforms for the distribution of information and community consultation pertaining to the business of Council.

BACKGROUND

Lithgow City Council is committed to making the best use of all available media to improve communication with the public. This includes using all reasonable and cost-effective means to improve the way we communicate, reach out and interact with the different communities we serve.

Social media and the media are the Council's most important channels of communication with the community. They are effective mediums which the Council works with to provide factual and positive information on policies, initiatives, performances and achievements.

It is important that any potential risks are managed through a common-sense approach and framework as well as proactively monitoring the development of such applications.

It is important that the Council builds on its relationship with the media and the community and continues to issue timely, informative and interesting media releases and to provide other information as necessary.

It is also important that each media release and the distribution of information through social media is approved through the correct Council channels.

4 LEGISLATION

Actions and comments are governed by various legislative and Council requirements.

Councillors and staff members may expose themselves to legal action or sanctions under these requirements unless complying with this policy and relevant Standard Working Procedures.

The following legislation is applicable to this policy:

- Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009
- Freedom of Information Act, 1982 (Federal)
- Copyright Act 1968
- Defamation Act, NSW 1974
- Privacy Act, 1988
- Lithgow City Council policies
- Lithgow City Council Code of Conduct
- Workplace Surveillance Act.

5 AUTHORISED REPRESENTATIVES

Statements, relating to Council business, can be made to the media or via social media in the form of a media release or a comment by:

- (a) the Mayor (or Deputy Mayor in the Mayor's absence);
- (b) a Councillor nominated by the Mayor
- (c) the General Manager;
- (d) a staff member nominated by the General Manager.

Statements by authorised representatives will only relate to policies and resolutions adopted by the Council and other initiatives and activities the Council is involved with. Comments are to be made on behalf of the Council.

The Council's General Manager or authorised staff may provide information on the Council's operational matters and respond to specific inquiries on policy interpretation or guidelines. They may exercise discretion to determine the appropriateness of the response and where such matters should be referred to the Mayor or Council for endorsement of a policy. Authorised persons are entitled to decline comment.

These guidelines do not apply to personal Letters to the Editor, Councillors and employees are able to issue personal letters that make no reference to their relationship with Council if it is considered appropriate.

6. CONFIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

Confidential information will not be released by Council via any form of media or social media.

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