

Media

COUNCIL POLICY NO. 101

1. POLICY PURPOSE

This policy outlines protocols for managing communication between Gannawarra Shire Council, the media and the community.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to:

1. Gannawarra Shire Councillors, employees, contractors and volunteers.
2. Compliance with legislation, regulations, industry codes; Council policy, agreements and other organisational requirements; and Council values identified in the Council Plan.

3. POLICY

Gannawarra Shire Council is committed to using a range of methods to communicate its services and events, and update the community on current issues. This is achieved using traditional media (print, radio and television) and electronic media (email and social media).

This policy ensures that communication between Council, the community and the media is managed appropriately, including:

- Providing accurate, timely and consistent information;
- Ensuring that authorised spokespeople provide information to the media or on social media on behalf of Council;
- The preservation of Council's integrity and professional image; and
- The handling of issues in an appropriate manner.

Authorisation to make comments to the media

Mayor and Councillors

The Mayor is the primary spokesperson to the media on major issues and decisions that are made by Council.

The Mayor may delegate to fellow Councillors, where necessary, on matters relating to their interests and/or expertise.

Employees

The Chief Executive Officer is the primary spokesperson on operational matters, and will act as a secondary spokesperson on Council matters, should Councillors be unavailable.

The Chief Executive Officer may delegate his/her authority to senior officers as spokespeople on issues from their areas of responsibility. Senior officers are not authorised to make comment to the media unless authorised by the Chief Executive Officer.

Comments at public events, meetings and on social media

Councillors, the Chief Executive Officer and senior officers should be aware that all comments made at public events, meetings and on social media are on the public record and can be utilised by the media.

Media requests and approval of written materials

Where possible, any enquiries to staff from the media must be referred immediately to Council's Communications Team. Responses to media inquiries must be responded to in a timely manner.

Approval of media releases

All media releases for distribution by Council must be endorsed by the relevant Director and approved by the Chief Executive Officer or an officer delegated by the Chief Executive Officer. This also pertains to other information provided to the media.

Comments as a private citizen

Councillors

Councillors choosing to express a personal opinion through the media, including electronic and social media, will make clear that this is a personal view and does not represent the position of Council. Councillors will ensure that any such opinion is devoid of comments that could reasonably be construed as being derogatory, offensive or insulting to any person.

Employees

Personal communications and statements made privately; in conversation, written, recorded, emailed, texted or posted in personal social media, have the potential to be made public, whether intended or not.

Employees who choose to express a personal opinion through electronic and social media will ensure that any such opinion is devoid of comments that could reasonably be construed as being derogatory, offensive or insulting to any person.

Use of social media on behalf of Council

Council may use social media platforms, such as Facebook, LinkedIn and other emerging platforms, to promote its services to the community.

Council reserves the right to moderate comments or questions on these platforms.

4. POLICY REVIEW

Council will review this policy as required but always within one year after a general election of the Council. At the time of review, this policy was compliant with the *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*.

5. RELATED POLICIES

Model Councillor Code of Conduct.

Policy No. 143 – Community Engagement.

6. FURTHER INFORMATION

Members of the public may inspect all Council policies at Gannawarra Shire Council's Kerang and Cohuna Offices, or online at www.gsc.vic.gov.au

Any enquiries in relation to this policy should be directed to the Director Community Wellbeing on (03) 5450 9333.