



Burwood

Inc.1874

MEDIA POLICY

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Corporate Document Approved
by Council: 27 October 2020
Content Manager No.: 20/46770
Version No. 1
Ownership: Communications

Purpose

This policy outlines a formal process to ensure all media releases, statements and inquiries regarding Burwood Council issues are managed professionally and appropriately.

For this purpose, the Council has identified the **Media and Communications Team** as having the expertise and programmes in place to facilitate the above.

Scope

Applies to all Council Officers and Councillors.

Policy

1. For Burwood Council to provide prompt, accurate responses to all media on matters which are of public interest.
2. The key objective is to provide Burwood Council with a positive public image in line with its corporate objectives and mission statement through presentation of press releases, media liaison, promotional literature, official speeches, interviews, social media and other internal and external communications strategies.
3. To clearly indicate Council's authorised spokespersons.
4. To limit the possibility of miscommunication and to maximise the effectiveness of Council Officers by ensuring comments to the media are made only through authorised people.
5. To establish guidelines for effectively communicating and publicising news about Burwood Council with the media.

Method

The Mayor, General Manager, Group Manager Corporate Planning and Communications and Media and Communications Officer are Council's official spokespersons on all matters involving the media.

Issuing of media releases and responses to media inquiries, the Media and Communications Officer is the official spokesperson for Council on all matters of policy and external relations.

No Council Officers has any authority to talk to the media on any Council matter, unless delegated by the General Manager.

Council Officers are required to direct all media inquiries to the Media and Communications Officer. The Media and Communications Officer will then liaise with the General Manager and Council Officers to prepare a response to the inquiry. If the inquiry is of a simple nature, the Media and Communications Officer may deal with the issue and provide answers attributable to a "Council spokesperson".

The General Manager should make themselves available to answer inquiries from the media where such inquiries affect immediate areas of operations.

As a matter of policy, the General Manager should remain the ultimate authority in question of doubt on handling any media issue.

Information given to the media of a controversial, legal or ethical nature requires the approval of the General Manager and the Mayor (example Council's Media Releases).

Journalists may on occasions contact Council Officers directly. No Council Officer, other than those authorised above, are to handle the inquiry from the media. Council Officer should immediately contact the Media and Communications Officer if they have been contacted by a journalist.

Council Officers should be reminded of this policy during their induction program shortly after they are employed.

Role of Councillors

It is common practice for the media to ask Councillors to comment on Council policy or decisions. Only the Mayor, General Manager, Group Manager Corporate Planning and Communications and Media and Communications Officer or at the request of the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor, are permitted to speak on behalf of Council.

Individual Councillors remain free to provide personal comments to the media, but not to speak on Council's behalf.

Individual Councillors speaking to the media on their own behalf must clearly convey this to the media and avoid any perception that their views are necessarily those of Council.

The Mayor and Councillors may, as a courtesy, inform the Media and Communications Officer of any media contact relating to Council business and may copy the Media and Communications Officer on any personal media releases.

Defamation law covers Councillors as it does all Council Officers. It could be considered defamatory to harm another person's reputation verbally or through written word.

Councillors are reminded of this policy at their Councillor Induction Program shortly after they are elected and is included in the Councillors' Manual.

Media Strategies

When Council is faced with a significant media interest on a specific event, the Media and Communications Officer is responsible for the preparation of a strategy to manage all inquiries and requests. The strategy should include responses to the media, advice to Council Officers, responsibility for making official Council comments and development of press releases. In certain circumstances an external agency or consultant may be used to ensure consistency in Council's message.

Record Keeping

The Media and Communications Officer and the Media Team will maintain records of media inquiries and responses, copies of media releases and background information. Media releases are also published on Council's website for public view.

Related Information/Glossary

Possible matters to consider:

- Burwood Council Code of Conduct
- Burwood Council Customer Service Charter
- Burwood Council Councillors' Manual
- Burwood Council Employee's Handbook
- Community Engagement Policy 2012
- Community Engagement Strategy 2015
- *Defamation Act 2005*

- *Local Government Act 1993*
- *Protected Disclosures Act 1994*
- *Public Interest Disclosure Act 1994* – Internal Reporting Policy 2015
- Social Media Policy 2013

Review

Policy to be reviewed every four years

Contact

Media and Communications Officer – 9911 9819