

# NORFOLK ISLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL

## POLICY

**HEADING:** Media Policy

**MEETING ADOPTED** 20 July 2016  
**RESOLUTION NO.:** 15/16

**HISTORY OF DOCUMENT**  
**PREVIOUSLY ADOPTED:**

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### **Introduction**

Norfolk Island Regional Council is accountable to the community for its performance and recognises the key role the media plays in effective communication between the Council and the community. Council encourages open communication with the media with an emphasis on promoting a positive, progressive and professional image of Council and staff.

### **Purpose**

To establish central points of contact, protocols and a consistent method for managing communication between the Council and the print, broadcast and web based media to ensure coordinated, accurate and reliable presentation.

### **Policy Statement**

All information provided to the print, broadcast and web based media by Norfolk Island Regional Council is to be sourced from one (1) central point within Council. The General Manager is that central point.

All information is to be cleared by the General Manager. The General Manager is the point of contact between Council and the media for media releases, statements, announcements and advertising and will clear all releases and advertising copy.

Announcements concerning new policies or major decisions taken by Council go out under the signature of the Mayor e.g. "The Mayor announced today".

Staff approached by the media to provide an article or segment in relation to their position at Council must advise the General Manager that they have been approached and will be participating in an interview.

Urgent or immediate announcements occurring out of hours are to be issued by the General Manager. The General Manager and Mayor are to be advised of any issue or announcement.

All technical/procedural releases go out under the signature of the General Manager. A copy of all proposed technical procedural releases and advertisements should be approved and signed by the General Manager.

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## **News Columns / Radio Announcements**

Provision in the local media and radio will be available to the Mayor for announcements of decisions made by Council and matters related to the Community Strategic Plan, policy direction and any other matters the Mayor wishes to announce that are not of an operational or political nature.

Provision in the local media of a regular news column is to be written by the General Manager and used to advise the community of the progress of activities and works, operational and procedural matters, new laws or regulations, reminders and local government items of specific interest.

## **Public Comment**

Public comment can include public speaking engagements (including comments on radio and television) expressing views in letters to the press or in books or notices where it is reasonably foreseeable that publication or circulation will enter the public domain.

## **Staff**

While it is recognised that Council employees, as members of the community, have the right to have an opinion – staff cannot make public comment or enter into public debate on political and social issues related to council business in the media or at public forums. The General Manager and other senior management staff need to be sensitive to the fact that because of their responsibility and status, there could tend to be the implication that the public comment is in some way an official comment of the Council. Reference is made to Council's Code of Conduct (section 3.1) below.

## **Councillors**

Councillors are not to comment to the print or electronic media on Council's behalf unless authorised to do so by the Mayor. Council acknowledges that as elected representatives, the media will, from time to time, call on Councillors for personal comment. In this instance, a Councillor wishing to make statements to the media must inform the journalist:

- (1) That comments are made as an individual;
- (2) That comments made do not necessarily represent the views or beliefs of Council or other Councillors; and
- (3) That the matter has or has not been determined by Council.

Reference is made to Council's Code of Conduct (section 3.1) below.

## **Norfolk Island Regional Council - Code of Conduct**

*3.1 You must not conduct yourself in carrying out your functions in a manner that is likely to bring the council or holders of civic office into disrepute. Specifically, you must not act in a way that:*

- a) contravenes the Act, associated regulations, council's relevant administrative requirements and policies*
- b) is detrimental to the pursuit of the charter of a council*
- c) is improper or unethical*
- d) is an abuse of power or otherwise amounts to misconduct*
- e) causes, comprises or involves intimidation, harassment or verbal abuse*
- f) causes, comprises or involves discrimination, disadvantage or adverse treatment in relation to employment*

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*g) causes, comprises or involves prejudice in the provision of a service to the community. (Schedule 6A)*

*3.2 You must act lawfully, honestly and exercise a reasonable degree of care and diligence in carrying out your functions under the Act or any other Act. (section 439)*

*3.3 You must treat others with respect at all times.*

### **The Council's charter (sec 8 of the Act)**

*(1) A council has the following charter:*

- To provide directly or on behalf of other levels of government, after due consultation, adequate, equitable and appropriate services and facilities for the community and to ensure that those services and facilities are managed efficiently and effectively*
- To exercise community leadership*
- To exercise its functions in a manner that is consistent with and actively promotes the multicultural principles*
- To promote and to provide and plan for the needs of children*
- To properly manage, develop, protect, restore, enhance and conserve the environment of the area for which it is responsible, in a manner that is consistent with and promotes the principles of ecologically sustainable development*
- To have regard to the long term and cumulative effects of its decisions*
- To bear in mind that it is the custodian and trustee of public assets and to effectively plan for, account for and manage the assets for which it is responsible*
- To engage in long-term strategic planning on behalf of the local community*
- To exercise its functions in a manner that is consistent with and promotes social justice principles of equity, access, participation and rights*
- To facilitate the involvement of councillors, members of the public, users of facilities and services and council staff in the development, improvement and co-ordination of local government*
- To raise funds for local purposes by the fair imposition of rates, charges and fees, by income earned from investments and, when appropriate, by borrowings and grants*
- To keep the local community and the State government (and through it, the wider community) informed about its activities*
- To ensure that, in the exercise of its regulatory functions, it acts consistently and without bias, particularly where an activity of the council is affected*
- To be a responsible employer.*