

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide clarity around the role of the Mayor as the official spokesperson of Council and ensure the quality, consistency and timeliness of all media communications on behalf of Council.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all Glenorchy City Council Elected Members, management and staff members.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Elected Member Code of Conduct Policy
- Committee Policy
- Social Media Policy

STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS

Acts	<i>Local Government Act 1993, section 27</i>
Regulations	<i>n/a</i>

POLICY STATEMENT

Role of the Mayor

Section 27 of the *Local Government Act 1993* provides that the Mayor is the official spokesperson of Council.

This function is not co-shared with other Elected Members or the General Manager other than at the Mayor's discretion. The Mayor is the only person authorised to speak on behalf of Council.

The Mayor may authorise the General Manager, other Elected Members or Council officers to communicate on behalf of Council on certain technical or factual matters as the Mayor considers appropriate. This will ordinarily be done by way of an express authorisation to make a comment on a particular topic. However, the Mayor may provide a standing authorisation to make comments on particular matters to other persons, as the Mayor sees fit.

Any authorisation by the Mayor to communicate on behalf of Council is provided on the basis that all communications must deliver a consistent message, must not be contrary to any official position adopted by Council and must portray Council's position accurately, irrespective of whether that position has been previously expressed in public.

Role of Committee Chairs

Elected Members appointed by Council as Committee Chairs are responsible for reporting Committee minutes, recommendations and events back to Council for discussion and, if necessary, resolution. Committee matters are regarded as Council business. The appointment to chair a committee does not convey any authorisation to engage with media regarding committee matters.

The Mayor may authorise a committee chair to communicate on behalf of the Council on matters relevant to the committee. This authorisation must be in writing and detail the subject matter to be communicated as well as a date by which the authorisation ceases.

All such communications are to be aligned to any official position adopted by Council and must portray Council's position accurately (eg. Strategic and Annual Plans, Council strategies, previous Council media statements).

Council's Senior Communications Advisor must be engaged to assist with all external communications activities.

Role of Coordinator Communications and Engagement

Council's Coordinator Communications and Engagement (or equivalent) is responsible for coordinating and monitoring Council's external communication activities. In practice, this includes dealing with the media and overseeing all media communication made on behalf of Council.

The position reports directly to the Manager Stakeholder Engagement and liaises with and provides advice on day-to-day communications matters with the General Manager and the Mayor. The position also has a broader role in providing high level strategic advice on media and communication issues to the Mayor and the General Manager.

The Coordinator Communications and Engagement may, in practice, be the first point of contact for media inquiries. However, the position is not able to authorise a person to communicate on behalf of Council, unless the Mayor has given that authorisation.

Where staff are involved in the preparation of an event which may attract media attention, staff are required to liaise with the Coordinator Communications and Engagement who will coordinate any media activity associated with that event. Staff must not contact media at their own initiative, except with the express authorisation of the Mayor or the Coordinator Communications and Engagement.

Media Statements

The Mayor will be responsible for the final approval of any Council media statements.

The Mayor may consult with Elected Members, the General Manager or Council staff when preparing a media release but is not required to.

The Senior Communications Advisor will liaise regularly with the Mayor and General Manager to ensure that Council media releases are properly drafted and communicated.

The Senior Communications Advisor will also support the Mayor and General Manager in drafting responses to media requests.

Copies of all media statements released by Council will be provided to Elected Members, the General Manager, Directors and Managers as soon as practicable after they are released (with the expectation that this will be within 24 hours other than in exceptional circumstances).

Media Requests

All staff members who receive media requests must pass the information on to the Coordinator Communications and Engagement, who will advise the Mayor and support the Mayor in preparing a response.

Staff who receive unsolicited media inquiries should:

- inform the outlet that they are not authorised to speak on Council's behalf
- obtain basic information about the topic of the inquiry and of the contact details of the person making the request
- ask the caller when their deadline is, and
- relay the request and the above information to the Coordinator Communications and Engagement, or, where the Coordinator Communications and Engagement is unavailable, the Mayor.

Under no circumstances are staff to provide:

- any verbal or written comment or digital information to the media (unless expressly authorised by the Mayor), or
- any Council documents, unless publicly available and authorised by the Mayor,

to any media outlet.

Elected Members and media

This policy does not take away the right of any Elected Members to engage in public debate or speak with or appear in the media. However, Elected Members must advise and have sought permission from the Mayor if they are representing Council and must not purport to speak on behalf of Council unless the Mayor has expressly authorised them to do so.

Whenever speaking with or appearing in media Elected Members must:

- when asked to comment on Council's position on any matter, portray Council's position accurately, and
- when asked for their opinion on a matter, clearly and unambiguously indicate when they are putting forward their personal views and do so in a way that does not bring Council into disrepute. For example, if an Elected Member is being interviewed in their official capacity, but during the interview is asked to express an opinion, the Elected Member must indicate that their opinion is personal and not the official position of Council.

Background

To ensure that Council delivers clear and consistent messages to the media and the public, Council must ensure that clear guidelines and expectations are in place to govern Council’s interactions with the media and that these are communicated to both Elected Members and staff members.

Additionally, a policy is required to ensure compliance with:

- section 27 of the *Local Government Act 1993*, which provides that the Mayor is the official spokesperson of Council, and
- Council’s Elected Member Code of Conduct, which adopts the Model Code of Conduct prepared in accordance with the Act.

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Version:	3.0	Adopted	25 September 2023	Commencement Date	26 September 2023
Minutes Reference	Council meeting, DD Month YYYY, Item ##		Review Period	4 Years from adoption	
Previous Versions:	1.0 adopted 28 May 2018 (Council meeting, item 13) 2.0 adopted 28 September 2020 (Council meeting, item 17)				
Responsible Directorate	Corporate Services	Controller:	Manager Stakeholder Engagement		
ECM Document No.:	Council Policies by Directive				