

# Wagga Wagga City Council

## MEDIA POLICY

<b>REFERENCE NUMBER</b>	POL 090		
<b>ORIGINAL APPROVAL DATE</b>	May 2007		
<b>RESPONSIBLE MANAGER</b>	Marketing and Communications Coordinator		
<b>RESPONSIBLE DIRECTOR</b>	General Manager		
<p>This document is to be reviewed every four years or in the first twelve months of the new term of Council, whichever is the earliest.</p> <p>Next Review Date: September 2020</p>			
<b>Revision number</b>	<b>Issue Date</b>	<b>Council Resolution</b>	<b>Council Meeting Date</b>
1			23 July 2007
2	27 July 2009	Res. No: 09/077	27 July 2009
3	1 June 2012	E Team	June 2012
4	August 2013	Res. No: 13/224.1	26 August 2013
5	September 2015	E Team	November 2015
6	July 2016	General Manager approval	August 2016
7	August 2017	Res No: 17/279	28 August 2017

## PART 1: INTRODUCTION

This policy is intended to provide guidance and a consistent framework for the provision of official comment in relation to Council business via traditional and social media.

### 1.1 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 procedure.

The following legislation and/or guideline information is applicable to this policy:

- Government Information (Public Access) Act 2010
- Copyright Act
- Defamation Act, NSW 1974
- Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998
- Australian Press Council
- Journalists Code of Ethics
- Wagga Wagga City Council Code of Conduct
- Social Media Usage Operating Standard and Social Media Usage Booklet

### 1.2 Purpose of this Policy

To establish protocols and consistent methods for managing the dissemination of information from Council to the community via traditional and social media; to ensure coordinated, accurate and reliable presentation of public information.

### 1.3 Policy Statement

The City of Wagga Wagga encourages open communication with the community through a range of communication methodologies, with an emphasis on promoting a positive, progressive and professional image of Council and staff.

To ensure information released publicly about Council is accurate, reliable and in the best interests of the organisation, Council officers must be designated as an authorised representative before providing comment to the media.

## 1.4 Policy Principles – Media

### 1.4.1 *Authorised Council Media Representatives*

- a. Only authorised Council representatives may comment to media – this includes, Mayor, Councillors, General Manager, Directors and Marketing and Communications staff. Other staff may receive authorisation as required.
- b. The Mayor is the principal public spokesperson on matters relating to the representative Council, decisions of Council and the community.
- c. Councillors have a right to express their own views to the media at any time in their role as a member of the governing body and as a representative of the community, noting that such views do not necessarily represent the position of Council.
- d. Councillors have a right to establish their own social media presence as a member of the governing body and as a representative of the community.
- e. The General Manager, in their statutory role, is the lead spokesperson for the City of Wagga Wagga on operational management matters.
- f. Sector Managers are the primary spokespeople for matters that fall within their operational area and may provide comment on matters of fact and other matters not involving interpretation of Council policy, or making predictions as to future Council actions.
- g. Sector Managers can nominate specialist members of staff to respond to questions on operational matters.
- h. The Marketing and Communications team shall issue media statements and social media comment only on matters of approved Council policy, or at the Mayor's or the General Manager's discretion, on issues of direct benefit to the Council as a whole.
- i. Major announcements will only be released by the Marketing and Communications Team to maximise the media and marketing potential for Council as an organisation and/or Wagga Wagga as a city.

### 1.4.2 *Responding to media enquiries/requests*

- a. Responding to media requests for information and interview will take into account staff availability and time constraints of both Council staff and media.
- b. It is an expectation that a sufficient amount of detail and context will be provided at the time of the request to enable an appropriate and informed response by Council officers.

## **1.5 Policy Principles – Social Media**

### **1.5.1 Authorisation to comment**

- a. Staff may not comment on behalf of Council on social media unless they are authorised by the Marketing and Communications Coordinator (or delegate). To become authorised, staff must have the appropriate delegation and have completed a user agreement. Staff must also have approval from their own respective Manager.
- b. Once authorised to comment on behalf of Council, staff must adhere to the social media guidelines overseen by the Marketing and Communications team as well as all relevant documents such as the Code of Conduct, this policy and legal requirements.

### **1.5.2 General guidelines**

- a. Staff will adhere to the terms of use and guidelines associated with the relevant social media platform/website.
- b. Marketing and Communications reserve the right to approve or reject requests from staff in relation to social media advertising. Social media should be one component of an overall marketing and communication campaign.
- c. Comments that ask a question about Council, or a matter related to Council, should be answered as soon as possible, preferably on the same day if within business hours.
- d. Comments received outside of normal business hours (eg after hours, weekends, public holidays) will be responded to on the following working day.

## **1.6 Procedures and Guidelines**

### **1.6.1 City of Wagga Wagga Marketing and Communications**

- a. The Marketing and Communications Team coordinates Council's media liaison and communication, distributing a range of communiqué to the media and community. In doing so, Councillors and Council management are informed and any subsequent enquiries are coordinated.
- b. The Marketing and Communications team coordinates Council's social media presence, maintaining official Council profiles and overseeing guidelines and requirements for all profiles under the broader City of Wagga Wagga banner.

- c. Additional pages created for other branches of Council may be granted with approval from the Marketing and Communications Coordinator (or delegate). If approved, Marketing and Communications reserves the right to remain an administrator of any pages and these pages.
- d. Public information surrounding an emergency or crisis is to be coordinated through Strategy and Communications according to the Emergency Response Plan.

## **1.6.2 Council staff and Councillors**

- a. Council representatives shall have regard for the Council Code of Conduct when making statements to the media, and shall show respect to members of the public and colleagues in their comments and not misrepresent the Council.
- b. When providing public comment, Council representatives shall have regard for whether disclosure of certain information contravenes, or could infringe laws or regulations which govern Council's operations.
- c. Council representatives must not discuss staff, confidential legal advice or matters of commercial in confidence with the media.
- d. When commenting on a decision of Council, Councillors shall reference the resolution as carried by Council to provide context to their comment. Councillors are encouraged to seek the assistance of the General Manager and/or the Strategy and Communications Team when issuing or making public statements to ensure the information is appropriate, timely and factually accurate.
- e. Council staff must comply with Council's Social Media Operating Standard and Social Media Usage Booklet in relation to making personal comments on any social media platform.
- f. Council staff who receive requests direct from media representatives are to forward the request to the Marketing and Communications Team in the first instance for coordination of a response.

## **1.7 Breaches**

- a. Any deviations by Councillors to this policy may be deemed to constitute a breach of the Code of Conduct and appropriate action will be taken.
- b. Any deviations by staff to the above policy are subject to disciplinary action.