Media and Communications Policy

Reference Number:	2.4
Type:	Council Policy
Category:	Corporate Governance
Relevant Community Plan Outcome:	• Provide accessible social infrastructure and services that engage our diverse community. Support and enable local business prosperity and growth. • Be bold and innovative in our practices, leadership and decision making.
Responsible Officer(s):	General Manager Corporate Services
First Issued/Approved:	June 1993 (Council 16/6/93, Item 8.9)
Minutes Reference:	CoS 6/11/2017, Item 3.53
Last Reviewed:	November 2017
Next Review Due:	November 2019
Applicable Legislation:	Local Government Act 1999 State Records Act 1997 Freedom of Information Act 1991
Related Policies:	Customer First Policy Complaints Handling Policy Privacy Policy Council Member Code of Conduct Policy Staff Code of Conduct Policy Council Member Records Management Policy Council Member Electronic Communications Policy Staff Records Management Policy Staff Electronic Communications Policy
Related Procedures:	Social Media Protocols – Staff and Elected Members Social Media Administrative Procedure

1. **Purpose**

This policy establishes Council's commitment to effectively respond to the media, wider community and stakeholders in a professional, timely and positive manner. It also nominates the official spokesperson(s) for the City of Charles Sturt for all forms of response to media.

Council recognises that social media provides opportunities for dynamic and interactive communication which can complement traditional communication mechanisms. This policy also reflects Council's approach to social media.

Media and Communications Policy (ref: 12/255046)

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2. Scope

This policy applies to all official responses provided by staff, Council members, volunteers, agents and contractors on behalf of the City of Charles Sturt to the public (using both traditional media and social media). This also applies to public use of official City of Charles Sturt social media platforms.

This policy does not cover forms of Community Engagement or general Council correspondence, or the use of social media in a personal capacity where no reference is made to Council related matters.

3. Policy Statement

Council requires a corporate approach when liaising with the media and the community, whether it is through traditional mechanisms or online, to ensure a consistent, factual and positive image is created. Council deems that issues which are of interest to the public are reviewed and the relevant facts are established before any comments are made on behalf of Council.

3.1 Roles and Responsibilities

Editing content of Council Social Media Platforms

The Marketing & Communications team will determine the appropriate Social media platforms that will be used for official Council purposes, and will coordinate all content. Where demand exceeds the ability for Council to resource the social media platforms, individual platforms may be suspended with notification placed on Council's public website.

It is not expected that social media will be used for provision of detailed and specific advice or as a forum for decision making relating to Council projects and services, but rather redirect and provide information about official Council channels and processes.

Monitoring

The Marketing & Communications Team will specifically monitor media issues including; press, talkback radio, the internet and television and provide updates to the Mayor, Chief Executive Officer and relevant staff members.

Responsibility rests with Marketing & Communications team to monitor both traditional and social media relating to Council and its services. Should any representative of Council identify issues with content or online behaviour, these should be referred to the Marketing & Communications team.

Response to Traditional Media (Spokespersons)

In accordance with section 58 of the Local Government Act 1999, the Mayor and the Chief Executive Officer are nominated as the official spokespersons for the Council for traditional media (when speaking with journalists from print and broadcast media outlets) and have the authority to make comments to the media on behalf of Council. Only the official spokespersons, or senior officers authorised by the Chief Executive for specific situations, may give any information or speak to the media on behalf of Council.

Where appropriate or expedient for a specific issue, the Mayor may delegate her responsibility as principal spokesperson for the Council to the Deputy Mayor or another Council member.

Media enquiries are generally received by the Marketing & Communications team who coordinate and determine the appropriate method of response. Council has a Marketing & Communications team that provides Council with professional staff who can respond to media enquiries in consultation with the Mayor and the Chief Executive Officer (or CEO's delegate/s).

If the Mayor or the Chief Executive is contacted directly by the media they have the authority to respond and it is recommended that the Marketing & Communications team are made aware of the enquiry.

Council Members should direct all media enquiries to the Marketing & Communications team. When Council Members speak to the media, they speak as individual Councillors and not on behalf of Council, and must make this clear to the media in their response. When the Mayor is not speaking on behalf of Council, he/she must make it clear that he/she is speaking as an individual.

Council staff shall communicate with the media only if authorised by the Chief Executive Officer and may not make any personal comment on any issue.

Proactive Media Management

Where media coverage of an event or issues is required or anticipated the Marketing & Communications team should be notified of the opportunity in order to best coordinate responses. The Marketing & Communications Team will determine the most appropriate method of media interaction.

Response to Social Media (Spokespersons)

Only the official spokespersons, or senior staff authorised by the Chief Executive (for specific situations), may provide information via Council's official social media platforms.

Moderation

Moderation applies to Social media only. For the purposes of social media, Council will be taking a position of post-moderation as opposed to pre-moderation of content. The City of Charles Sturt Council retains the right to remove content that does not adhere to the guidelines identified in this Policy or other associated policies. Where individuals are noted for breaching this policy on 3 occasions, they may be blocked from providing further comment via these social media mechanisms.

Records Management

Current legislation does not specifically cover content created or received in a Social Media context. However, it is considered that any information, images and footage distributed or received through a Social Media platform in the conduct of Council business may be considered a record and needs to be captured and maintained in accordance with the State Records Act 1997. The Marketing & Communications team, together with Information Services, will ensure as far as is practicable that official Council Social Media platforms comply with these requirements. The Freedom of Information Act 1991 gives legally enforceable right of access to members of the public (subject to certain restrictions) to corporate records held by Council.

3.2 **Social Media Principles**

Council's use of social media aims to:

- further inform, communicate and initiate community involvement and discussion about Charles Sturt's services and projects;

- encourage resident and user participation and open discussion;

- provide a timely response to comments to ensure that the community feels heard (with an aim to respond within a 24 hour period on a business day);

- extend the reach of communication to a wider audience, and direct the community to Council information, consultation, events and images;

- build and enhance relationships with the community and stakeholders;

- provide a convenient, accessible and flexible form of service delivery to better support the community.

The following principles should apply to all forms of social media used by Council:

Transparency

Transparency should be part of all social media communication. Charles Sturt will not create online communications designed to mislead the community or control a conversation. Every webpage, 'fan page' or hosted page that is controlled by Charles Sturt will clearly state its ownership and will be monitored as per internal protocols to track and monitor our online presence. Charles Sturt also requires that spokespeople using social media in an official capacity disclose to the community their identity (name and official title) within the organisation when associating with the public online.

Privacy

Protection of our community's privacy as a collective and individually is very important. This means we need to be conscientious regarding any identifying information that we collect online, including how we store, use or share that information in line with Council's Privacy Policy.

Legal rights and Confidential or Protected information

Use of social media platforms should comply with relevant legislation at all times. Proprietary or confidential information should not be disclosed. Intellectual property including copyrights, trademarks, brand, rights of publicity and other third party rights online, including user-generated content must be respected and not used without permission from the creator or copyright owner.

Responsible use of Technology

Users of social media should behave with courtesy, honesty and respect. Inappropriate behaviour, including harassment and bullying, as well as language that is offensive, abusive, disparaging, disrespectful, defamatory, discriminatory, or sexual in nature will not be tolerated. This includes singling out any individual (including Community Members, Elected Members or Staff members) for negative comment.

Council will not use or align Charles Sturt with any organisations, website or community groups that deploy the use of excessive tracking software, adware, malware or spyware.

Any personal or individual use of social media is at the individual staff member or Elected Members discretion, however it is important that individuals are aware and are responsible for the implications of participating in social media where they reference Council or their relationship with Council and its brands. While employees are free to promote or comment on Council activities via their own personal social media accounts, they are not permitted to announce initiatives which have not yet been made public. Additionally, where initiatives have been made public, but have not previously been promoted via the Council's official social media accounts, employees should check with the Marketing & Communications team before discussing these issues on social media. Council members and staff must comply with their relevant Codes of Conduct as well as Social Media Protocols. When providing personal opinions, staff or Elected Members should disclose their first and last name and a statement to the effect that this is their personal opinion and may not represent the opinion of the City of Charles Sturt.

Best Practice

A number of new or refined Social Media options are developed each year, and we will aim to utilise best practice to meet Council and the community's needs, specifically in relation to timeliness and content of responses, listening to the online community, and ensuring that these best practices remain current and reflect up to date and appropriate standards of behaviour.

3.3 **Complaints**

All personal complaints or grievances about the City of Charles Sturt Council and its services should be formally reported to Charles Sturt's Customer Service Call Centre on 8408 1111 or emailed to council@charlessturt.sa.gov.au Please refer to Council's Complaints Handling Policy for further information.

4. **Definitions**

Key Term – Acronym	Definition
Moderation	Moderation is the editing or removal of content posted to a social media site. For example to remove offensive material.
Post-moderation of content	Allows all user-submitted content to appear online automatically, where it will then be reviewed and removed or edited at a later time if necessary. [Note: Post moderation for social media platforms is industry best practice and encourages genuine, transparent and accurate information sharing and discussion.]
Pre-moderation of content	Allows for the review and approval of all user-submitted content before it appears online.
Social Media	Media for social interaction, using highly accessible and scalable publishing techniques. Uses web-based technologies to transform and broadcast media monologues into social media dialogues. Supports the democratisation of information and transforms people from content consumers to content producers…social media are a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0*, and that allow the creation and exchange of user – generated content… A Web 2.0 site allows its users to interact with each other as contributors to the website's content, in contrast to websites where users are limited to the passive viewing of information that is provided to them. [Note: * Web 2.0 refers to web applications that facilitate interactive information sharing.] Social media tools and platforms refer to the many different forms social media can take, including (but not limited to): internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, microblogging, wikis, podcasts, pictures, video, rating and social bookmarking. There are some social media forums which are extremely popular internationally and in Australia. There are 6 main forums – Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and blogs.
Traditional Media	Includes newspapers, broadcast, publications, press releases etc