



Media, Communications and Social Media Policy

Reference Number:	2.4
Type:	Council Policy
Category:	Corporate Governance
Relevant Community Plan Outcome:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charles Sturt is made up of strong and vibrant communities; we celebrate our identity, heritage and cultural diversity. People feel a sense of belonging, inclusion and social connectedness Our values, leadership and collaborative approach are bold and courageous and enables us to deliver value for our Community and create a leading liveable City We provide excellence in customer experience by ensuring our customers are at the heart of everything we do
Responsible Officer(s):	General Manager Corporate Services
First Issued/Approved:	June 1993 (Council 16/6/93, Item 8.9)
Minutes Reference:	CoS 6/02/2023, Item 4.11
Last Reviewed:	February 2023
Next Review Due:	February 2025
Applicable Legislation:	Local Government Act 1999 State Records Act 1997 Freedom of Information Act 1991
Related Policies:	Customer Experience Policy Unreasonable Requests for Service, Information and Complaints Policy Privacy Policy Council Member Code of Conduct Policy Staff Code of Conduct Policy Council Member Records Management Policy Council Member Electronic Communications Policy Records Management Policy - Staff Electronic Communications Policy – Council Agents
Related Procedures:	Media and Social Media Management - Marketing and Communications BCB Sub Plan Crisis Communications Protocol Media Protocol Media Response Protocol Spokesperson Delegation Social Media induction video Community Social Media Guidelines

1. Purpose

This policy establishes Council's commitment to effectively engage with 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 and public comment.

Council recognises that social media provides opportunities for dynamic and interactive communication which can complement traditional communication mechanisms.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all official engagements and communications provided by employees, Council members, volunteers, agents and contractors on behalf of the City of Charles Sturt with 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 Consultation 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 engaging in two way connections 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

Engaging Publicly Using Council Platforms

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

The engagement and communications platforms, including traditional and digital methods, may be used in a variety of ways to connect, and share information with, the City of Charles Sturt community. Both traditional and digital platforms may provide detailed and specific information, however all information will lead back to Council's main source of information – the City of Charles Sturt's main website. Decision making opportunities relating to Council projects and services will be shared across these platforms, with formal decision making processes not conducted across these platforms.

Authorisation and Monitoring Public Communication

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

Responsibility rests with the Media, Marketing & Communications Portfolio to monitor both traditional and digital communications platforms relating to Council and its services and only those authorised can create posts or publish comments. Should any employee or representative of Council identify issues with any traditional or digital content or behaviour, these should be referred to the Media, Marketing & Communications Portfolio.

Response to Traditional Media (Spokespersons)

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 Media, Marketing & Communications Portfolio who coordinate and determine the appropriate method of response. Council has a Media, Marketing & Communications Portfolio 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 Media, Marketing & Communications portfolio is made aware of the enquiry. Council Members should direct all media enquiries to the Media, Marketing & Communications Portfolio.

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, via traditional or digital platforms.

Proactive Media Management

Where media coverage of an event or issue is required or anticipated, the Media, Marketing & Communications Portfolio should be notified of the opportunity in order to best coordinate responses. The Media, Marketing & Communications Portfolio 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 digital and 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, 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 digital platform context. However, it is considered that any information, images and footage distributed or received through any Council communications channel 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 Media, Marketing & Communications Portfolio, including the Information Management Services Business Unit, will ensure as far as is practicable that official Council 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 Media, Communications and Social Media Principles

Council's use of traditional and digital platforms 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 communications used by Council:

Transparency

Transparency should be part of all communication. Charles Sturt will not create any communications designed to mislead the community or control a conversation. Every platform, including traditional and digital (e.g. 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 communications presence. Charles Sturt also requires that spokespeople communicating in an official capacity disclose to the community their identity (name and official title) within the organisation when associating with the public.

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 via our communications platforms, 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 communications 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, including user-generated content must be respected and not used without permission from the creator or copyright owner.

Best Practice

A number of new or refined digital platform opportunities 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 Responsible use of Technology

All Participants

When participating in open communications via traditional or digital platforms, participants should behave with courtesy, honesty and respect. 'House rules' will be shared with all those who engage in any City of Charles Sturt social media platform:

City of Charles Sturt will encourage conversation and debate via our social media channels and ask that the discussion be kept respectful and on-topic. You can share what's on your mind, but if it falls into any of the categories below, City of Charles Sturt will remove/report it:

- Offensive, abusive or violent language
- Hateful or discriminatory comments
- Links or comments containing sexually explicit content material
- Violations of copyright or intellectual property rights
- Spam, link baiting or files containing viruses that could damage the - operation of other people's computers or mobile devices
- Attacks on specific groups or any comments meant to harass, threaten or abuse an individual
- Commercial or personal solicitations, including crowdfunding campaigns
- Trolling posts or deliberately disruptive conversations
- Inaccurate or misleading statements about the City of Charles Sturt, its staff and elected members

Anyone who chooses to repeatedly break the house rules will be removed from our page.

Keep in mind that all social media channels are a public forum and only information you wish the general public to see should be shared.

Participation is at your own risk, and you take personal responsibility for your comments, your username and any information provided.

Council

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.

Staff and Elected Members

Any personal or individual use of digital communications 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 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 digital platforms, employees should check with the Media, Marketing & Communications Portfolio before discussing these issues publicly. Council members and staff must comply with their relevant Codes of Conduct as well as the 'House Rules'. 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.

3.4 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	Platforms and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking, allowing the community to comment, provide feedback and engage online. Social media includes the following - Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and blogs.
Traditional Platforms	Includes newspapers, broadcast, publications, letters and press releases etc.
Digital Platforms	Includes social media, email, eNewsletter/EDMs, text messaging, websites, videos, Local Services App etc.