

COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA POLICY

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Responsible Officer:	Aleisha Verwoert North
Owner:	Communications Manager
Responsible Director:	CEO
Relevant Legislation/Authority:	NA
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1. PURPOSE

This policy sets out the City of Greater Bendigo's commitment to communicate its many and varied decisions, activities, services and major projects, and policy initiatives to the community that it serves and represents.

2. SCOPE

The policy applies to all City of Greater Bendigo staff, volunteers and contractors.

3. DEFINITIONS

Media statement: Any comment written or verbal provided to the media, including email and social media.

Media release: Information provided to the media in the form of a media release and including the City logo.

Promotional material: This includes but is not limited to:

- Advertising – print, electronic and broadcast
- Pamphlets, brochures, flyers, e-newsletters and booklets
- Posters
- Website material
- Project bulletins

- Social media
- Videos

4. PRINCIPLES

This policy aims to ensure consistency, transparency and clarity in all communications and media material issued by the City.

5. POLICY

Media

The primary purpose of media statements and media releases is to positively promote the work of Council by providing accurate, relevant and timely information on issues of interest to our community. Media statements and media releases are not a platform for grand-standing, self-promotion, or providing misleading or inaccurate information.

All media releases from the City are to be issued via the Communications unit. Media statements and media releases will not contain remarks of a personal, derogatory, defamatory, insulting or offensive nature directed at current or former Councillors or staff.

Approval for all media releases from the City needs to be given by relevant Managers and Directors. Any information attributed to a third party in a media release must be confirmed by the third party to be correct.

The City wants to ensure that the community is as well informed as is reasonably possible on major issues, plans and projects. However, it is not always possible to offer or generally release all information to the community on every issue or matter. The City has obligations to keep some matters confidential where in particular they relate to:

- Personnel matters
- The personal hardship of any resident or ratepayer
- Industrial matters
- Contractual matters
- Proposed development
- Legal advice
- Matters affecting the security of City property
- Other matters which the City considers would prejudice the organisation or any person

Matters that may impact on the reputation of the City must be referred to the CEO before any public comment is made.

Spokespeople

Media statements and media releases on behalf of the City will generally quote the Mayor, the Chief Executive Officer or Directors.

The Mayor is the spokesperson for policy statements about the strategic direction of Council and the CEO and Directors are responsible for statements about operational matters.

Both the Mayor and the CEO can delegate their authority under certain circumstances.

For example, the Mayor may delegate to other Councillors in circumstances where:

- The matter relates to a specific ward and is a matter of local interest
- A Councillor has had a specific ongoing interest and role in an issue
- A Councillor has specific knowledge or expertise in the matter
- A Councillor heads a specific Committee such as the Easter Festival Committee

The CEO or a Director may delegate responsibility to Managers who have portfolio responsibility for a particular issue. Further delegation to an officer may be made where comments are required on specialist matters related to an officer's responsibility. Volunteers can also provide media statements, provided this has been approved by the relevant Manager. This should be done in consultation with the Communications unit.

When issuing media statements/releases on agenda items in advance of Council meetings, City spokespeople will emphasise that Council is responsible for making decisions on agenda items.

Directors and Managers will keep the Communications unit informed of media comments they make.

Media enquiries

The Communications unit is the first point of contact for all media outlets. All City staff directly approached by media outlets will, in the first instance, redirect enquiries to the Communications unit.

Exclusives

There will be no exclusive stories provided to individual media outlets. Doing so has the potential to damage our relationship with other media outlets and restricts our ability to get the best coverage possible for stories that promote the work of the City. Exclusives will not be offered as part of any sponsorship agreements between the City and individual media outlets.

Communications

This section of the policy applies to all corporate publications and promotional material issued on behalf of the City.

All written material will be timely, relevant, accurate, simple and in plain English. Simple, consistent and repetitive messaging is important if we are to ensure our community understands what we do and why we do it. Clear and consistent branding enables the public to recognise City activities, which in turn can lead to improved awareness of, and respect for, our services and activities by the public.

Promotional material and other publications produced by the City will be produced in accordance with the City Style Guide and City Writing Guide. The Style Guide includes guidance and information on when and how the City's logo is to be used. The Style Guide is available on *Bynder* and the Communications unit can provide further advice as needed. All promotional material will be reviewed and signed off by the Communications unit and the unit requesting the material prior to it being distributed.

Units are encouraged to give the Communications unit as much prior notice of any promotional material as possible. In turn, the Communications unit will ensure that sign-off occurs in a timely manner.

Any social media activity undertaken on behalf of the City will comply with the Social Media Policy.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Communications unit is responsible for the management of communications and media material that is issued on behalf of the City.

7. RELATED DOCUMENTS

Employees are encouraged to access the related internal documents which are available on the intranet and/or external resources which are available as per the below.

These include:

- Social Media Policy (Organisation)
- Style Guide
- Writing Guide

Further information or advice on this policy should be directed to the Communications unit.

8. HUMAN RIGHTS COMPATIBILITY

The implications of this policy have been assessed in accordance with the requirements of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

9. ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

It is recognised that, from time to time, circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to this document. Where an update does not materially alter this, such a change may be made administratively. Examples include a change to the name of a Business Unit, a change to the name of a Federal or State Government department, and a minor update to legislation which does not have a material impact. However, any change or update which materially alters this document must be made through consultation with the staff Consultative Committee and with the approval of EMT or where required, resolution of Council.

10. DOCUMENT HISTORY

Date Approved	Responsible Officer	Unit	Change Type	Version	Next Review Date
May 2014	Communications Manager	Communications	Review	Version 1	May 2017
Nov 2018	Communications Manager	Communications	Review	Version 2	Nov 2022
Dec 2022	Communications Manager	Communications	Review	Version 3	Nov 2026