

TENTERFIELD SHIRE COUNCIL

POLICY STATEMENT

HEADING:

Media Policy

MEETING ADOPTED AND RESOLUTION NO.:

**23 August 2017
168/17**

HISTORY OF DOCUMENT PREVIOUSLY ADOPTED:

23 October 2013	386/13
19 December 2012	528/12
26 November 2008	672/08
23 March 2016	51/16

Introduction

Tenterfield Shire Council is accountable to the community for its performance and recognises the key role the media plays in effective communication between the Council and the community. Council encourages open communication with the media with an emphasis on promoting a positive, progressive and professional image of Council and staff.

Purpose

To establish central points of contact, protocols and a consistent method for managing communication between the Council and the print and broadcast media to ensure coordinated, accurate and reliable presentation.

Policy Statement

All information provided to the print, broadcast and web based media by Tenterfield Shire Council is to be sourced from one (1) central point within Council. The General Manager is that central point.

All information is to be cleared by the General Manager. The General Manager is the point of contact between Council and the media for media releases, statements, announcements and advertising and will clear all releases and advertising copy.

Announcements concerning new policies or major decisions taken by Council go out under the signature of the Mayor e.g. "The Mayor announced today".

Staff approached by the media to provide an article or segment in relation to their position at Council must advise the General Manager that they have been approached and will be participating in an interview.

Urgent or immediate announcements occurring out of hours are to be issued by the General Manager. The General Manager and Mayor are to be advised of any issue or announcement.

All technical/procedural releases go out under the signature of the General Manager. A copy of all proposed technical procedural releases and advertisements should be approved and signed by the General Manager.

Regular News Columns

Provision in the local media of a regular news column is to be written by the Mayor and used to advise the community of factual issues including procedural matters, new laws or regulations, reminders and local government items of specific interest not normally covered by reporters attending Council meetings. Where appropriate the assistance of a professional journalist may be called upon to prepare the column.

Public Comment

Public comment can include public speaking engagements (including comments on radio and television) expressing views in letters to the press or in books or notices where it is reasonably foreseeable that publication or circulation will enter the public domain.

Staff

While it is recognised that Council employees, as members of the community, have the right to have an opinion – staff cannot make public comment or enter into public debate on political and social issues related to council business in the media or at public forums. The General Manager and other senior management staff need to be sensitive to the fact that because of their responsibility and status, there could tend to be the implication that the public comment is in some way an official comment of the Council. Reference is made to Council's Code of Conduct 2013 (section 3.1) below.

Councillors

Councillors are not permitted to comment to the print or electronic media on Council's behalf unless authorised to do so by the Mayor. Council acknowledges that as elected representatives, the media will, from time to time, call on Councillors for personal comment. In this instance, a Councillor wishing to make statements to the media must inform the journalist:

- (1) That comments are made as an individual;
- (2) That comments made do not necessarily represent the views or beliefs of Council or other Councillors; and
- (3) That the matter has or has not been determined by Council.

Reference is made to Council's Code of Conduct 2013 (section 3.1) below.

Tenterfield Shire Council - Code of Conduct 2013

3.1 You must not conduct yourself in carrying out your functions in a manner that is likely to bring the council or holders of civic office into disrepute. Specifically, you must not act in a way that:

- a) contravenes the Act, associated regulations, council's relevant administrative requirements and policies*
- b) is detrimental to the pursuit of the charter of a council*
- c) is improper or unethical*
- d) is an abuse of power or otherwise amounts to misconduct*
- e) causes, comprises or involves intimidation, harassment or verbal abuse*

f) causes, comprises or involves discrimination, disadvantage or adverse treatment in relation to employment

g) causes, comprises or involves prejudice in the provision of a service to the community. (Schedule 6A)

3.2 You must act lawfully, honestly and exercise reasonable degree of care and diligence in carrying out your functions under the Act or any other Act. (section 439)

3.3 You must treat others with respect at all times.

