



STRATEGIC POLICY
MOUNT ISA CITY COUNCIL
Media Policy

RESOLUTION NO. **OM16/04/2024** VERSION **V6**

APPLIES TO STRATEGIC POLICIES ONLY

This an official copy of the **Media Policy**, made in accordance with the provisions of *Local Government Act 2009, Local Government Regulation 2012, Public Records Act, Mount Isa City Council's Local Laws, Subordinate Local Laws* and current Council Policies.

Strategic policies are adopted by Council due to its desire to influence the direction of an issue or assist in the delegated decision making of Council officers. Strategic policies should follow the jurisdiction provided to Council through its Corporate Plan; the **Media Policy** is approved by the Mount Isa City Council for the operations and procedures of Council.

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 Tim Rose
Chief Executive Officer

DOCUMENT VERSION CONTROL			
Governance/Policies/Strategic Doc ID# 26629			POLICY TYPE
			Strategic (Council)
VERSION	DATE	RESOLUTION NO.	DETAILS
V1	14.11.2007	G07/11/07	Responsible Officer – Communications & Marketing Officer
V2	10.12.2008	PP08/12/08	Responsible Officer – Communications & Marketing Officer
V3	20.04.2016	OM00/00/00	Responsible Officer – Communications & Marketing Officer
V4	12.02.2020	OM13/02/20	Responsible Officer – Media Officer
V5	19.08.2020	OM30/08/20	Responsible Officer – Media Officer
V6	16.02.2024	OM16/04/24	Responsible Officer – Media Officer
			REVIEW DUE 02.2026

DISTRIBUTION AND DISSEMINATION			
Internal email to all employees	X	Section meetings / Toolbox talks	
Internal email to all Councillors	X	Included in employee inductions	X
Staff noticeboards		Uploaded to Council website	
Internal training to be provided		External training to be provided	
Registered in Magiq	X		

1. PURPOSE

Mount Isa City Council Media Policy – including Social Media

The intent of this policy is to provide understanding and guidance to elected members and staff for the appropriate use of media platforms – including traditional media (e.g. press, television, magazines, radio) and social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) – as well as define who is authorised to speak to the media, and parameters on what can be released to the media and when. This policy details Mount Isa City Council (“Council”) procedures and directives regarding the use of and interaction with media and social media by elected members and employees. Positive management of this interaction between Council and the media is vital and must be managed carefully to ensure the benefits to Council are maximised while the risks of adverse publicity, due to inaccurate or inappropriate information being shared, are minimised. Council recognises the importance and influence of the media in keeping the community informed, getting feedback on important issues and ensuring Council operates in a transparent and open way. This policy acknowledges the important news gathering role of traditional media as well as the role of social media in providing new opportunities for dynamic, interactive two-way communications that complement existing communication and improve access to, and delivery of, Council information and messaging.

2. COMMENCEMENT

This policy will commence on and from 24 April 2024. It replaces all other policies or arrangements governing media use and interaction (whether written or not).

3. APPLICATION

This policy applies to councillors, as well as employees, agents and contractors (including temporary contractors) of Council (collectively referred to in the policy as “employees”)

It applies to all online digital spaces collectively referred to as social media where people may comment, contribute, create, forward, post, upload and share content, including social media sites (e.g. Facebook), video-sharing sites (e.g. YouTube), blogs, microblogging sites (e.g. Twitter), and any other websites that allow individuals to use simple publishing tools or new technologies emerging from the digital environment. As it is not possible to expressly refer to or list the specific sites or kinds of social media outlets, the absence of a reference to a particular site or kind of social media activity does not limit the application of this policy.

This policy is not intended to cover personal use of social media where:

- The author publishes information in their personal capacity and not on behalf of, or in association with, Mount Isa City Council; and
- No reference is made to Mount Isa City Council, its Councillors, employees, policies and services, suppliers, or other stakeholders or Council-related issues.

Councillors and employees of Mount Isa City Council are expected to demonstrate standards of conduct and behaviour that are consistent with relevant legislation, regulations and policies (e.g. Councillor Code of Conduct, Code of Conduct for Employees, Mount Isa City Council employee contracts).

4. BACKGROUND

Council is committed to making the best use of all available media to improve communication with the public. This includes using all reasonable and cost-effective means to improve the way we communicate and interact with the community we serve.

Social media and the media are the Council’s most important channels of communication with the community. They are effective mediums which the Council works with to provide factual and positive information on policies, initiatives, events, projects, performances and achievements.

It is important that any potential risks are managed through a common-sense, timely, consistent, appropriate and well-informed approach and framework as well as proactively monitoring the development of such applications.

It is crucial that the Council builds on, fosters and maintains its relationship with the media and the community and continues to issue timely, informative and interesting media releases and to provide other information as necessary.

It is also important that each media release and the distribution of information through social media is approved through the correct Council channels.

5. OBJECTIVES

- 5.1. To provide a policy for the release of information relating to Council business through media outlets.
- 5.2. Ensure positive, proactive media coverage of relevant Council projects, programs and general operation.
- 5.3. Provide a consistent, streamlined approach to managing media.
- 5.4. Ensure appropriate authorisation of Council messages.
- 5.5. Ensure the accuracy of information provided.
- 5.6. Deliver messages and information in a non-political format.
- 5.7. Ensure responses are provided to media in a consistent, timely manner.
- 5.8. Help maximise publicity opportunities for Council.
- 5.9. To clearly identify authorised spokespersons on behalf of Council.
- 5.10. To provide guidelines to those authorised spokespersons when making statements regarding Council business.
- 5.11. To endorse Council's use of social media for the purpose of sharing information and to facilitate discussion as part of a community engagement strategy.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 6.1. The Mayor and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) are Council's official spokespersons. The Mayor is the official Council spokesperson on all matters of policy and decision-making inquiries, including civic occasions, community events and major Council announcements. The CEO is the official Council spokesperson on all matters relating to Council's operations, including employees, administrative and industrial matters.
- 6.2. The CEO may nominate other staff to act as spokespeople for the Council.
- 6.3. The Mayor may nominate another councillor to speak on a particular matter.
- 6.4. Councillors may speak on behalf of council in relation to their respective portfolios. All portfolio related media comments must be in supported/in relation to an adopted council resolution or policy with any commentary in support of the respective council resolution of policy. Media releases on such matters must be developed by the Council's Media Officer in consultation with the respective Councillor.
- 6.5. Views expressed by elected members should be clearly identified as their own, either personal or professional (unless authorised under this policy as a portfolio councillor). Comments should be

in line with relevant Council policies and not at any time bring the reputation of Council into disrepute.

- 6.6. The Media Officer is responsible for coordinating media liaison and issuing media releases and has been delegated authority to respond to media enquiries on behalf of Council.
- 6.7. No employee, other than those authorised by the CEO, are to handle an enquiry from the media without prior approval from the CEO.
- 6.8. Information given to the media of a controversial, legal or ethical nature requires the approval of the CEO and/or the Mayor.
- 6.9. The Media Officer is responsible for Council's corporate social media sites. Other employees must only administer approved sites that relate to their areas of responsibility and must have the prior authorisation of their supervisor and/or CEO.
- 6.10. Social media sites must be updated regularly to engage with users and to remain effective and relevant. Council's corporate sites should aim to have at least one post per business day.

Authorised Officer	Roles & Responsibilities
Mayor	Council's official spokesperson on all policy matters. The Mayor may choose to delegate media enquiries to other Councillors.
Deputy Mayor	Act as the Mayor's delegated spokesperson if the Mayor is not available.
Councillors	May speak on behalf of council in relation to their respective portfolios. All portfolio related media comments must be in supported/in relation to an adopted council resolution or policy with any commentary in support of the respective council resolution of policy. Media releases on such matters must be developed by the Council's Media Officer in consultation with the respective Councillor. May provide the media with comment, identifying that this is provided as their own personal opinion and not representing the official position of Council.
CEO	To make statements on behalf of Council to the media. Council's official spokesperson on all policy, operations and administration issues.
Managers and Directors	To make statements on behalf of Council to the media provided there has been prior consultation with the CEO and statements are made in conformity with any directions given by the CEO.
Media Officer	Responsible for coordinating responses and providing information to the media on behalf of Council. Responsible for distributing all written media comment to media organisations. Responsible for Council's social media (Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) accounts.
Employees	No media role unless requested by CEO to provide information or comment.

7. DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

- 7.1. All media enquiries should be directed to the Media Officer.
- 7.2. Employees must not speak to the media about matters related to Council unless authorised to do so.

- 7.3. Employees may not provide any comment, information, statements or announcements to the media with the intention of contesting or undermining Council policy or casting Council, councillors or employees in a negative light.
- 7.4. Employees may speak to the media or write Letters to the Editor as private individuals with the following restrictions:
- a) They do not comment on Council business or policy;
 - b) They are not identified as Council employees;
 - c) Their comments are not perceived as representing official Council position or policy.
- 7.5. In the event of an industrial dispute (or an incident likely to lead to an industrial dispute), statements on behalf of Council employees should be issued via the relevant union.
- 7.6. Where appropriate, and with prior approval from the CEO, an employee may become the sole spokesperson on a specific issue, event or initiative within their operational portfolio, to ensure consistency of message.
- 7.7. Employees should treat all media outlets equally and should avoid giving one outlet preferential treatment. Media inquiries should be treated efficiently and courteously.
- 7.8. When a media organisation or representative requests information on a specific topic, the response must be provided exclusively to that organisation or representative.
- 7.9. News media will sometimes request background information for news stories. Employees should direct these inquiries to the Media Officer for direction and advice. The Media Officer may be authorised to provide background information, either verbally or written, to the media, but cannot be quoted. They must make this clear to the interviewing journalist at the beginning of the discussion. If a quote is required, this must be requested from the Mayor, CEO or relevant Manager or Director.
- 7.10. Employees should avoid providing information “off the record” during media interviews. It is best to assume that everything said to any media representative may appear in a news story.
- 7.11. Contractors or service providers employed by Council must refer all media enquiries relating to Council to the Media Officer.
- 7.12. Only discuss publicly available information. Do not disclose confidential information, internal discussions or decisions of Council, employees or third parties.
- 7.13. Do not comment outside your area of expertise. Do not commit Council to actions or undertakings.
- 7.14. Be accurate, constructive, helpful and informative. Do not make statements which you know to be false or may reasonably be taken to be misleading or deceptive.
- 7.15. When using media platforms, Councillors and Council staff are expected to:
- Seek assistance and authorisation from the Media Officer
 - Adhere to Mount Isa City Council’s codes of conduct, policies and procedures
 - Behave with caution, courtesy, honesty and respect
 - Comply with relevant laws and regulations
 - Reinforce the integrity, reputation and values of Mount Isa City Council.

8. COUNCILLORS AND THE MEDIA

- 8.1. Councillors may speak to Media in relation to their portfolios on behalf of council and only in support of a relevant council resolution or policy linked to their respective portfolio.

Every councillor also has a right to express a private opinion on any issue – such as while speaking to the media, or while engaging on social media platforms as private individuals – whether or not that opinion reflects Council’s official position, but councillors must carefully identify the role in which they speak or write.

- 8.2. Whenever councillors publicly express their own opinions, they must make it clear they are speaking for themselves, unless delegated by the Mayor, and not for Council, unless they are supporting a Council position.
- 8.3. When councillors speak "for the Council" on their portfolios or when delegated by the Mayor, they must express and support Council’s entire policy on the issue at hand.
- 8.4. Any personal comment given in relation to Council decisions must not be a misuse or misrepresentation of information or facts. There will be times when a Councillor does not support a decision of the Council and may wish to inform the electors of his or her personal position on the matter. In such a situation, the Councillor should clearly communicate the decision of the Council, the process taken to arrive at the decision without misuse or misrepresentation of information or facts, and then indicate his or her personal view. The Councillor must state such views are personal and not made on behalf of, nor are they the opinion of, Council.
- 8.5. Councillors must be mindful that any response or public comment will likely be perceived as being made as a Councillor of Mount Isa City Council, irrespective of whether they use the title “Councillor” in their communication or the media channel being used, including personal, professional or other social media channels.
- 8.6. If a Councillor has responded to a media query, or proactively provided media comment on Council matters, he or she must advise the Mayor and Media Officer of this as soon as possible.
- 8.7. If delegated, to maintain Council’s reputation with stakeholders and the community and to ensure that Council key messages are clear and consistent at all times, consultation with the Media Officer is recommended before responding to enquiries from the media. Suitable talking points may then be provided if required.

9. MEDIA RELEASES

- 9.1. Employees may prepare draft media releases, but they must be forwarded to the Media Officer for editing, formatting and distribution to ensure they maintain Council style and look.
- 9.2. Council’s media releases should never be issued without the Media Officer’s knowledge and the prior approval of the CEO, the Mayor or delegated authority.
- 9.3. A media release should never be issued quoting a councillor or an employee without that person’s prior knowledge.
- 9.4. Employees with specialist knowledge may be quoted in media releases with the permission of the relevant delegated authority.
- 9.5. Media releases must be approved by the CEO or the delegated authority before posting on the Council website.
- 9.6. All new employees are to be given Council’s Media Policy as a part of the induction process.

10. SOCIAL MEDIA

- 10.1 Council is committed to engaging with the community and recognises that social media affords Council another avenue to communicate. Social media can complement Council’s existing communication methods.

The purpose of this policy is to establish protocols for managing the use and content of Council's social media sites, and to provide guidelines for employees and councillors about the personal and professional use of Council's social media sites.

- 10.2 Social media should be used as part of wider campaigns, including mainstream media advertising, media releases, Council websites, community announcements, printed promotional material and other methods of communication.
- 10.3 Advice is available from the Media Officer. Only publicly available information is to be disclosed. It is the responsibility of the publisher/editor to ensure that only this information is displayed. Any information provided must be factually accurate and comply with all Council policies.
- 10.4 When using Council social media sites, employees authorised by the CEO or Media Officer will:
- a) Only post content that is genuinely expected to be of interest to followers.
 - b) Respond to enquiries within 24 hours (Monday to Friday) where possible.
 - c) Keep messages simple and engage in conversations where appropriate.
 - d) Link to more information on Council's website where possible. If external websites are required to be linked to, this must be authorised by the CEO (or delegate).
 - e) Provide accurate, fair and thorough information.

The following is not permitted under any circumstances:

- Abusive, profane or sexual language;
- False, misleading or deceptive content;
- Material which would bring Council into disrepute;
- Confidential information about Council or third parties;
- Use of copyright- or trademark-protected materials;
- Discriminatory material in relation to a person or group based on age, creed, disability, family status, gender, nationality, marital status, parental status, political opinion/affiliation, pregnancy or potential pregnancy, race or social origin, religious beliefs/activity, responsibilities, sex or sexual orientation;
- Illegal material or material designed to encourage law breaking;
- Statements which may be considered to be bullying or harassment;
- Personal details or references that may breach privacy laws;
- Material that could compromise Council, employees, community or system safety;
- Material that would breach applicable laws (defamation, privacy, trade and consumer laws, financial rules and regulations, fair use, trademarks, antibullying);
- Spam, meaning the distribution of unsolicited bulk electronic messages;
- Participate anonymously or covertly via a third party or agency;
- Publishing content in exchange for reward of any kind; and
- Endorsement of any political affinity or allegiance.

11. MONITORING SOCIAL MEDIA

- 11.1. The Media Officer will monitor content posted on all official social media outlets to ensure adherence to the Media Policy for appropriate use, message and consistency in branding.

11.2. Content relating to Council that is posted on the internet by elected members, employees, residents and other community members or organisations will be monitored by the Media Officer through the use of a media-monitoring service, Google Alerts and other applications. Where necessary, content will be addressed in an appropriate manner.

11.3. Comments from social media users will be monitored and moderated where possible.

12. COUNCIL SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

12.1. While Council should aim to avoid diluting the corporate social media profile, individual programs or events can establish their own social media presence in accordance with this procedure.

12.2. All new Council social media sites must be approved by the Executive Management Team. The Executive Management Team is to be informed of any planned new social media sites prior to work starting to create them.

12.3. An employee wanting to set up a social media site must provide evidence that the site is needed, its purpose and how the site will be administered.

12.4. Prior to approval being granted, the administrator must seek advice from the Media Officer about engagement, practical uses and management of their social media presence.

12.5. The use of all Council social media sites will be reviewed on an annual basis by the administrator to ensure they remain relevant and useful.

13. COMMENT MANAGEMENT

Administrators should ensure that they:

- a) Answer questions as soon as possible.
- b) Correct any incorrect information as soon as possible.
- c) Respond accurately at all times. If they do make a mistake, administrators should acknowledge it and correct it as soon as possible.
- d) Exercise sound judgment and common sense when responding.
- e) Do not enter or start arguments.
- f) If they are unclear on facts, seek advice and approval from relevant Managers, Directors or the CEO.
- g) Negative or inappropriate comments, or those that raise legal, privacy or political concerns, should be managed immediately and in consultation with Directors or the CEO.
- h) Inappropriate comments or those that raise legal or privacy concerns should be removed, and the administrator should reply to the author privately, through private messaging, email or phone. Ensure the comment is captured and forwarded to records before removal.

14. NEGATIVE COMMENTS – GENERAL PRINCIPLES

14.1. **Straight problem** – always respond, either privately or on the public forum. Take action to rectify the problem.

14.2. **Constructive criticism** – always respond. Thank the user for their suggestion and forward the suggestion to relevant program manager for consideration. If the suggestion is taken up, further response at a later date might be appropriate.

- 14.3. **Warranted criticism** – always respond, the quicker the better. Be positive, empathetic. Alert the program manager and communicate any response to the problem/issue if appropriate.
- 14.4. **Trolling** – do not respond and if necessary, remove it from the page. (Trolling is when posts are inflammatory or off-topic with the main purpose being to provoke an emotional response or to disrupt the normal, relevant conversation.)
- 14.5. It is appropriate to note on the site, if possible, that content deemed unsuitable could be removed. For example: “Mount Isa City Council reserves the right to remove content that does not comply with its Media Policy or any associated policies. To view the policy, visit www.mountisa.gov.qld.au”
- 14.6. Although not recommended, comments on the Facebook wall/timeline can be restricted so that only the administrator can post directly.

15. PROMOTION

- 15.1. Council's social media sites should be promoted using social media buttons to link from Council's main website and other program websites.
- 15.2. Social media sites should be promoted in Council communications e.g. employee and community newsletters, email groups, advertisements and media releases.
- 15.3. Sites should all be linked (for example, liking each other on Facebook, and following each other on Twitter).
- 15.4. Employees are also encouraged to link to social media sites by using social media buttons on their email signatures.

16. VARIATIONS

Council reserves the right to vary, replace or terminate this policy from time to time.

17. BREACH OF POLICY

- 17.1 Where Council reasonably believes an employee has breached this policy, the matter will be dealt with under the Performance and Misconduct Policy.

18. COMMUNICATION AND DISTRIBUTION

- 18.1 Supervisors will ensure the policy is distributed as per the Distribution and Dissemination table on this policy.

9. DEFINITIONS

Traditional media may include (but is not limited to):

- a) **Printed** – newspapers, newsletters, magazines
- b) **Broadcast** – radio, digital radio
- c) **Online** – online news sites, blogs
- d) **Televised** – TV news, programs
- e) **Social media** – The term commonly given to web-based tools that allows users to interact with each other in some way by sharing information, opinions, knowledge and interests online. As the name implies, social media involves the building of online communities or networks to encourage participation and engagement. This includes blogs, message boards, social networking websites (such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) content sharing websites (such as Flickr, YouTube) and many other similar online channels.



ASSOCIATED LEGISLATION AND POLICIES

- *Local Government Act 2009*
- *Local Government Regulation 2012*
- *Public Records Act 2002*
- *Mount Isa City Council Community Consultation Policy*