

TITLE:	Media (Inc. Social Media) Policy		
DIVISION:			
ADOPTED BY:	Council		
DATE OF ADOPTION:	December 12, 2013	DATE OF REVIEW:	December 2017
MOTION NUMBER:	176/13		
POLICY NUMBER:	CP000021		
AUTHORISED:	Chief Executive Officer		

THIS POLICY APPLIES TO:

All employees and contractors of the Barkly Regional Council and Elected Members

PREAMBLE

The aim of all policy is for Councillors to provide strategic input into the effective operational framework of the organisation under S.11 of the Local Government Act

SUMMARY

The Policy sets forth Council's expectations in relation to dealing with both traditional and social media and establishes principles for the guidance of staff and Elected Members.

OBJECTIVES

The objective of this Policy is to provide guidance to employees and elected members as to who is authorised to speak to the media, parameters on what can be released to the media and when.

BACKGROUND

This document details Barkly Regional Council's (Council) procedures and directives regarding the use of and interaction with media and social media by employees and elected members.

Council recognises the importance 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 growing role of social media.

POLICY

Guiding Principles

The procedural statement and directive in this document adhere to:

- Effective two-way communication with the community and other stakeholders that helps Council achieve its broader objectives in providing municipal services.

- Timely and accurate dissemination of information that the community needs to understand Council's role and services.
- Professional and accountable media relations that ensures the media is able to do its job effectively while not compromising Council's legal and ethical responsibilities.
- Coordinating risk management practices.
- Ensuring appropriate accountability by users.
- Targeted and cost-effective communication, thereby minimising cost to Council.

DEFINITIONS

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

- Printed (newspapers, newsletters, magazines)
- Broadcast (radio, digital radio)
- Online (online news sites, blogs)
- Televised (TV news, programs).

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

- social networking sites (eg Facebook, Myspace, LinkedIn)
- video and photo sharing websites (eg Flickr, Youtube)
- blogs, including corporate blogs and personal blogs
- blogs hosted by media outlets (eg 'comments' or 'your say' features)
- micro-blogging (e.g. Twitter)
- wikis and online collaborations (eg Wikipedia)
- forums, discussion boards and groups
- vod and podcasting
- Instant messaging (including SMS).

PROCEDURES

The Council President will be the principal spokesperson for Council issues. Should the President be unavailable the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is the spokesperson or will designate an appropriate senior Council officer.

Issues of an operational nature should be directed to the CEO in the first instance.

Elected members are under no obligation to seek permission from, or to advise the CEO or the designated officer of any attempt to gain media attention for themselves. However elected members are encouraged to inform the CEO or the designated officer out of professional courtesy. Elected members however must not make public comment on Council matters in an official capacity, except where directed to by the President.

All comments made via the media are in the public domain, thus sound judgement and professionalism should be exercised when engaging with media. Comments must comply with all relevant Council policies and values.

Views expressed by elected members should be clearly identified as their own, either personal or professional. Comments should be in line with relevant Council policies and not at any time bring the reputation of Council into disrepute.

BUSINESS RELATED USE OF ALL MEDIA

As a general principle, only the President or the CEO will make official comments on behalf of Council to the media.

All media statements and official comments made on behalf of Council shall reflect the decisions made by Council as stated in its adopted resolutions or the positions taken by Council as articulated in its strategic and policy documents.

Personal comments are not represented as the view of Council and this should be identified.

PERSONAL USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Elected members need to be aware that as community representative their personal or professional site may be viewed as a public site, especially when reference to the elected member's position is present. Therefore when expressing a personal view this should be identified and care taken not to show disrespect for the Council, its decisions, decision making process or other elected members and staff.

SOCIAL MEDIA MATERIAL

The Council's website remains the Council's primary and predominant online presence.

Employees and elected members using social media must:

- Only disclose and discuss publicly available information;
- Ensure postings should be professional and designed to aid in the dissemination and promotion of Council information to public;
- Ensure that all content published is accurate and not misleading and complies with Council's Codes of Conduct, policies and confidentiality pursuant to the *Local Government Act*;
- Avoid the use of images (such as photo, video, logos and so on) unless it is approved by the CEO or designated officer. If an image is used it should be low resolution and not contravene the Council's or owners copyright;
- Be polite and respectful to all people with whom they interact; and
- Adhere to the Terms of Use of the relevant social media platform/website, as well as copyright, privacy, defamation, contempt of court, discrimination, harassment and other applicable laws.

Those using social media must not:

- Post material that is offensive, disrespectful of colleagues, obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, bullying, discriminatory, hateful, racist, sexist, infringes copyright, constitutes a contempt of court, breaches a Court suppression order, or is otherwise unlawful;
- Use the identity or likeness of another elected member or employee of Council;
- Use or disclose any confidential information obtained in their capacity as an employee or elected member;

- Make any comment or post any material that might otherwise cause damage to a colleague or to Council's reputation or bring it in any way into disrepute.

REASONABLE/ UNREASONABLE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Use of media or social media during the conduct of Council meetings is not permitted.

Council resources shall not be used to access or post any material that is fraudulent, harassing, threatening, bullying, embarrassing, sexually explicit, profane, obscene, racist, sexist, intimidating, defamatory or otherwise inappropriate or unlawful.

LEGAL CONSEQUENCES

Council may be held liable for statements made by an authorised employee or elected member commenting in an official capacity on behalf of Council, no matter the media platform.

FAILURE TO COMPLY

Failure to comply with these procedures may result in disciplinary action and the recovery of any costs incurred by the Barkly Regional Council.

LEGISLATION, TERMINOLOGY AND REFERENCES

NT Local Government Act, Privacy Act and Code of Conduct

IMPLEMENTATION AND DELEGATION

The President has authority to act as the principal spokesperson for the Council; The CEO has delegated authority to implement this Policy.

EVALUATION AND REVIEW

This Policy is to be reviewed every four (4) years, and may be reviewed at other times at the discretion of Chief Executive Officer.