
Proposed Media and Social Media Policy

Responsible Officer: Customer and Communications Manager

Recommendation

That Council:

1. Revoke the Media Interaction Policy dated 22 August 2007 (Attachment 1) and any policy revived as a result of the revocation.
2. Adopt the Media and Social Media Policy attached to this report (Attachment 2).

Background

In 2022, the Office of Local Government (OLG) developed a Model Media and Model Social Media Policy (the policies) in consultation with councils. The policies were developed to provide a framework to assist councils when dealing with the media. The result was aimed at ensuring that media engagement by councillors and staff is consistent, accurate and professional. It was also designed to provide a structure for the administration of social media platforms and provide a standard of conduct for all council officials who use social media in their official capacity.

The policies were developed by the OLG following two rounds of consultation with the local government sector and is designed to reflect best practice for the industry.

The media environment is rapidly evolving, with digital platforms increasingly becoming the main way people access and consume news and information. There is less reliance on traditional media and platforms to inform the community about priorities, projects, and activities.

Rous is aiming to achieve a balance in distributing information across various media platforms, including print, digital, and broadcast media management. Content is tailored for diverse audiences through the news section on Rous' corporate website and social media posts. Media releases and other information is also shared via constituent council newsletters, and advertising through local radio, television and newspapers.

A comprehensive Media and Social Media Policy has been developed to effectively manage the distribution of information to the community, ensuring authentic and meaningful engagement, with the aim of being Open | Accurate | Timely | Relevant.

The draft policy aims to:

1. Ensure that all communication with the media and broader community is coordinated, consistent, informed, timely, and appropriate.
2. Clearly identify Rous' authorised representatives/spokespersons and ensure proper authorisation and responsibility for supplied comments.
3. Mitigate risks and minimise the potential for miscommunication, inaccurate information, or any other impacts on Rous' reputation.
4. Provide a framework for managing engagement with the community and interest groups on social media, both proactively and reactively.
5. Provide guidance on addressing social media posts that are defamatory, derogatory, or of a bullying, vulgar, abusive, or misleading nature.

The proposed policy is largely reflective of the Model Media and Social Media policies developed by the OLG and seeks to replace the Media Interactions Policy.

Governance

Rous' responsibilities for how information is collected, used, stored, secured and disclosed is governing by legislation. The relevant clauses from the 2022 OLG Model Media and Model Social Media Policy also provide a guide to best practice governance for Council's media and social media communication. That guidance has been used to inform the draft policy.

The policy is designed to complement both the Code of Conduct and our obligation to open access information under Government Information Public Access (GIPA) Act 2009.

Consultation

The content of the policy was informed with input from the Leadership Group, Customer and Communications team, Communications and the Governance and Risk team.

Training will be organised for the relevant staff to familiarise them with the new Media and Social Media policy.

There is no legislative requirement to place the draft policy on public exhibit prior to being adopted.

Conclusion

A review of the current Media Interactions policy has been undertaken and a new policy has been developed in line with best practice and the recently released Model Social Media Policy 2022 and Model Media Policy 2022 prepared by the office of Local Government.

Attachments

1. Media Interactions Policy dated 17 August 2007 – <https://rous.nsw.gov.au/page.asp?f=RES-VZO-26-11-82>
2. Draft Media and Social Media Policy
3. OLG Model Media Policy – <https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/A842229-Model-Media-Policy-Final-RK-TAB-1.docx>
4. OLG Model Social Media Policy – <https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Model-Social-Media-Policy.docx#:~:text=The%20Model%20Social%20Media%20Policy%20provides%20councils%2C%20county%20councils%20and,media%20in%20their%20official%20capacity>