

# Media Policy

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the responsibilities of Riverina Water officials regarding interactions with the media.

## Policy Statement

Communicating with the community via the media is an important part of achieving Riverina Water's broader objectives and commitment to transparency.

This policy provides a clear framework for facilitating media enquiries and the process for authorising Riverina Water officials to represent Riverina Water by making public comment.

Media agencies are an important partner in reaching customers and the community, and this policy is designed to facilitate that process in an efficient manner.

## Scope

This policy applies to board members, staff, Riverina Water committee members and contractors of Riverina Water.

## Principles

Riverina Water is committed to upholding and promoting the following principles of media engagement:

- **Openness:** We will ensure that we promote an open exchange of information between Riverina Water and the media.
- **Consistency:** We will ensure consistency by all Board Members and staff when communicating with the media.
- **Accuracy:** The information we share with the media will be a source of truth for Riverina Water and community and we will prioritise the need to correct inaccuracies when they occur.
- **Timeliness:** We will ensure that we respond to media enquiries in a timely manner.

## Data and document control

Any comment to a journalist or member of a media organisation is to be consistent with Riverina Water's Code of Conduct and accurately reflect the values and decisions of Riverina Water.

Only an authorised spokesperson may be interviewed by the media or provide approved responses.

## **Policy Implementation**

### **1 Appointment and role of the Media Coordinator**

1.1 The Customer and Communications Team Leader is the Media Coordinator of Riverina Water. The Chief Executive Officer may appoint additional Media Coordinators.

1.2 The Media Coordinator's role is to:

- be the lead point of contact for all media enquiries, requests for interviews, requests to film or photograph Riverina Water staff, facilities or events for news and current affairs purposes
- be responsible for preparing all media statements prior to their release
- liaise with relevant staff members within the organisation where appropriate.
- ensure that media statements are approved by Chief Executive Officer or delegate prior to their release
- maintain a record of all media enquiries and responses
- ensure that media organisations and their representatives are treated professionally, equally and without bias
- ensure that media enquiries are dealt with promptly
- provide guidance to Board Members approached by the media for comment to avoid communication of misinformation, and
- ensure that all media releases are published on Riverina Water's website

### **Spokespersons**

1.3 The Chairperson, Chief Executive Officer and two Directors are Riverina Water's authorised spokespersons

1.4 Other staff and representatives may be authorised by the Chief Executive Officer and/or relevant Director as a spokesperson to comment in the media on behalf of Riverina Water.

#### **Data and document control**

## **Board Members**

1.5 As a member of the governing body and as a representative of the community, Board Members are free to express their personal views to the media.

1.6 When engaging with the media, Board Members:

- must not purport to speak for Riverina Water unless authorised to do so.
- must clarify when speaking to the media that they are expressing their personal views as an individual Board Member and that they are not speaking for Riverina Water (unless authorised to do so)
- must uphold and accurately represent the policies and decisions of Riverina Water
- must not disclose Riverina Water information unless authorised to do so, and
- must seek information and guidance from the Chief Executive Officer where appropriate before providing comment to the media to ensure they have the most up-to-date and relevant information and have considered reputational or other risks.

1.7 In the interests of promoting a positive, safe and harmonious organisational culture, Board Members should endeavour to resolve personal differences privately and must not prosecute them publicly through the media.

1.8 Where Board Members (including the Chairperson) become aware of potential issues that could result in media interest, they should provide this information to the Chief Executive Officer

## **Riverina Water Staff**

1.9 Riverina Water staff must not speak to the media about matters relating to Riverina Water unless authorised to do so.

1.10 If Riverina Water staff receive a media enquiry or they are invited to comment to the media on a matter relating to Riverina Water, they must refer the enquiry to the Media Coordinator.

1.11 Riverina Water staff are free to express their personal views to the media on matters that do not relate to Riverina Water, but in doing so, must not make comments that reflect badly on Riverina Water or that bring Riverina Water into disrepute.

1.12 If authorised to speak to the media, Riverina Water staff:

### **Data and document control**

- must uphold and accurately represent the policies and decisions of Riverina Water
- must not disclose Riverina Water information unless authorised to do so by the Chief Executive Officer or Media Coordinator, and
- must seek information and guidance from the Media Coordinator where appropriate before providing comment to the media to ensure they have the most up-to-date and relevant information and have considered reputational or other risks

1.13 Where Riverina Water staff become aware of potential issues that could result in media interest, they should provide this information to the Media Coordinator.

## **2 Tone**

2.1 All media engagement by Riverina Water officials must be conducted in a professional, timely and respectful manner.

## **3 Induction and training**

3.1 Riverina Water must provide training to Riverina Water officials who engage or are authorised to engage with the media.

3.2 Media engagement training will be provided to Board Members as part of their induction or refresher training or as part of their ongoing professional development program.

## **Board Members' questions about media engagement**

4.1 Board Members must direct any questions about their obligations under this policy to the Chief Executive Officer.

## **5 Standards of conduct when engaging with the media**

5.1 Riverina Water officials must comply with Riverina Water's code of conduct when engaging with the media in an official capacity or in connection with their role as a Riverina Water official.

5.2 Riverina Water officials must not share information or make comments to the media through either direct or indirect mechanisms that:

### **Data and document control**

- are defamatory, offensive, humiliating, threatening, or intimidating to other Riverina Water officials or members of the public
- contains profane language or is sexual in nature
- constitutes harassment and/or bullying within the meaning of the Code of Conduct or is unlawfully discriminatory
- is contrary to their duties under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 and their responsibilities under any policies or procedures adopted by Riverina Water to ensure workplace health and safety
- contains content about Riverina Water, Riverina Water officials or members of the public that is misleading or deceptive
- divulges confidential Riverina Water information
- breaches the privacy of other Riverina Water officials or members of the public
- contains allegations of suspected breaches of Riverina Water's code of conduct or information about the consideration of a matter under the Procedures for the Administration of the Code of Conduct
- could be perceived to be an official comment on behalf of Riverina Water where they have not been authorised to make such comment
- commits Riverina Water to any action
- violates an order made by a court
- breaches copyright
- advertises, endorses, or solicits commercial products or business.

## **6 Use of media during emergencies**

6.1 During emergencies, such as natural disasters or public health incidents, the Media Coordinator will be responsible for coordinating media releases and statements on behalf of Riverina Water.

6.2 Board Members, Riverina Water staff and other Riverina Water officials must not provide comment or information to the media that is inconsistent with official advice issued by Riverina Water and any other agency coordinating the emergency response.

### **Data and document control**

## 7 Media engagement in the lead up to elections

7.1 This policy does not prevent Board Members who are candidates at a council or any other election from providing comment to the media in their capacity as candidates at the election.

7.2 Any media comment provided by a Board Member who is a candidate at a council or another election must not be provided in an advertisement, newspaper column, or a radio or television broadcast paid for by Riverina Water or produced by Riverina Water or with Riverina Water resources.

## 8 Records management requirements

8.1 Media content created and received by Riverina Water officials (including Board Members) acting in their official capacity is a Riverina Water record and may be subject to information access applications made under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009. These records must also be managed in accordance with the requirements of the State Records Act 1998 and Riverina Water's approved records management policies and practices.

## 9 Breaches

9.1 Any deviations by Board Members to this policy may be deemed to constitute a breach of the Code of Conduct and appropriate action will be taken.

9.2 Any deviations by staff to this policy are subject to disciplinary action.

## Definitions

<b>TERM</b>	<b>DEFINITION</b>
<b>RIVERINA WATER OFFICIAL/COUNCIL OFFICIAL</b>	Board members, staff, Riverina Water committee members and contractors of Riverina Water

### Data and document control

<b>MEDIA COORDINATOR</b>	The Customer and Communications Team Leader, or other staff appointed by the CEO, responsible for administration and coordination of media activities
<b>MEDIA</b>	Print, broadcast and online media used for communicating information to the public, including, but not limited to, newspapers, magazines, internet publishers, radio, and television broadcasters.
<b>AUTHORISED SPOKESPERSON</b>	Riverina Water officials who are permitted to make comment to a journalist or media organisation as per this policy.
<b>MEDIA ENQUIRY</b>	Any request for comment or information by the media
<b>PERSONAL INFORMATION</b>	Information or an opinion (including information or an opinion forming part of a database and whether or not recorded in a material form) about an individual whose identity is apparent or can reasonably be ascertained from the information or opinion
<b>SOCIAL MEDIA</b>	Online platforms and applications, such as but not limited to social networking sites, wikis, blogs, microblogs, video and audio sharing sites, and message boards, that allow people to easily publish, share and discuss content. Examples of social media platforms include, but are not limited to Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Yammer, YouTube, Instagram, Flickr and Wikipedia

**Policy number**
**Policy 1.29**

Responsible area

Corporate Services

Approved by

Riverina Water Board Res 26/061

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**Data and document control**

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Legislation or related strategy	Defamation Act 2005 Copyright Act 1968 Local Government Act 1993 Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009
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Documents associated with this policy	Customer and Community Engagement Strategy Code of Conduct Policy 1.01 Privacy Policy 1.20 Social Media Policy Social Media Usage Internal Policy 4.11
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Policy history	Approved by Riverina Water Board February 2021 Resolution number 21/01  Approved by Riverina Water Board February 2022 Resolution number 22/015
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Policy Review	Once every Board term, every 4 years.
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Policy details may change prior to review date due to legislative or other changes, therefore this document is uncontrolled when printed.

## END OF POLICY STATEMENT

### Data and document control

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