



# **MEDIA POLICY**

This document has been developed as a guideline for Chamber executive committee and members to take into consideration when any member of the Chamber communicates with the media and is consistent with the aims and position of the Chamber.



## **Introduction**

This policy outlines the coordination of contact between committee members of the Gunnedah Chamber of Commerce and the media and outlines who can speak to the media on behalf of the Chamber. It should apply to all members at all times, 24 hours a day, seven days per week.

It is designed to ensure that in all dealings with the media, the committee members of the Chamber act in a professional, coordinated manner and that all statements made on behalf of and representing the Chamber of Commerce are accurate and appropriate.

For the purposes of this policy, media contact includes:

1. Providing information via media release or statements
2. letters to the editor
3. Responding to media enquiries over the phone and via email
4. Interviews or briefings
5. Disclosing information to the media
6. Comments on talkback radio
7. Addressing a seminar or conference where the media are present
8. Media activities for events, reports and launches

There are risk management issues in media relations, including but not limited to;

- Potential damage to the Chamber's reputation;
- Defamation;
- Legal issues.

## **Media Relations Strategy**

All media relations activity will be undertaken with the recognition that the media play an important part in influencing social attitudes and perceptions of the Gunnedah Chamber of Commerce, its initiatives and business principles.

All media relations activity will aim to educate and raise awareness about the Gunnedah region and initiatives of the Gunnedah Chamber of Commerce.

All proactive media contact will be consistent with the mission objectives of the Gunnedah Chamber of Commerce.



## Chamber Spokesperson

The role of primary Chamber Spokesperson is a vital one in projecting the views of the GCoC.

In the case of a Chamber Spokesperson being asked to comment to local media on local issues then it is a 'business as usual' approach – that is, the interview should take place with the media outlet, and the chamber spokesperson makes the Public Relations Officer aware of the interview and it's likely air date or date of publication.

However, in the case of the Chamber spokespeople being asked by local media to comment on Statewide or national issues and their impacts on a particular region, eg the passing of new Legislation/regulation etc, or events eg GFC, the spokesperson must contact the Public Relations Officer prior to committing to participate in the interview.

It may be the case that the GCoC already has a designated position on the topic as determined by the President or executive committee, or that other members of the Chamber have had the same request so we need to ensure consistency, or it may be the case that for strategic reasons, the best response is not to be involved in media comment on that issue.

## Principles of this Policy

1. Those authorised to comment to media include the President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer and the Public Relations Officer. From time to time, and in consultation with the executive committee of the Chamber, another member of the committee may be authorised to comment to the media if it's a subject area of professional expertise.
2. The Executive to the GCoC should be actively seeking to share the voice of the GCoC executive and members and all factual information shared with the media should be a true representation of its members in line with the information received from its members from:
  - Member surveys
  - Member votes
  - Member Submissions

Details of the degree of support by the members of the GCoC in relation to a topic for media release should also be published with the media release. For example: "75% of the members surveyed supported the (topic)"

3. The nominated Public Relations Officer, will cultivate relationships with journalists, field and filter media enquiries and keep media contact records. Other responsibilities include drafting or coordination of media releases and statements and coordination of media interviews, liaison with the Chamber of Commerce Committee to coordinate responses to media issues, and alerting the Committee to sensitive or controversial media issues relevant to the Gunnedah Chamber of Commerce.

4. All external content for media including media releases, media statements and letters to the editor will be presented to the executive committee for approval by the majority prior to its release or submission.
5. Members of the Committee, other than the designated Public Relations Officer, will not initiate media contact or respond directly to media enquiries. Committee members will advise the Public Relations Officer or President of likely events, announcements or issues that may attract medial interest, and ensure information provided to the Public Relations Officer is accurate. All media releases are to be monitored by the Public Relations Officer.
6. If members of the Committee are contacted directly by the media, they will request the journalist's name, contact details, publication or program deadline (date and time), topic and what they are requesting – for example, an attributable quote, statement of background briefing. This information should then be passed promptly on to the President or nominated Public Relations Officer.
7. Media responses should always be “on the record”. They will be truthful and accurate and not include speculation, guesswork or personal opinion. They will not include disparaging comments about other organisations, committees or individuals. Members are entitled to express their own views, but any comment on behalf of the Gunnedah Chamber of Commerce is considered a public affairs matters.
8. Media representatives are to be treated respectfully and courteously at all times by members of the Committee.

### **Internal Communication of Media Releases**

Immediately prior to issuing a media release, the Public Relations Officer will notify, where appropriate and as necessary, the relevant GCoC members that a release is planned. This will allow consultation with the members prior to public release and any media opportunities.

Media releases will be posted on the GCoC website and emailed to all members.

### **Responsibility to Inform**

There is a responsibility for committee members to inform the executive of the GCoC of any matters relating to their activities with the potential to have an impact on the reputation of the GCoC. This is essential to assist in the management of potential issues.

### **Confidentiality**

Personal or contact details of members of the Committee, and organisations involved with the Committee, will not be provided to the media without prior consent.

The release of any information will remain consistent with the Chamber's confidentiality policies.



## **Defamation**

No person authorised to speak on behalf of the GCoC is allowed to make derogatory, untrue, unfair, racist or sexist remarks about any other individual.

Such comments are not acceptable in any form.

It is a matter for the GCoC executive committee to decide if the GCoC would provide any support or assistance to members who are sued for defamation in the course of acting as a GCoC spokesperson.