



# **BYRON SHIRE COUNCIL**

**POLICY NO. 13/013**

**COMMUNICATIONS POLICY**

**INFORMATION ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT  
(INTERNAL USE ONLY)**

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#E2013/77794	27 November 2013	Adopted as per resolution 13-624 with a commencement date of 1 January 2014.

**Further Document Information and Relationships**

<b>Related Legislation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009</li> <li>• Protected Disclosures Act 1994</li> <li>• NSW Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998</li> <li>• NSW Anti Discrimination Act 1977</li> <li>• NSW Defamation Act (2005)</li> </ul>
<b>Related Policies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complaints Management Policy DM1154370</li> <li>• Code of Conduct Policy E2013/12377</li> <li>• Draft Social Media Policy E2013/22562</li> </ul>
<b>Related Procedures/ Protocols, Statements, documents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft Byron Shire Council <i>Social Media Procedures</i></li> <li>• Byron Shire Council <i>Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2008-13</i>.</li> <li>• Byron Shire Council <i>Cultural Plan 2008-13</i></li> <li>• Guidelines for the Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW (2004)</li> </ul>

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**POLICY TITLE** COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

**FILE REFERENCE** E2013/72429

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Byron Shire Council provides a wide variety of community infrastructure and facilitates social and cultural programs for shire residents. Effective and accessible communication can support the delivery of Council services to enable engagement, build partnerships, manage expectations, deliver customer service and increase awareness about Council processes and regulatory compliance requirements.

## 2. PURPOSE

Byron Shire Council recognises the need to embrace new and emerging technologies in conducting its business and fulfilling its objectives. Council will utilise the most appropriate method to communicate Council services, initiatives and works programs ensuring that the communication method is targeted, flexible and responsive.

Byron Shire Council (Council) is defined as all:

1. Byron Shire Council workers, including:

- Employees (whether permanent, temporary, full-time, part-time, casual, or on probation)
- Business units (including but not limited to Byron Shire Council caravan parks and community facilities)
- Contractors (including casual labour hire)
- Consultants
- Volunteers (including committee/board members, volunteers for events such as Schoolies and New Year's Eve)
- Students (including work experience students and interns)

Communication can consist of multiple forms of content including, but not limited to:

- Text
- Photographs
- Illustrations
- Art
- Videos
- Music
- Spoken word

Communication methods will allow broad community accessibility where possible and therefore consider the requirements of the *Disability and Discrimination Act* and Council's *Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2008-13* and *Cultural Plan 2008-13*.

### **3. OBJECTIVES**

The Communication Policy aims to provide a framework for staff and Councillors to:

- 3.1 Inform the community of key Council decisions, services, programs and initiatives.
- 3.2 Promote transparency and accountability of Council's decision making processes.
- 3.3 Ensure that communication is consistent, accurate, timely and professional.
- 3.4 Improve communication with customers and enhance Council's public image.
- 3.5 Ensure communication with the media is proactive, effective, consistent, well-informed, timely, professional and appropriate.
- 3.6 Clearly indicate Council's authorised media spokespersons.
- 3.7 Limit the possibility of miscommunication.
- 3.8 Actively support partnerships and opportunities that generate two-way community engagement.

### **4. MEDIA**

Council will adopt a proactive approach in ensuring media organisations are kept up to date on Council happenings. Council also welcomes enquiries from the media and are to be treated in the same manner as Council customers; that is, Council will attend to media requests promptly and with courtesy, honesty and respect.

The Byron Shire Mayor, General Manager and Directors/Executive Manager are the official spokespersons on Council matters.

### **5. COUNCILLORS AND THE MEDIA**

In their role as elected representatives, Councillors are free to talk to the media at any time on any issue of interest. When speaking with the media, Councillors must identify the role in which they speak; that is either personally or on behalf of Council in a delegated role.

### **6. BYRON SHIRE COUNCIL WEBSITE**

The Byron Shire website is a primary online communication tool. Council will publish website content that is current, accessible, accurate and informative and will aim to be compliant with the World Wide Web accessibility standards.

### **7. MOBILE PHONES AND SHORT MESSAGE SERVICE (SMS)**

Mobile phones and smart phones are recognised as a highly valued communication tool. Smart phones are used for sourcing information from on-line websites, entertainment, social media, purchasing goods and receiving Short Message Service (SMS) or text messages.

In recognising the strong usage of smart phones, Council will aim to have smart phone friendly content and consider smart phone friendly applications.

In addition, in the event of an emergency, all SMS messages sent from Council will clearly identify Byron Shire Council as the sender.

## **8. COPYRIGHT**

Byron Shire Council owns and/or licenses all content in Council published documents (including brochures, information booklets, fact sheets and electronic newsletters etc), Council reports, memos and emails, Byron Shire Council website, audio and video footage produced and sourced by Council, business units, consultants and contractors.

Council supports the sharing of Council information for the purposes of community engagement and education, private study, research and as permitted under copyright legislation.

Content cannot be reproduced for commercial purposes without the permission of the General Manager.

## **9. LOGO AND IDENTITY**

Byron Shire Council is the sole owner of the Byron Shire corporate logo and any logo created to identify a project, event, service or program of Council. Logo usage by a third party organisation must be approved by the General Manager or form part of a sponsorship agreement or community donation.

## **10. EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION**

In the event of an emergency, the Byron Shire Mayor and/or the General Manager, or their delegates, are the Council spokespeople.

## **11. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Council recognises that a fundamental component of quality customer service and good governance is effective and proactive community engagement.

All community engagement will be informed by the internationally recognised “Public Participation Spectrum” developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) which outlines five levels of public participation including Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate and Empowerment. When planning for community engagement Council staff will determine the most appropriate level of participation depending on the nature and complexity of the project/issue.

## **12. CONSTITUENTS, COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS**

Council recognises that its constituents, community and business organisations are vital partners in providing two-way communication. When appropriate, Council will seek to proactively engage with these groups via:

- Representation on Project References Groups, Advisory Committees, Section 355 Committees, Special Purpose Committees.
- Invitations to relevant Council convened meetings and workshops.
- Invitations to provide input and submissions either directly or online

## **13. MANDATORY CONSULTATION**

Mandatory consultation is required by legislation and regulations and is set out in the Local Government Act and the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. Council will ensure that all legal requirements are met.

**14. CORRESPONDENCE**

Council correspondence includes letters, facsimiles and email. Acknowledgement of correspondence, outcomes, options, or the provision of an interim reply will be undertaken as quickly as possible.

**15. SOCIAL MEDIA**

Depending on current issues, projects, services and the targeted audience demographic, Council may choose to use social media as part of its communication tools.

**16. INTERNAL COMMUNICATION**

Council is continuously working to ensure relevant information is quickly disseminated throughout the organisation.

Internal communication will aim to keep staff and Councillors informed and promote a participatory approach to change management, increase engagement and enable effective communication. In an effort for this to be achieved, where possible Council will seek out creative and innovative opportunities to:

16.1 Provide participatory opportunities through consultative staff forums, staff reference groups, and team meetings to act as an open pathway to convey information, report on recent projects, ask for advice and raise concerns.

16.2 Ensure induction programs incorporate communication procedures.

**17. COMMUNITY COMMUNICATION**

Communication is a two way process. Where possible, Council will encourage the community to:

17.1 Focus their comments on specific issues.

17.3 Realise that Council operates under resource constraints.

In addition, community feedback and ideas will be relayed to Councillors as part of community consultation and engagement in order to help inform decision making.

Council will also following its customer service guarantee regarding complaints which can be found within Council's *Complaints Management Policy 3.22*.