Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association Policy

POLICY AND PROCEDURE

MEDIA POLICY

1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to define roles and responsibilities within the Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association for working with the media. It will also assist the media by clarifying the level of service they can expect regarding access to the organisation through the President, Executive Officer and constituent council members, in the provision of information and responses to enquiries. The policy deals with the day-to-day relationship between the Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association and the media.

1.2 It is not the intention of this policy to curb freedom of speech or to enforce strict rules and regulations. Rather, the intention is to establish a framework for achieving an effective working relationship with the media. The Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association welcomes the opportunity to talk to the media and, through them, to debate issues in the public arena.

2. Key aims of media relations

2.1 The Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association is accountable to the Eyre Peninsula region for its actions and this can only be achieved through effective two-way communications. Accountability relies upon a genuine understanding of the Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association's policies and the services it provides. The media – print, radio, TV, internet – are crucially important in conveying information to the region and beyond so the Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association must maintain positive, constructive media relations and work with them to increase public awareness of the services provided by the Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association and to explain the reasons for particular policies and priorities.

2.2 The media themselves have a vital role to play on behalf of the region in holding the Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association to account for its policies and actions. It is important that they have access to the organisation to attain background information to assist them in this role. To balance this, the Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association will defend itself from any unfounded criticism and will ensure that the public are properly informed of all the relevant facts using other channels of communication if necessary.

2.3 To summarise, the key aims of this policy are to work with the media to:

- build up a relationship of trust and mutual understanding that will benefit both parties;
- explain the Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association's policies and services to the local region and beyond;
- communicate important public information messages;
- invigorate local democracy and enable people to participate in the work of the Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association; and
- enhance the reputation of the Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association.

3. Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association Values

3.1 The Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association's Management Plan contains objectives for how it will promote the social, economic and environmental well-being of the Eyre Peninsula region.

3.2 In addition the Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association is committed to:

- honesty - we will never knowingly mislead the public, media or our member councils on an issue or news story;
- transparency - we promote openness and accessibility in our dealings with the media, whilst complying with the law and maintaining confidentiality when appropriate;
- balance - information provided to the media will be objective, balanced, accurate, informative and timely; and
- clarity - all communications with the media will be written in plain English.

4. The legal framework

4.1 The Local Government Act 1999 Chapter 6, Part 3 (Public Access to meetings) applies to the EPLGA Board meetings as if they were a council and the Board Members were members of a council. The Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association must also have regard to the Local Government Act, its own Charter and policies like the Code of Conduct for Board Members. Some aspects of the Code are relevant to this policy, in particular those relating to the Board Members actions:

- They act with reasonable care and diligence in the performance of their role, at all times
- They are courteous, respectful and sensitive in dealing with other Board Members
- They are representing the best interests of their Councils and the EPLGA rather than their own self-interest, in making decisions

- They are mindful of the image of EPLGA at all times, as reflected in their behaviour which should be above reproach
- They accept the responsibility of decisions that are arrived at in accordance with the Charter of EPLGA and the Local Government Act, 1999
- They are willing to promote the resolutions of EPLGA in the wider community
- They publicly support the President as the duly elected spokesperson of the organisation
- They are diligent in ensuring confidentiality in all matters, until they are released into the public arena
- They commit to acting lawfully, responsibly and prudently when discharging their duties as Board Member
- They understand the responsibility of a Board Member, as described in PART 5, Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association Charter.
- They demonstrate a commitment to transparency of decision making and to representing the considered interests of their own Council.

4.2 The Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association reserves the right to withhold certain sensitive information, for example concerning commercial transactions.

4.3 When the media wish to discuss an issue that is, or is likely to be, subject to legal proceedings then advice should be taken from the Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association's Solicitor before any response is made.

5. Attendance of the media at meetings

5.1 The media are encouraged to attend Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association meetings and seating and workspace will be made available. The President and/or relevant Board Members will be available following meetings for comment or interview if required.

5.2 Any filming or taping of meeting proceedings by the media must be with prior notice to the President.

6. Guidance for members

6.1 The Code of Conduct for Board Members contains guidance for providing publicity.

6.2 Members are advised to ensure they are properly briefed and guided by the President or Executive Officer before talking to the media.

7. Responding to approaches from the media

7.1 The media may contact the Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association for many different reasons, for example, to follow up a story after receiving agendas or minutes; to ask for the Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association position on a more general story affecting other authorities or organisations; to look for a local perspective on a national story; following a call from a member of the public; for an update on a long running story. These approaches are usually made by phone or in person, for example, following a meeting.

7.2 Local press and radio and TV stations may contact the President, Executive Officer and Board Members directly when preparing news stories. They include:
- West Coast Sentinel
- Whyalla News
- Port Lincoln Times
- The Tribune
- ABC Regional Radio
- 5CC Radio - Port Lincoln
- Adelaide & Local Television
- State & National Radio & Newspapers

7.3 Approaches from all national press, radio or TV stations or specialist press should be directed to the President and/or Executive Officer who will discuss the nature of the story and then may contact the appropriate Board Member asking them to respond.

7.4 All proposals for feature articles or more lengthy broadcast interviews or debates should be made through the President and/or the Executive Officer.

7.5 Investigative journalism will usually involve requests for background information and statistics, often from the archives. If the material requested is public information then every effort should be made to assist the journalist or researcher. Again, their deadlines should be respected but if it will take time to compile the information then this should be made clear from the beginning. It will usually be necessary to provide information in addition to that which is requested in order to

set the facts and figures in context. It is recommended that requests for detailed information of this nature, whether from the local or national media, are made through the Executive Officer.

7.6 It is not possible to provide hard and fast rules about who will speak to the media on behalf of the Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association in particular situations. The important considerations are that the person has the necessary facts and understanding, that they are available when required and that they can speak with some authority, using plain English.

Responsible Officer:
Executive Officer

Adopted: **28 June 2013**

Last Reviewed: **24 June 2016**

Review Due: **July 2019**