



Policy and Procedure MEDIA RELATIONS

1. POLICY

Local and regional media are vital partners in achieving the goals of Mallee Accommodation and Support Program. In order to maximise the advantages of media presentation and minimise the risks of media misrepresentation, it is necessary to establish guidelines for how contacts with various media outlets will be conducted.

It is the intention of this policy to establish a framework for achieving an effective working relationship with the media and to identify key roles and responsibilities within the agency. The organisation welcomes the opportunity to talk to the media and, through them, to debate issues in the public arena.

It is important that MASP works with the media to communicate important public information messages about its work and its goals.

In all dealings with the media MASP will operate on the values of:

Honesty - MASP will never knowingly mislead the public, media or staff on an issue or news story.

Transparency - MASP will promote openness and accessibility in our dealings with the media, whilst complying with the law and maintaining confidentiality when appropriate.

Clarity - all communications with the media will be written in plain English.

Balance - information provided to the media by MASP will as far as humanly possible be objective, balanced, accurate, informative and timely.

MASP will work with the media in order to:

- advocate on social and community issues central to our vision and mission.
- advocate and on behalf of the clients of MASP
- promote the work of MASP generally
- inform the public of the range of MASP's services
- assist in fundraising for MASP and in recognizing donors and fundraisers.

In order to ensure that these purposes can be fulfilled, this policy regulates the choice of people entitled to speak for MASP.

Where possible, the CEO, Board members and staff should speak to the media on any significant matter in the name of or on behalf of MASP **only if**:

- They have consulted the agency Communications Officer (nominated by the CEO)
- They have the required expertise to speak on the issue under discussion
- They have some experience in media relations

If it is a staff member who is to speak to the media, prior CEO approval is always required.

Staff, the CEO and Board members are encouraged to deliver public presentations that discuss and promote MASP's work and its goals, provided that they make it clear that they are or are not presenting/speaking on behalf of MASP.

Staff, the CEO and Board members must observe MASP's confidentiality policy in relation to client information and records.

Staff, the CEO and Board members are advised to ensure they are properly briefed and guided by relevant staff before talking to the media on any issue related to MASP.

In dealing with the media, staff and Board members should be conscious that they are seen as representatives of MASP. They should avoid making comments or participating in photo opportunities that are non MASP specific that may damage the long-term reputation of MASP.

Any filming or taping on MASP property or of MASP proceedings by the media is subject to prior permission of the CEO.

The media themselves have a vital role to play on behalf of the community in holding MASP to account for its policies and actions. It is important that they have access to officers and staff members and to background information to assist them in this role. To balance this, MASP must have the capacity to defend itself from any unfounded criticism, and will ensure that the public are properly informed of all the relevant facts (if necessary using other channels of communication).

2. PROCEDURE

The CEO and Board shall nominate a **Communications Officer** for MASP.

At present, the Communications Officer role is filled by the Manager Community Development & Business Operations.

The **Communications Officer** will produce and update a list of key contacts for distribution to local press and radio and TV stations. The Communications Officer can also be contacted for preliminary discussions on any story or if a journalist or researcher is unsure who to approach for a comment.

The **Communications Officer** shall coordinate all media conferences for MASP.

The **Communications Officer** shall authorise all media releases from MASP and be responsible for mounting them on MASP's website. All news releases must also be approved by the CEO and staff in charge of the relevant area before distribution.

The Communications Officer should, where feasible, be involved in any approaches to the media to feature MASP's work.

Significant written statements on behalf of MASP shall be made as authorised by the CEO, Board or a nominee in reference to the principles listed above.

It should always be made absolutely clear whether the views put forward regarding any issue relating to MASP are those of MASP or of an individual. At all times consideration should be given as to how the correspondence may affect the reputation of MASP.

Approaches from all press, radio or TV stations or specialist press should be directed to the Communications Officer who will discuss the nature of the story and then contact the appropriate officer or member asking them to respond.

2.1 Complex and/or contentious issues

It is important to obtain advice from the Communications Officer (preferably before the issue becomes public knowledge) on any issues that are likely to be complex or contentious or to be sustained for any length of time.

In such a situation the Communications Officer will work with the relevant staff, CEO and Board members to produce a communications plan which will ensure that balanced, timely information is provided to keep all parties informed.

2.2 Photos

No photos of clients or employees should be released to the public via advertising, news media, or web without the approval of the Communications Officer, who shall satisfy themselves that MASP's confidentiality policy has been observed and publicity releases have been signed.

2.3 Advising of Press contact

Where a staff member, the CEO, Board member or volunteer has had any significant interaction with media representatives on issues related to MASP, it is the responsibility of the person concerned to notify the Communications Officer and to provide the name of the reporter or writer and the media outlet they represent.

2.4 Workload issues

Every effort should be made to assist the media in their inquiries. Where media queries involve requests for information that will require substantial staff work to produce, such work must be authorised by the CEO.

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. Requests for detailed information of this nature, whether from the local or national media, should be referred to the Communications Officer.

MASP reserves the right to withhold certain sensitive information concerning, say, commercial transactions or governmental negotiations. Any such information will be clearly labelled and clearly notified to relevant staff.

2.5 Unauthorised release of information

If any unauthorised releases of confidential information do occur, an investigation will take place to establish who was responsible and appropriate action will be taken.

3. Related Documents

- Confidentiality & Privacy Policy
- Board Confidentiality Policy

4. APPROVAL

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Gary Simpson
CEO

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