



## Media Communications Policy and Procedures

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### Purpose of Policy

This policy is designed to provide a framework for the Australian Council of Deans of Health Science (the Council) to:

- manage its marketing, communications, media and public relations activities in order to strategically connect with its stakeholders;
- embed processes which manage the Council's brand, enhance its reputation and support its strategic goals and vision; and
- sets out governance of public engagement through the media.

### Background

Effective communication with the media is critical to the Council's ability to meet its strategic objectives and to initiate and promote government, and public support and community engagement.

The Council encourages members to participate in public debate and be available to the media for comment in their field of expertise. Members contributing to public commentary should identify themselves as *firstly*, a member of the Australian Council of Deans of Health Science, followed by their University title, appointment and/or qualifications when they are writing or speaking publicly on a matter within their academic or professional field of expertise or specialisation.<sup>1</sup>

### Aims and objectives

The aim of public engagement through the media is to communicate and build the Council's public reputation for excellence in teaching and research.

Effective media relations support the strategic objectives of the Council by providing information in a timely manner that is accurate and of a high quality and serves to:

- enhance public awareness and understanding of research and issues of public importance;
- improve the understanding and general visibility of the Council with the public and key stakeholders; and,
- build the reputation of the Council with the public and key stakeholders.

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<sup>1</sup> Subject to members' host institutional media policies and authorisations

## **Governance**

The **Chair** has overall responsibility for maintaining and building the reputation of Council consistent with Council Strategy and for all corporate communication strategies and policies including corporate branding, marketing, positioning and messaging.

The Chair is the official spokesperson of the Council. This role may be delegated to appropriate Council members depending on the particular issue.

The **Executive Officer** has primary responsibility for supporting academic and other professional officers to engage effectively and professionally with the media on behalf of Council.

Council members, staff (including consultants) are accountable for their public comments and must ensure that public comments are independent, non-discriminatory and honest.

## **Types of Media Communications**

Engagement with the media can occur in a number of ways:

- individual academic or professional officers providing comment or critique in their acknowledged area of professional expertise (public comment);
- the production of media releases, statements and copy to promote the Council's achievements (including the achievements of individual academic staff, graduates and students), its research initiatives and outcomes and events and activities (news and marketing media); and
- sharing of institutional content via social media that is relevant to the strategic intent of Council.

## **Procedure**

The Executive Officer has primary responsibility for supporting academic and other professional officers to engage effectively and professionally with the media on behalf of Council.

All requests for comment by the media should be referred to the Executive Officer.

The Executive Officer may request academic or professional officers with expertise in a particular area to make themselves available to provide comment or critique in their acknowledged area of professional expertise. This may be in response to a request from the media or through analysis of topical issues.

In developing and coordinating promotional media the Executive Officer is responsible for exercising professional judgment about newsworthiness (that is, the likelihood of a story being accepted and published, or followed up, by a media outlet).

The Secretariat has primary responsibility for drafting, editing and distributing media releases on behalf of Council. Council members or students may, however, also supply draft releases to the Secretariat for final editing and distribution.

While the author of the draft release is responsible for the accuracy of the content, the Secretariat will edit this material to improve its news value, readability or reader comprehension. All edited releases will be returned to the author for final endorsement before distribution.

Media release approval

All media releases are to be approved by the Executive Officer or authorised representative, unless otherwise authorised by the Chair. This is to ensure that:

- the content of the media release is written in a professional and consistent style and tone;
- information is conveyed in an appropriate manner;
- the Secretariat is aware of all editorials that are released and can arrange appropriate spokespersons.

Media releases may be distributed by Council members to personal media contacts, but only after release has been approved by the Executive Officer or authorised representative.

Media releases will be issued subject to the availability of the key spokesperson named in the release or the contact details. When liaising with the Secretariat on the development of media releases, staff members will advise of their availability to respond to any media enquiries prompted by the release. If a spokesperson will not be available for comment at the time the media release is issued, the release will either be delayed until an agreed time when the spokesperson is available or an alternative spokesperson identified by members or the Executive Officer.

Dealing with the Media

The outcome of any media engagement (with the exception of advertising) is a process that is controlled by the media and not by Council or any of its members.

All comments made to the media will be considered as 'on the record', regardless of any commitment given by a member of the media that a comment is 'off the record'.

Media enquiries will be responded to as soon as practicable, being respectful of media deadlines and responsive to requests from the media, without breaching individual member's home University's policies and procedures or compromising the University's reputation, image or brand.

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Policy Manager	Executive Officer
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