

# ACT PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT POLICY

## Purpose

1. To set out high level principles and supporting guidance to assist ACT Public Service (ACTPS) employees understand their responsibilities when dealing with media communications and community engagement as part of their employment with the ACTPS.

## Application

2. This policy sets out Whole of Government instructions issued by the Head of Service under the *Public Sector Management Act 1994* and applies to all employees and officers engaged under that Act.
3. This policy should be read in conjunction with the ACT Public Service Media Communications and Engagement Guidance issued by Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate (CMTEDD) Communications, and with directorate and agency specific policies.

## Background

4. The provision of cohesive and timely media, communications and community engagement is fundamental to an open, transparent and responsive relationship between the ACTPS and the ACT community.
5. It is through the use of media releases, media alerts and attendance at public forums that the ACTPS is able to announce or advise the community of directorate or Ministerial initiatives or events, or provide information.

## Principles

6. **Media Requests** – all media requests, including media enquiries, media releases, media alerts and requests for comment or interviews are to be managed by a Directorate Media Adviser or Directorate Communications team.

7. To ensure consistent messaging across the ACTPS, the CMTEDD Communications team must review any media request that is Whole of Government in nature.
8. **Speaking at Public Forums** – an ACTPS employee attending a public forum to present or speak in an official capacity on behalf of the directorate may only do so when;
  - a) their appearance is endorsed by the Director-General, their delegate, or the appropriate Director/Executive Director; and
  - b) their presentation and/or speaking points have been approved.
9. Presentations that are general, topical or contentious should be prepared in consultation with the Directorate Communications team and be approved by:
  - Director/Executive Director of the relevant line area(s); and
  - Director-General (or Deputy Director-General if delegated).
10. Presentations that are highly technical should be prepared by the relevant line area and approved by the Director/Executive Director of that line area.
11. If approved to present or speak in an official capacity at a public forum, an ACTPS employee must only speak on those topics approved. Should a question be asked that could be reasonably determined to fall outside of the approved topics, the ACTPS employee should advise that they are not authorised to speak on that matter.

## **Responsibilities**

12. **ACTPS Employee** – it is the responsibility of ACTPS employees to provide any media requests directly to their Directorate Media Advisor or Directorate Communications team for action.
13. When attending public forums, ACTPS employees should consider their obligations under Section 9 of the PSM Act not to disclose information obtained through their employment with the ACT Government that they are not authorised to disclose. It is only appropriate for an ACTPS employee to make comment in an official capacity at a public forum when they have approval to participate in discussions relating to their directorate.

For example, it is important for employees not to comment on whether any projects are being considered in a budget context.
14. ACTPS employees who are attending public forums (whether in an official or unofficial capacity) should be aware of the requirement to adequately manage any conflicts of interest. Should an ACTPS employee attend a public forum in an unofficial capacity, they have a duty to consider whether personal comments and statements could:

- be mistaken for an official comment;
- involve the use of official information not publicly available;
- constitute or give the appearance of a conflict of interest; and/or
- undermine public confidence in the employee's ability, or that of their directorate, to carry out official functions fairly and impartially.

15. **Directorate Media Adviser/Directorate Communications team** – it is the responsibility of the Directorate Media Adviser or Directorate Communications team to manage directorate media responses in consultation with the relevant line area(s). This includes confirming any required deadlines and gaining the necessary approvals as outlined in the ACT Public Service Media, Communications and Engagement Guidance material.

### Further Advice

16. Further enquiries may be directed to the Whole of Government Communications Manager, Communications Division, Chief Minister Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, on 6205 9530.

### Legislative Reference

17. The key principles of this policy are consistent with the *Public Sector Management Act 1994* (PSM Act). Section 9 of the PSM Act details the requirements of a public employee in performing his or her duties, in particular that a public employee shall:
- (m) not disclose, without lawful authority—*
- (i) any information acquired by him or her as a consequence of his or her employment; or*
- (ii) any information acquired by him or her from any document to which he or she has access as a consequence of his or her employment;*
- (n) not make a comment that he or she is not authorised to make where the comment may be expected to be taken to be an official comment.*




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Bronwen Overton-Clarke  
 Commissioner for Public Administration  
 on behalf of Kathy Leigh, Head of Service

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