

# Media Policy

Version 2.0  
May 2024

## 1 Purpose and Scope

NSW State Emergency Service (NSW SES) recognises the important role the media plays in promoting the Service and its messages to communities across the state.

The purpose of this policy is to develop and maintain a strong, working relationship between the Service and media outlets. This policy defines and sets the professional behaviours, standards, and ethics required of all members when engaging with the media, as well as details the principles and structures for how to engage with the media.

This policy applies to:

- all members, including, but not limited to, employees, volunteers, spontaneous volunteers, contractors, sub-contractors, and consultants
- when engaging with the media as a member of NSW SES – whether on duty or not – or as a private citizen.
- NSW SES operational and non-operational matters.

Breaches of this policy may result in disciplinary action.

## 2 Policy Principles for Media

### 2.1 Authority to comment by Authorised Members

Only media-trained members of the NSW SES are authorised to speak with the media/press. Depending on the nature of the inquiry, this may be staff from the NSW SES Media and Communications team or other NSW SES members. In the first instance, all communications with media should be handled by the NSW SES Media and Communications team. However, in particular situations, approved and authorised members are able to provide information on behalf of NSW SES. Some examples of these scenarios include;

- A Zone Commander providing an update on a minor incident which occurred in their Zone, such as a flood rescue.
- An approved member on the scene of a minor incident (such as a fallen tree) providing a brief progress update to the media.

## 2.2 Working with the Media

NSW SES is committed to working with the media to ensure that all citizens of NSW are provided with accurate and timely information about incidents across the state. This commitment is underpinned by a few core principles;

- Clarity – All information should be succinct, straightforward and, most importantly, correct.
- Accessibility – Information should be available to all citizens of NSW, regardless of their individual accessibility requirements (such as requiring an Australian sign language interpreter).
- Efficiency – Information should be delivered to the citizens of NSW within an appropriate amount of time, allowing individuals to best prepare and protect themselves for all ranges of incidents within the purview of the agency.

Members are also expected to abide by the core values of NSW SES when dealing with the media.

## 3 Appropriate conduct by Members when engaging with the Media

Members interacting with media outlets are governed by the Service's Code of Conduct and Ethics. These set the standards for appropriate and professional behaviour for all members.

Members must not interact with media in a way that could bring NSW SES, NSW Government or other members into disrepute, or damage their reputation. It is the responsibility of the member to ensure that their conduct when working with the media is appropriate and that the information, they are providing is clear, correct and timely.

Specifically, any member dealing with the media is to ensure, to the best of their ability, that any information;

- is accurate;
- is issued in a timely manner;
- is not of a speculative nature;
- is not expressive of personal opinion;
- is not of a political nature;
- is issued within their area of responsibility, expertise and knowledge;
- avoids criticism of individuals, groups or agencies;
- does not breach an individual's right to privacy;
- does not jeopardise investigations;
- does not reveal sensitive or commercial information which should not be available to the public; and
- is presented in a way that reflects the professional nature of the NSW SES.

Information provided to the media by NSW SES is to be provided on an equal basis and not favour any one media organisation over any other. The exception to this is when a specific request is initiated by a media organisation.

Where NSW SES is not the lead agency, members should only provide information to media about the specific role of NSW SES personnel. The exception to this is where the lead agency has authorised NSW SES to comment more broadly on the incident.

## **4 Roles and Responsibilities**

### **4.1 Senior Leadership Team**

The Senior Leadership Team, including the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioners and Directors are responsible for implementation of, and adherence to, this policy across their functional areas.

### **4.2 Policy Owner and Sponsor**

The Deputy Commissioner Corporate Services is the policy sponsor and is accountable for adherence to the policy. The Senior Manager Media and Communications is the policy owner and is responsible for the development, review and implementation of this policy across NSW SES.

### **4.3 Managers, Supervisors and Commanders**

Managers, Supervisors and Commanders at all levels are responsible for the adherence to this policy by members within their unit, team or functional areas.

### **4.4 Members**

All members are responsible for adhering to this policy. This includes:

- members, including, but not limited to employees, volunteers, contractors, sub-contractors, consultants, liaison officers and visitors.

## **5 Related Documents**

### **5.1 Legislation**

This procedure and all associated policies and procedures are supported by the following legislative framework:

- *Crimes Act 1900* (NSW)
- *Criminal Code Act 1995* (Cth)
- *Defamation Act 2005* (NSW)
- *Government Sector Employment Act 2013* (NSW)

- *Government Sector Employment Regulation 2014 (NSW)*
- *Government Sector Employment Rules 2014 (NSW)*
- *Health Records & Information Privacy Act 2002 (NSW)*
- *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)*
- *Privacy & Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW)*
- *State Emergency Service Act 1989 (NSW)*
- *State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 (NSW)*

## 6 Policies

This policy and all associated policies and procedures are supported by the following policy and procedural documents:

- *Media Procedure (NSW SES)*
- *Social Media Policy (NSW SES)*
- *Alcohol and Drugs Procedure (NSW SES)*
- *Bullying and Harassment Policy (NSW SES)*
- *Code of Conduct and Ethics (NSW SES)*
- *Cyber Security Policy (NSW SES)*
- *External Complaints Policy*
- *External Complaints Procedures*
- *Fraud and Corruption Control Policy (NSW SES)*
- *ICT Acceptable Use Policy (NSW SES)*
- *Intellectual Property Policy and Procedure (NSW SES)*
- *Internal Grievances Policy (NSW SES)*
- *Internal Grievances Procedures (NSW SES)*
- *Legal Services Policy and Procedure (NSW SES)*
- *Mobile Device Policy (NSW SES)*
- *Password Policy (NSW SES)*
- *Public Interests Disclosure (PID) Policy and Procedure (NSW SES)*
- *Records Management Policy (NSW SES)*
- *Risk Management Policy (NSW SES)*
- *Taking of Photos and Video Guideline (NSW SES)*
- *Volunteer Membership Policy (NSW SES)*

## 7 Support and Advice

You can get advice and support about anything in these procedures from:

- Your Manager or Zone Commander
- Policy Owner – Senior Manager Media and Communications
- Policy Sponsor – Deputy Commissioner Corporate Services
- By emailing [media@ses.nsw.gov.au](mailto:media@ses.nsw.gov.au).

## 8 Definitions

| Term                     | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Accessibility            | For the purpose of this policy, this includes ensuring everyone is able to view, hear, read and understand the information the service is trying to communicate.                                                                                                                                     |
| Corporate communications | For the purpose of this policy, this includes any and all materials, which convey official information from NSW SES to members of the public. As related to this policy, this can include, but is not limited to, printed and digital materials that are branded NSW SES.                            |
| Authorised members       | For the purpose of this policy, an 'Authorised member' is a Local, Unit or Deputy Commander, or a member that has otherwise been delegated authority to engage with the media at a particular time and who has received the appropriate media training.                                              |
| Media                    | For the purpose of this policy, this includes producers, journalists, and camera operators across any and all print, digital and broadcast platforms. It also relates to any content that is published in public forums including, but not limited to, websites, blog sites, podcasts, or magazines. |
| Information              | any material such as written communication, oral communications, videos or photographs. This includes content found on social media.                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Media                    | traditional communication mediums including radio, television and print (including their online or digital components).                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Member                   | For the purpose of this policy, is a public official in accordance with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988 (NSW)</i></li> <li>• <i>Ombudsman Act 1974 (NSW)</i></li> </ul>                                                              |
| Official Comment         | Information provided to the media which presents the view or position of the NSW SES.                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Official use             | For the purpose of this policy, is any authorised representation or communication in relation to NSW SES, its business, operations, policies or activities by or on behalf of a zone, region, business unit, or by a member in an official capacity.                                                 |

| Term                       | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Operational matters        | For the purpose of this policy, this relates to any and all matters involving the service's preparedness, training and response to storms, floods and tsunamis. It can also relate to the service's non-legislative roles and support of other emergency service agencies.                                       |
| Non-operational matters    | For the purpose of this policy, this relates to any and all matters involving the day-to-day operations of NSW State Emergency Service, its personnel, policies, procedures, and activities undertaken to support communities.                                                                                   |
| Private comment            | For the purpose of this policy, this relates to any communication or comment made to the media or in a public forum as a private citizen that may or may not involve personal views, comments or opinions about NSW SES.                                                                                         |
| Production Assistance      | Requests from organisations (including media, social media, advertising and production companies) for assistance with projects such as filming, photography or disaster protection or technical services for television or film productions.                                                                     |
| Public or official comment | For the purpose of this policy, this relates to any comments provided to the media.                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Public forum               | For the purpose of this policy, this relates to any means in which comments can be viewed publicly by others and thereby can be shared with others.                                                                                                                                                              |
| Public official            | For the purpose of this policy, is an individual having public official functions or acting in a public official capacity in accordance with the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988 (NSW)</i></li> <li>• <i>Ombudsman Act 1974 (NSW)</i></li> </ul> |
| Social Media               | Media designed to be viewed and disseminated online. Communications are conducted through conversation and social interaction, using internet-based technologies and channels. Examples include Facebook, Twitter (X), YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat, forums, blogs and other online platforms.                      |

**Document Control Sheet**

|                         |                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Title</b>            | Media Policy                                                                                     |
| <b>Current Version</b>  | 2.0                                                                                              |
| <b>Directorate</b>      | Corporate Services                                                                               |
| <b>Policy Owner</b>     | Senior Manager Media and Communications                                                          |
| <b>Policy Sponsor</b>   | Deputy Commissioner Corporate Services                                                           |
| <b>Effective date</b>   | 15/05/2024                                                                                       |
| <b>Next Review Date</b> | 15/05/2029                                                                                       |
| <b>Rescinds</b>         | Media Policy v1.0<br>Leadership Talking Point Guidelines v1.0                                    |
| <b>Topic</b>            | Media, Communications, Public Relations                                                          |
| <b>Function</b>         | Strategic management, Information management, Governance, Legal activities, Operational response |
| <b>Key Words</b>        | Media, Communications, Digital Communications, Branding, Public Comment, Spokespeople            |

**Version History**

| Version # | Creation Date | Author         | Summary of changes    |
|-----------|---------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| 1.0       | 01/12/2010    | Media Officer  | Creation              |
| 2.0       | 15/05/2024    | Policy Officer | Reviewed and updated. |

**Approval**

| Title                                    |                | Date       | Version signed off |
|------------------------------------------|----------------|------------|--------------------|
| A/Deputy Commissioner Corporate Services | Policy Sponsor | 08/05/2024 | 2.0                |
| Damien Johnston                          | A/Commissioner | 13/05/2024 | 2.0                |