



St Vincent de Paul Society
NSW
good works

NSW Media Policy and Procedures 2018

Version Control

Contact names	Role / position	Version number	Date	Review date
Yolanda Saiz	Executive Director, Fundraising and Communications	2	Feb 2011	June 2018
Philip Sen	Communications Manager	3	8 & 28 Feb 2018	June 2018
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Related Policy

- Privacy and Confidentiality Policy 2009
- NSW Social Media Policy 2018

Employees should also refer to the Code of Conduct, particularly the sections on professionalism and confidentiality.

POLICY

It is crucial that St Vincent de Paul Society engages with the media in a professional and consistent manner at all times to promote or defend the interests of the Society, our clients, volunteers, members and staff.

For guidance pertaining to social media i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube and other sites and platforms, please refer to the separate NSW Social Media Policy 2018.

General Guidelines

The St Vincent de Paul Society NSW:

1. Engages with the media in a way that promotes the best interests of the Society and the people we assist without exposing the Society to unreasonable risk of unfavourable publicity arising from a misunderstanding of its position;
2. Advocates on behalf of the most disadvantaged in our community, especially on issues of social justice;
3. Acknowledges the support of benefactors and encourages further donations, particularly in relation to specific appeals;
4. Communicates with and informs the Catholic community of the works of the Society and the need for assistance with resources, both human and financial; and
5. Follows strict informed consent and confidentiality protocols when putting Society members, volunteers or clients forward to the media;
6. Avoids ignoring requests or offering 'no comment' reactions to the media, which can be construed as evasive and can be counterproductive.
7. Considers the potential impact of media exposure on members, volunteers and employees.

Key Contacts: last updated 1 July 2018

Name	Title	Contact Details
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General media procedure

Remember, if in doubt, please consult the key contacts above before acting.

The Communications Manager (deputised by the Senior Communications Coordinator) and/or the Executive Director, Fundraising and Communication should respond promptly to State-level media requests with a whole-of-Society perspective.

This involves briefing the relevant spokesperson about the nature of the request, the context, and the appropriate key messages before they speak to the media.

Determining who should speak to the media on contentious and less straightforward issues will be the responsibility of the Communications Manager in consultation with the Executive Director, Fundraising and Communications and, as relevant:

- The Chief Executive Officer;
- The State President;
- Central Council Presidents;
- Executive Directors;
- Central Council Executive Officers; and/or
- The appropriate Service Manager(s).

The decision will be made after considering the nature of the media request, the context of the request, and any sensitivities or risks associated with the request.

1. MEDIA POLICY RATIONALE

1.1 Philosophy and Aims

As a key player in service delivery and the policy debate, the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW ('the Society'), has a responsibility to engage with the media. This is to ensure that its work is understood by the broader Australian society in which it operates, and that it builds its social justice profile and reputation in the sectors in which it operates.

The spiritual philosophy of the Society stresses the humility of its clients and members and, as such, it could choose not to engage with the media. But the very public nature of much of the Society's work and its professional operation as a service provider means that such a closed approach to the media is not realistic and could in fact be harmful to the Society's reputation.

1.2 The Need for this Media Policy and Procedures Document

A free media is a cornerstone of democracy, and a large, high-profile organisation like the Society cannot be shy of it. The media can be a powerful ally, or a powerful adversary, in attaining our goals of bringing compassion and justice to the disadvantaged in our community.

A media policy is therefore necessary to ensure that the Society engages the media in a consistent, timely and advantageous way while minimising risk to its reputation and the best interests of our clients, volunteers, members and staff. The Society must also provide consistent and credible messages to the public via the media, so that we demonstrate our unified approach at every level and in every locale.

The face of the media is changing rapidly, and it cannot and should not be 'controlled' by silence or inaction. The Society must actively use all available communications channels to inform and inspire the public about its mission and work. This is especially important as people are now using social media channels to communicate directly with organisations and the broader public: please refer to the separate 2018 Social Media Policy for more details.

This NSW *Media Policy and Procedures 2018* sets guidelines about who is authorised to speak to the media and in what circumstances they should do so. Those representatives must be well acquainted with the Society's policies and position across a range of issues.

The policy also enables the Society's members, staff and volunteers to understand how the Society chooses to relate to the media and provides guidelines for dealing with the media.

1.3 Promoting Community Awareness

For the Society to continue its many activities, it relies largely on the generosity of donors and volunteers plus the many people who shop at our Vinnies stores. Current and future donors, shoppers and volunteers must be aware of the work of the Society and have confidence in its competent and compassionate approach to those it assists.

Therefore, the Society works via the media to promote the Society's services and goals in order to:

- Recruit potential members and volunteers;
- Foster trust and confidence in the Society;
- Alert potential people we assist to the services it provides;
- Influence policy makers;
- Reinforce the reputation of the Society; and
- Raise awareness of its work to philanthropists, trusts, foundations, donors and potential donors.

2. OUR VOICE

2.1 Promoting Social Justice

The Rule, Part 1, p.19, 1(4) says:

"... The Society is concerned with not only relieving need but with redressing situations that cause it ..."

The Society is committed to working to change the conditions that cause suffering in our society. Its founder, Frederic Ozanam, was an outspoken agent for social change.

The Society acknowledges the importance and influence of the media in promoting social justice goals and drawing the attention of the public and policy makers to those areas where the Society sees a need for action for social justice.

2.2 Apolitical

Only those authorised to do so can speak to the media on issues of a political or religious nature.

The Society's role as a social justice advocate means that the Society will, at times, make comment in the media concerning issues of a political nature. Because the Society is strictly apolitical such comments must focus on the issues and not on party politics.

The Society does have services that operate with the assistance of government at both state and federal levels; and it can, and does, engage with governments to promote the needs of the people we assist. This may involve talking with the media to enable awareness or promotion of the Society's position on a particular issue, and it may be in a proactive or reactive way.

3. APPROVALS AND DESIGNATED SPOKESPEOPLE

3.1 Approval system

In general, the designated spokesperson in each situation as outlined below holds authority for approving the response to a media request. The designated spokesperson does not necessarily have to deal with every request personally, but may delegate preparation of a response to, for example, the Communications Manager.

3.2 Designated Spokespeople

State Council

Matters of national or state-wide importance should always be referred to the Communications Manager or the Executive Director, Fundraising and Communications in the first instance.

The State President, the CEO or a duly appointed representative will act as spokesperson to speak on any issue with significant public relations implications or where the Society has to defend itself against public criticism.

Where a matter is of purely local interest, responsibility will be delegated to a local spokesperson.

Central Council

A Central Council spokesperson, either the Central Council President or Executive Officer, will address non-contentious issues within the Central Council.

Regional Council

A Regional Council spokesperson will speak on non-contentious issues within the region, with the consent of the Regional President. If comment is sought over activities of local government, this should be referred to the Communications Manager.

Conference

The Conference President should speak only on local or parish matters.

Special Works

The appropriate spokesperson for a Special Work will be the State President, CEO, relevant Central Council President or Service Manager, depending on the nature of the media request.

Vinnies Shops

The relevant Executive Director or Executive Officer should speak on issues relating to individual Vinnies Shops. In certain cases when appointed by the Executive Officer, the area manager or shop manager can act as spokesperson. The Executive Director, Commercial Operations and Central Councils speaks on more general state-wide Vinnies Shops issues.

3.3 When to elevate to the State Support Office

If in doubt, please check with the Communications Team before acting.

Media contact involving any or all of the points below should be directed through the Communications Manager and/or the Executive Director, Fundraising and Communication.

- National or state-wide issues e.g. advocacy themes such as housing affordability, the cost of living, refugees and people seeking asylum;
- An issue that could potentially impact on the Society's reputation;
- An issue with state-wide impact or relevance;
- An issue where the Society has to defend itself against public criticism.

In the event of a major issue or developing crisis that is likely to attract adverse media attention, please also contact the Executive Director, Fundraising and Communications and the Communications Manager as soon as possible.

Central Council Presidents, Central Council Executive Officers, Service Managers and/or any Central Council or Service-based media and communications personnel may be the first points of call for everyday local promotional activity and media engagement such as:

- Opening new shops and facilities;
- Community fundraising events;
- Routine questions on the local activities of the Society.

Only those authorised to do so can speak to the media on issues of a political nature. Moreover, those who speak on behalf of the Society must not allow themselves to be pressured by media deadlines into making unguarded or inappropriate comments that might have damaging consequences.

4. PEOPLE WE ASSIST AND THE MEDIA

Media requests often come with little or no notice, and the demand is often to interview and / or photograph people we assist. The Society recognises its responsibility to guard people we assist from media attention, but also that this must be balanced with the need to give them a voice through the media to tell their stories.

We must therefore endeavour to sensitively and professionally facilitate media coverage when practical. In particular, all interviews with the people we assist are vetted by the Communications Manager (deputised by the Senior Communications Coordinator) and signed off by the Executive Director, Fundraising and Communications.

Informed consent protocols for the people we assist

1. Following a request from the media to interview someone on a particular issue, the Communications Manager should be contacted immediately. They will then liaise with the relevant Central Council President, Executive Officer and/or Service Manager.
2. If agreed to, the above will identify a suitable person personally known to them and ask them whether they would be willing to speak to the media.
3. If they agree, the Communications Manager and/or their Service Manager will meet or speak to them to brief them fully about the implications of a media interview. This briefing will include informing them of the risks (including privacy and family concerns).
4. The Communications Manager and Service Manager will assess whether the interview should proceed. At all times, they will draw on their expertise to assess whether it is in the Society's, and the individual person's, best interests to participate in a particular media interview.
5. If appropriate, the Communications Manager and/or Service Manager will be present during any media interview with the people we assist.

5. GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Because the Society is an advocate for the rights of the poor and marginalised, it has an obligation to challenge policies that are oppressive or unjust. Comment on matters relating to government policy is the prerogative of State Council through the State President or CEO. Other stakeholders within the Society should not become involved in political debate.

Those who speak on behalf of the Society must endeavour to ensure that criticisms are directed at the issues, and not at particular political parties or individuals. Expressions such as 'the Federal *Coalition* Government' or 'the *ALP* Government' should not be used in statements by the Society. 'The

federal Government' or 'the NSW Government' are acceptable since they refer to the institution rather than the party.

In dealings with governments the Society should be seen to be speaking with one voice. Where Society statements challenge federal government policies applying in NSW, the Society's National Council should be informed. This is why all such requests should be referred to the Communications Manager or the Executive Director, Fundraising and Communications in the first instance.

The Communications Manager must be notified where a Member of Parliament is invited to a public event as there are protocols that need to be adhered to.

6. MANAGING CRISES

It is possible that the Society, by the nature of its work, could be affected by a crisis that will attract extensive media attention. The Society must be able to respond quickly and calmly in such situations.

Depending on the nature of the crisis, a crisis communications committee may be formed consisting of:

- The Chief Executive Officer (primary spokesperson);
- The Chair of the State Council
- The Executive Director, Fundraising and Communications;
- The Executive Director, Executive Secretariat;
- The Communications Manager and/or Senior Communications Coordinator;
- Any appropriate Central Council President(s) and /or Central Council Executive Officer(s);
- Any appropriate Service Manager(s).

No-one outside the committee may speak to the media on the issue once a crisis has been recognised.

The committee will have pre-determined holding messages and key messages available to adapt for quick responses.

7. INTERNAL STAKEHOLDER CONSIDERATIONS

Negative media coverage of the Society can impact the reputation of the organisation with members, volunteers and employees. Similarly, positive coverage can enhance the pride and engagement of internal stakeholders. As such, all media opportunities should consider possible impacts and alert the Internal Communications Manager as soon as practically possible to ensure internal communications activities coincide. Internal stakeholders should ideally be informed of possible impacts ahead of any media exposure.