



Media Relations Policy

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Introduction

******* Puckapunyal Military Area is a secure base and approval for any media is to go through the Senior Army Defence Force Officer (SADFO) prior to entry on base. Under NO circumstances are the Puckapunyal and District Neighbourhood Centre Staff or Committee Members to allow or escort media on to base*******

Local, state and national media are vital partners in achieving the goals of Puckapunyal and District Neighbourhood Centre. In order to maximise the advantages of media presentation and minimise the risks of media misrepresentation it is necessary to establish guidelines for how media contacts will be conducted. It is not the intention of this policy to curb freedom of speech or to enforce strict rules and regulations. Rather, the intention is to establish a framework for achieving an effective working relationship with the media. The organisation welcomes the opportunity to talk to the media and, through them in the public arena. In dealing with the media, staff, committee members and other volunteers should be conscious that they may be seen as representatives of the organisation and should therefore avoid making comments or participating in photo opportunities that may damage the long-term reputation of Puckapunyal and District Neighbourhood Centre.

Purpose

Puckapunyal and District Neighbourhood Centre works with the media in order to

- advocate for the goals of the organisation
- promote the work of the organisation
- inform the public of the details of the organisation
- assist in fundraising for the organisation

In order to ensure that these purposes can be fulfilled, this policy regulates the choice of people entitled to speak for Puckapunyal and District Neighbourhood Centre.

The media themselves have a vital role to play on behalf of the community in holding Puckapunyal and District Neighbourhood Centre to account for its policies and actions. It is important that they have access to officers and members and to background information to assist them in this role.

To balance this, Puckapunyal and District Neighbourhood Centre 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).

It is the responsibility of all staff, committee members and volunteers to ensure that effective media relations are maintained in order to achieve the aims of Puckapunyal

and District Neighbourhood Centre. Naturally, in doing this, certain legal constraints might apply (e.g. not making comment on current court cases, especially those before a jury).

This policy deals with the day-to-day relationship between Puckapunyal and District Neighbourhood Centre and the media and does not address how the organisation will work with the media in a crisis.

Puckapunyal and District Neighbourhood Centre operates on the values of

- **Honesty:** The organisation will never knowingly mislead the public, media or staff on an issue or news story.
- **Transparency:** The organisation 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 Puckapunyal and District Neighbourhood Centre will as far as humanly possible be objective, balanced, accurate, informative and timely.

Puckapunyal and District Neighbourhood Centre should seek to establish and maintain a good and open relationship with the media. It is important that the organisation works with the media to communicate important public information messages about its work and its goals.

However, contact concerning any significant matter in the name of or on behalf of Puckapunyal and District Neighbourhood Centre should only be made by Executive Committee:

- **They have consulted the Communications Officer nominated by the committee**
- **They have the required expertise to speak on the issue under discussion**
- **They have some experience in media relations.**

Where any of these criteria do not apply the Executive Committee are recommended to exercise extreme caution.

Responsibilities

The Executive Committee shall nominate a Communications Officer to coordinate Puckapunyal and District Neighbourhood Centre's relationships with the media.

The Communications Officer and the Executive Committee are all authorised to speak on behalf of Puckapunyal and District Neighbourhood Centre.

Other staff, committee members and volunteers are advised to ensure they are properly briefed and guided by the Communications Officer and the Executive Committee before talking to the media on any issue related to Puckapunyal and District Neighbourhood Centre.

Where information or public comment is requested or required, the Communications Officer shall determine the most appropriate person to respond.

Staff, committee members and other volunteers, and third parties, are encouraged to deliver public presentations that discuss Puckapunyal and District Neighbourhood

Centre's work and its goals, provided that they make it clear where such presentations are or are not authorised by the organisation. All staff, committee members and other volunteers must observe Puckapunyal and District Neighbourhood Centre's Privacy Policy in relation to client records.

Processes

Significant statements on behalf of Puckapunyal and District Neighbourhood Centre shall be made as authorised by the Communications Officer and Executive Committee as detailed above.

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

The Communications Officer is responsible for:

- Producing and updating 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.
- Producing the organisation's annual public relations plan, which shall be consistent with the organisation's business plan and marketing plan.
- Coordinating all media conferences for Puckapunyal and District Neighbourhood Centre. All such conferences shall be videotaped by the organisation.
- Authorising all media releases from Puckapunyal and District Neighbourhood Centre and for mounting them on the organisation's website. All media releases must also be checked and approved by staff in charge of the relevant area before distribution.
- Being involved in any approaches to the media to feature Puckapunyal and District Neighbourhood Centre's work.
- Receiving and coordinating a response to all approaches from all national press, radio or TV stations or specialist press.

All staff, committee members and volunteers are responsible for:

- Providing advice (preferably before the issue becomes public knowledge) to the Communications Officer 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 and Board members to produce a communications plan which will ensure that balanced, timely information is provided to keep all parties informed.
- Ensuring that no photos of clients, patients, employees, or students shall be released to the public via advertising, news media, or internet, or by any other means, without the approval of the Communications Officer, who shall satisfy themselves that the organisation's Privacy Policy has been observed.

- Notifying the Communications Officer of any contact made in the name of Puckapunyal and District Neighbourhood Centre to the media and providing the name of the reporter or writer and the media outlet they represent.

Any significant media contacts with Puckapunyal and District Neighbourhood Centre's staff or members on any issue likely to prove contentious shall, where possible, be videotaped.

Any filming or taping on Puckapunyal and District Neighbourhood Centre's property or of the organisation's proceedings by the media is subject to prior permission of the Communications Officer and Executive Committee.

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 Executive Committee. 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.

Puckapunyal and District Neighbourhood Centre 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.

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.