



# PERMACULTURE TOOWOOMBA INC.

EMPOWERING RESILIENCE

## MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

### Introduction

This policy provides overarching guidance to all Permaculture Toowoomba Inc. media communications activities. The effective dissemination of information and communication is a vital element in linking with our community and creating greater community awareness of Permaculture Toowoomba Inc.'s services, activities, achievements and ethos.

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.

In dealing with the media, Management Committee members, financial members and other volunteers should be conscious that they may be seen as representatives of our association and should therefore avoid making comments or participating in photo opportunities that may damage the long-term reputation of Permaculture Toowoomba Inc.

### Purpose

Permaculture Toowoomba Inc. works with the media in order to:

- advocate for the goals of our association
- promote the work of our association
- inform the public of the details of our association
- increase community awareness of our association ethos

In order to ensure that these purposes can be fulfilled, this policy regulates the choice of people entitled to speak for Permaculture Toowoomba Inc.

The media themselves have a vital role to play on behalf of the community in holding Permaculture Toowoomba Inc. 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, Permaculture Toowoomba Inc. 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 Management Committee members, financial members and other volunteers to ensure that effective media relations are maintained in order to achieve the aims of Permaculture Toowoomba Inc. This policy deals with the day-to-day relationship between Permaculture Toowoomba Inc. and the media.

## Policy

Permaculture Toowoomba Inc. operates on the values of:

- **Honesty:** Our association will never knowingly mislead the public, media or Management Committee members on an issue or news story.
- **Transparency:** Our association 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 Permaculture Toowoomba Inc. will as far as possible be objective, balanced, accurate, informative and timely.

Permaculture Toowoomba Inc. should seek to establish and maintain a good and open relationship with the media. It is important that our association 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 Permaculture Toowoomba Inc. should only be made by Management Committee members, financial members and other volunteers where:

- They have consulted the President or Communications Officer nominated by the Management 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, Management Committee members, financial members and other volunteers are recommended to exercise extreme caution and to seek guidance from the most senior Management Committee member available.

## Duties of Key Personnel

The Management Committee may nominate a Communications Officer to coordinate Permaculture Toowoomba Inc.'s relationships with the media.

The Communications Officer and President are both authorised to speak on behalf of Permaculture Toowoomba Inc.

Other Management Committee members, financial members and other volunteers are advised to ensure they are properly briefed and guided by the Communications Officer or President before talking to the media on any issue related to Permaculture Toowoomba Inc.

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

Management Committee members, financial members, other volunteers, and third parties, are encouraged to deliver public presentations that discuss Permaculture Toowoomba Inc.'s work and its goals, provided that they make it clear where such presentations are or are not authorised by our association.

All Management Committee members, financial members and other volunteers must observe Permaculture Toowoomba Inc.'s Privacy Policy.

## Processes

Significant statements on behalf of Permaculture Toowoomba Inc. shall be made as authorised by the Communications Officer or President as detailed above.

It should always be made absolutely clear whether the views put forward regarding any issue relating to Permaculture Toowoomba Inc. are those of our association or of an individual. At all times consideration should be given as to how the correspondence may affect the reputation of Permaculture Toowoomba Inc.

The Communications Officer or President 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.
- Authorising all media releases from Permaculture Toowoomba Inc., and for uploading them on our association's website. All media releases must also be checked and approved by Management Committee members in charge of the relevant area before distribution.
- Being involved in any approaches to the media to feature Permaculture Toowoomba Inc.'s work or responding to approaches from press, radio or TV stations or specialist press.

All Management Committee members, financial members and other volunteers are responsible for:

- Providing advice (preferably before the issue becomes public knowledge) to the Communications Officer or President on any issues that are likely to be complex or contentious or to be sustained for any length of time.
- Ensuring that no photos shall be released to the public via advertising, news media, or internet, or by any other means, without the approval of the Communications Officer or President, who shall satisfy themselves that our association's Privacy Policy has been observed.
- Notifying the Communications Officer or President of any contact made in the name of Permaculture Toowoomba Inc. to the media and providing the name of the reporter or writer and the media outlet they represent.

Every effort should be made to assist the media in their inquiries. Where media queries involve requests for information that will require substantial work to produce, such work must be authorised by the President.

Permaculture Toowoomba Inc. reserves the right to withhold certain sensitive information such as commercial transactions or governmental negotiations. Any such information will be clearly notified to relevant Management Committee members by the Communications Officer or the President.

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.

**Crisis  
Communication  
Strategy**

Advanced preparation is critical when dealing with a crisis situation.

Occasionally, an unforeseen crisis occurs, and the following steps will be followed:

- Identify a single spokesperson, such as the President and ensure he / she is available to talk to the media and is well briefed on the issue.
- Be prepared and forthright for a response to media enquiry. Ensure all facts and figures are available.
- Develop a response to the media which puts the community first, takes responsibility, is honest and states the 'who, what, when, where and how' of the situation.
- Provide a constant flow of communication to all stakeholders, most importantly financial members.
- Be accessible and familiar with media needs and deadlines.
- Monitor media coverage and correspondence.

**Responsibilities**

It shall be the responsibility of the Management Committee to ensure that these requirements of this policy are complied with.

These policy and procedures shall be reviewed every year by the Management Committee.