

# Communications Policy

Policy Owner	General Manager Marketing and Communications
Effective Date	30 April 2020
Last Revised	22 December 2023
Replaces	N/A
Approved by	Gary Sanderfield, Chief Business Officer

## Purpose

The Marketing and Communications Team (MARCOMMS) is responsible for developing, authorising and distributing external communications on behalf of Disaster Relief Australia (DRA). MARCOMMS must be consulted at the inception of all projects requiring media contact, social media interaction, public relations, marketing, graphic design, community consultation, photography, video production and external websites.

All external communications must comply with the provisions of the attached guidelines.

- Provide direction for DRA volunteers and leadership, on contact with any external stakeholder, media, and issuing of public statements including on social media.
- Clearly identify the official spokesperson or team under business as usual, operational activities and/or emergency conditions.
- Provide direction, talking points, and presentation guidance for volunteers who are approached to speak in public.
- Provide direction for volunteers in the preparation of material for external publications (such as newsletters, propaganda, flyers etc.).
- Provide direction, talking points, and presentation guidance to any volunteer who may be approached to provide publicity for stakeholders or partners.

## Scope

This policy provides direction for all DRA volunteers and leadership when dealing with the media, interacting on social media and making external communications. They specify who is authorised to act as a spokesperson

and the procedures to be followed prior to the release of corporate information.

This does not preclude volunteers from making their own statements which may conflict with DRA's position. However, DRA's corporate resources are to be utilised only for issues which convey information on DRA's official stance, position, decisions and policy.

## **External Communications**

This policy ensures DRA presents clear and factual messages without unnecessary confusion caused by individual perceptions and interpretations. All communications must be prepared and issued in accordance with these guidelines.

DRA is committed to operating transparently with all stakeholders, by providing timely updates about our disaster relief operations throughout and at their completion using social media, newsletters and operation summaries. DRA commits to responding to all requests for information in a timely manner.

## **Integrity**

DRA is committed to the values of partnership, respect and honesty and to the long-term effectiveness of aid and development. As such all public materials are quality checked by the MARCOMMS to ensure accuracy and quality.

The MARCOMMS has the primary responsibility for ensuring that all DRA publications and communications are accurate, up-to-date, accessible, respectful and compliant with DRA policies. The MARCOMMS also ensures that all public communications comply with appropriate State and Federal laws, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) requirements, and the ACFID Code of Conduct and Fundraising Charter.

DRA ensures that the use of images and messages portraying primary stakeholders is appropriate, accurate and consensual. Images used by DRA of women and men, boys and girls in their communications will respect the dignity, values, history, religion and culture of the people portrayed. Children will be portrayed positively as part of their community. All volunteers and project partners must seek the appropriate permission and consent of primary stakeholders or their adult guardians. When collecting images, taking photos and documenting stories in the field. The DRA

Media/Photographic Release will be used in such instances unless verbal permission is deemed more suitable. In these situations, advice should be sought from project partners on the appropriate permissions and on any potential risks related to using images and case studies.

## **Operational Guidelines**

Communication and publicity stems from five principal sources, as a result of:

- opportunities generated by MARCOMMS
- requests from the Office of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
- decisions reached at leadership meetings
- requests from a wide range of media outlets
- interactions on social media

## **OFFICIAL SPOKESPERSON**

Only an official spokesperson is authorised to make statements on DRA's behalf.

### **Chief Executive Officer**

The CEO is the official spokesperson for DRA on all issues. As the CEO represents the whole organisation, they are often requested to comment in addition to, or instead of, the relevant spokesperson. The CEO may delegate this authority to a DRA representative.

### **General Manager, Marketing and Communications**

In the absence of the CEO or at the request of the CEO, the General Manager Marketing and Communications may be the official spokesperson.

### **Marketing and Communications Team**

A member of the MARCOMMS may act as spokesperson on the relevant area of responsibility. The preferred spokesperson will be the National Partnerships and Media Liaison. MARCOMMS will focus on preparing key messages and press releases to be issued (if required) relevant to the event.

### **Local Agent/Public Relations Officer**

In the event of an operation, Service Project or similar event, a local spokesperson or Public Relations Officer (PRO) may be allocated as the

spokesperson. This person will be supported by the MARCOMMS for the preparation and dissemination of key messaging, press releases and other relevant materials.

## **External Communication Policy Standards**

If an event or Operation is likely to attract media interest, key messages/talking points and a potential press release will be prepared. If the spokesperson intends to publicly speak at an event, they will, where practical, advise the MARCOMMS before undertaking the interview. This is not always possible as the media often ask questions without notice on a range of topics and may result in key messages or talking points having to be made available immediately after an interview has occurred.

## **Critical Incidents**

In the event of a critical incident, all communications must be approved by the CEO or their direct delegate.

## **Clarifications**

Where there is any doubt as to the official spokesperson, or the information to be released, the matter shall be referred to the General Marketing and Communications.

The General Manager Marketing and Communications, in consultation with the National Communications Manager, is the ultimate arbiter in relation to the handling of media issues.

## **Attribution**

A “DRA spokesperson” should be attributed in external communications where there is no other official spokesperson quoted.

The MARCOMMS may issue statements on behalf of the CEO, and as an official spokesperson of the CEO at the direction of the CEO.

## **Approval Process**

External communications must be approved by MARCOMMS, or the official DRA spokesperson.

## **Confidentiality**

DRA operations and associated information are public, and available to the media.

## **Meeting Propriety**

Taking images, videoing, or recording audio on operations or DRA events is only permitted in line with the relevant policies, as approved by the National Communications Manager.

## **Contact Information**

External communications promoting DRA initiatives must feature official contact phone numbers, website addresses and email addresses.

## **Media**

It is the responsibility of MARCOMMS to respond to media inquiries about DRA decisions and initiatives. The General Manager Marketing and Communications will be made aware of all media inquiries. The MARCOMMS should assist, in a timely manner and mindful of deadlines in the preparation of responses including through research and technical advice. MARCOMMS should give priority to proactive media opportunities that protect and enhance DRA's reputation.

## **Media enquiries to (Non-approved) Volunteers**

Without prior approval of the National Communications Manager and/or General Manager Marketing and Communications, Communication and Marketing, CEO, Chief Operating Officer (COO) or National Partnerships and Media Liaison, Volunteers must decline media opportunities.

If approval is provided, Volunteers can only give answers of fact and must not offer comments or opinions. The approved spokesperson, given the role, can provide greater detail when publicly discussing matters under his/her administration.

## **Proactive Media Opportunities**

MARCOMMS is responsible for developing and executing newsworthy media opportunities to reflect DRA priorities, and in anticipation of significant DRA decisions and projects.

Proactive media opportunities should be organised to ensure the participation of the approved spokesperson. Disaster Relief Team (DRT) Managers or Mission Commander's (MC) will be extended an invitation to attend media events held within their respective areas. Equally, approved spokespersons should as a courtesy advise MARCOMMS of any media interviews they are undertaking. Volunteers are encouraged to contact MARCOMMS with items they believe merit media coverage and are consistent with DRA's priorities.

## **Volunteers Communications**

External communications prepared by any member to be issued by or published at any cost whatsoever to DRA must be in accordance with DRA policies and values and not:

- bring the organisation of DRA, DRA's leadership team, or Volunteers into disrepute
- defame any individual or group
- contain information which is knowingly false or misleading
- divulge confidential information, as determined by DRA
- contain direct personal promotion, for example; election campaign material
- it is the responsibility of the author or authors of these materials to ensure accuracy, equity and fairness, and comply with legislation and DRA requirements

DRA will not tolerate Volunteers making statements about other ACFID Volunteers with the intent of causing reputational damage, or an advantage to DRA.

Volunteers are to manage their own social media platforms. MARCOMMS has no role in the creation or management of any of these sites. Volunteers should be aware that inappropriate use of the social media could be deemed inappropriate behaviour. If Volunteers are identified on their personal social media platforms as a DRA Member, they need to take appropriate steps to ensure they are always representing DRA appropriately.

MARCOMMS controls on behalf of the organisation, including the official websites, Twitter, Facebook and other sites published at a cost to DRA. This includes written, photographic and video content.

## Representing Disaster Relief Australia

DRA Volunteers must secure approval from the MARCOMMS or relevant General Manager Marketing and Communications before accepting speaking engagements. Where applicable, all presentations, videos, etc. must also be provided to the MARCOMMS for approval. This policy does not extend to day-to-day activities such as presenting to community groups as part of DRA's on-going programming.

If a presentation is accepted by a member, it must be made very clear to the audience that the comments are not related to the individual's views or beliefs. Refer to the DRA Code of Conduct for further information.

## Stakeholder and Partner Publicity

DRA Volunteers must abide by the following guidelines in relation to a stakeholders or partners wishing to obtain publicity from the fact that DRA is using their products or services:

- Volunteers must refer all requests for publicity to the MARCOMMS. This includes case studies and all external communications
- Volunteers should not offer testimonials for stakeholders or partners' products. This means that no photographs of Volunteers (identified either by logo, name or position title) are to appear in any medium, and no member is to be quoted in any stakeholders or partners story, 'case study' or advertisement relating to a product or service. The CEO, or COO, or General Manager Marketing and Communications may approve an exception, in liaison with MARCOMMS
- Stakeholders and partners may issue media statements about DRA using their product or service, but these must be written in the third person only. Any media statement written by a stakeholder or partner mentioning DRA must be approved by the MARCOMMS

## Resources

[ACFID Fundraising Policy](#)

## Version History

This procedure is to be reviewed every 2 years, unless required earlier due to a significant incident, changes in national guidelines, legislation or by third party request.

Version	Date	Author	Summary of Changes
1	30 Apr 2020		Document Creation
2	14 July 2020		General updates
3	22 Dec 2023	Cassandra Dunlop	General updates