



NEWS MEDIA POLICY

Date of Issue	Review Date
1 April 2018	1 April 2019
1 April 2019	1 April 2020
29 June 2020	30 June 2021

Purpose

This policy outlines the principles underpinning the Pike River Recovery Agency (the Agency) approach to news media engagement. It should be read in conjunction with the [Media Guidelines](#) which have been set up for the news media.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff, temporary or permanent, employed or engaged by the Agency on any basis in any country. This policy applies to all interactions with news media through various approved channels, including Social Media channels. For information about the administration and operation of the Agency social media channels, please refer to the [Social Media Policy](#).

Help

Any news media query or engagement must be directed to the Principal External Relations Advisor – Communication, who is the first point of contact for all news media enquiries. Contact at media@pikeriverrecovery.govt.nz and 021 872 810.

Definitions

News Media – News media should be interpreted as any individual or organisation that meet the following criteria;

- A significant element of their publishing activities involves the generation and/or aggregation of news, information and opinion of current value.
- They disseminate this information to a public audience. Dissemination can be by print, electronic or digital means.

Social media – means websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.

Policy statements

Relationship with the news media:

- The news media is a key stakeholder for the Agency and has a legitimate interest in its activities.
- The news media also plays a critical role in the Agency communicating with the public and other stakeholders. Being able to communicate our story through the news media helps the public to better understand what the Agency does.
- The news media provides scrutiny and supports transparency and accountability of our activities.
- The news media can enhance or detract from the Agency's reputation (and that of our Minister).



- The Agency is committed to being accessible, transparent, knowledgeable and credible in its interactions with the news media. We want to manage our engagement with the media constructively, promptly, and professionally.

Media engagement

- The Principal External Relations Advisor - Communication is the first point of contact for the news media in reactive and proactive situations. This ensures the appropriate spokespeople are utilised, communications are coordinated and approved signoffs achieved.
- Responses to news media inquiries should be given priority and should be as prompt as reasonably practicable, taking into consideration complexity, reputational risk, confidentiality concerns and the operating environment of 'no surprises' with Ministers.
- The Principal External Relations Advisor - Communication will inform relevant managers and staff and keep them up-to-date with follow-up news media questions or ongoing requests.
- In some instances, it will be more appropriate to treat a news media request as either an Official Information Act or Privacy Act request.
- Agency staff have the right to interact with the news media as private individuals, as long as doing so does not interfere with their official duties, or negatively reflect on the standing or integrity of the Agency (see the [State Services Code of Conduct](#)).
- Where inaccuracies are published, broadcast or posted, the Principal External Relations Advisor – Communication will discuss courses of action with the CE, COO and/or COS and request appropriate follow-up action from the respective media. This may include a request to remove reference to all or part of a story; retract reference to the inaccuracies; or meet with Agency staff to better understand issues.

Spokespeople

- The Agency will name spokespeople in the interests of transparency, unless there is a good reason not to.
- In most instances, the spokesperson for the Agency will be the Chief Executive.
- In most instances, the spokesperson for technical aspects of the Agency's work, to do with operational matters for the Pike River Mine, will be the Chief Operating Officer.
- The Principal External Relations Advisor – Communication will work with managers to determine designated or delegated Agency spokespeople who can engage with news media. Only designated or delegated spokespeople are authorised to engage with news media.
- When acting as an Agency spokesperson, staff must not express personal views to news media. Staff must maintain public service neutrality at all times. (See the [Agency Code of Conduct](#)). This does not preclude relevant staff whose role it is to provide professional opinion (e.g. the Chief Operating Officer) providing views to news media in that capacity.

Sign-offs

- Sign-off on communications with news media must be sought from the relevant manager or someone they have delegated this responsibility to. Responses are shared with the Agency management team, FRG and Minister's office. Where appropriate, the Agency will share responses with NZ Police and other stakeholders (DOC etc).

Key Accountabilities and Responsibilities

To ensure that the Agency manages engagement with news media effectively, the following accountabilities and responsibilities are in place:



- Spokespeople will be designated by the relevant manager in consultation with the Principal External Relations Advisor – Communication, either on an ongoing or one-off basis, depending on the issue.
- The Principal External Relations Advisor – Communication will work with the relevant staff in the development of communications material.
- Engagement with news media (reactive and proactive) will be facilitated via the Principal External Relations Advisor – Communication
- Agency staff are able to speak to the news media within the boundaries of discussing their specific areas of responsibility.
- All managers are responsible for ensuring this policy is adhered to.
- A breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action, depending on the level of the breach.

Role	Description of Responsibility
Chief Executive	Responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval of this policy and procedures. • The Agency meeting its obligations under this policy.
Management Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for reviewing and endorsing this policy and associated procedures, or recommending changes to the policy. • Embedding this policy in their teams. • Ensuring their teams are compliant with this policy. • Assist in developing key messages in conjunction with Principal External Relations Advisor – Communication as required. • Sign off responses to news media and escalate requests or responses to the Chief Executive as appropriate.
Policy owner	Responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring the policy is working effectively through regular monitoring and reporting of compliance to the policy. • Promoting awareness of this policy, in particular during orientation for new staff, during election periods and at times of reputational sensitivity. • Manages all news media enquiries and liaises with the Agency on an appropriate response/engagement. • Monitors, records and analyses news media interactions. • Assists and advises the Agency on news media engagement / strategies / tactics. • Provides advice to managers (or delegates) on appropriateness of staff to be Agency spokespeople. • Provides advice or assistance with Official Information Act or Privacy Act requests as appropriate. • Liaises with Minister’s office as appropriate. • Liaises with media managers of other stakeholders as appropriate.
Designated spokespeople	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are adequately prepared/briefed to engage with news media. • Adhere to agreed messages. • Maintain public service neutrality at all times. • Are constructive, prompt and professional in engagements with news media.



Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Refer all news media requests to the Principal External Relations Advisor – Communication, media@pikeriverrecovery.govt.nz or 021 872 810.• Advise their managers that they have received a news media request or have been approached by news media.
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Mandatory Procedures

- Media Guidelines

Related Agency policies and documents

- Official Information Act Requests Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Record Management Policy
- Media Onsite Protocols (June 2020)
- Agency Strategic Communications Plan

Relevant legislation and regulations

- Official Information Act 1982
- Privacy Act 1993
- Copyright Act 1994
- Public Records Act 2005

Measures of success

The Principal External Relations Advisor – Communication regularly monitors and evaluates how well the news media policy is working. The measures of success are that:

- News media queries are given priority and receipt is acknowledged on the same day if received between 9am and 5pm on business days and 10am and 5pm on weekends and public holidays. If outside of this then acknowledgement will be on the next business day.
- News media queries are responded to as quickly as reasonably practicable and information provided is accurate and credible.
- Only designated spokespeople engage with the news media, including staff within their areas of responsibility.
- There is appropriate consultation in the Agency before a news media response is provided.
- All information released to the news media is signed-off by the person with the relevant authorisation.
- Agency spokespeople do not express personal views.
- Ministers are kept informed under the 'no surprises' policy.
- An accurate and comprehensive news media log is maintained.
- The Agency has a strong relationship with news media and is seen as a credible and responsive organisation [anecdotal feedback]
- The FRG are kept informed as per the Agency's Partnership Agreement.

Compliance Management

Compliance management process

Compliance management tools and processes will be used to minimise the risk of breaches



of this policy. These will include:

- Monitoring of compliance with required processes, procedures or guidelines set out in the mandatory procedures manuals.
- Tools such as checklists or training sessions to help inform staff and managers of their obligations.
- Daily monitoring of Agency news media engagement performance (including an environmental scan and news media log) to ensure compliance.
- Follow up and analysis of non-compliance, with support provided to ensure future compliance.

Compliance reporting and information

Compliance information regarding this policy will be provided to the Chief of Staff six monthly.

Training and Communication

To ensure designated spokespeople have the required competencies to engage with the news media, and that the policy is effectively communicated across the Agency, the Principal External Relations Advisor – Communication will:

- Organise news media training where it is considered there is a need; this includes for new spokespeople or in areas where there is heightened public interest.
- Remind staff of the policy by communicating it through internal channels.
- Promote the policy in interactions with staff across the Agency.
- Publish the News Media Policy on the policy page of the Intranet and in MAKO (Pike River Recovery Agency/ Policy and Procedure <http://mako.wd.govt.nz/otcs/lisapi.dll/link/79689531>).