

Communication Protocols

1. Policy Objectives

- 1.1 The objective of this Policy is to ensure clarity regarding communication protocols for Directors and Councillors of AgForce. This policy will assist AgForce to ensure that:
- (a) Directors and Councillors are aware of their pathways for communication within AgForce;
 - (b) Communications, both internally and externally, by the Directors and Councillors, are undertaken in the best interests of AgForce.
- 1.2 This policy addresses:
- (a) Communication pathways
 - (b) Nature and tone of communication
 - (c) Representing AgForce in the media
 - (d) Use of social media
 - (e) Communication during election periods
- 1.3 For the purpose of this Policy:
- “Director”** means a Director of AgForce (General President, Regional Director, Commodity President, Independent Director).
- “Councillor”** means a Regional President, Regional Councillor or Regional Commodity Councillor as set out in the Constitution.

2. Policy

Communication pathways

- 2.1 At all times, the Directors are required to work only through the General President or the CEO.
- 2.2 At all times, Councillors are required to work only through their relevant President (Regional or Commodity) or the CEO.
- 2.3 To ensure lines of authority and separation of powers are clear, Directors and Councillors requests for staff and corporate information should be directed through the CEO, notifying the General President where applicable. This is subject to paragraph 2.5.
- 2.4 Equally, any request from staff to a Director for advice or assistance in an operational matter should be referred to the CEO for action.
- 2.5 It is recognised that Regional Presidents and Councillors and Commodity Presidents engage directly and often with the relevant regional staff and/or commodity staff. In this regard and specifically:
- (a) communication from Councillors to staff regarding functions of a region/ commodity, meetings and events must be made through the relevant President.

- (b) Any communication relevant to regions or commodity requiring resourcing decisions, activities or policy outside of that agreed by the Board must come through the CEO, and not directly with staff.
- 2.6 Any breakdown in these lines of communication should be addressed directly with the General President and the CEO.

Nature and tone of communication

- 2.7 Directors and Councillors must not engage in conduct or communications that is likely to bring discredit upon AgForce and must remain professional in their manner and tone at all times when considering and addressing AgForce matters, as reflected in the Code of Conduct policy.
- 2.8 Directors and Councillors should foster respect, trust, mutual support, openness and honesty in their communication with Directors, Councillors and staff.
- 2.9 Directors and Councillors should foster strong professional relationships with AgForce members and stakeholders whilst recognising the protocols regarding 'spokespersons' set out below.

Representing AgForce in the media

- 2.10 Representation of AgForce Queensland in the media is a key to its success and must be managed appropriately. As a Director or Councillor, you are deemed by others to be an AgForce spokesperson or 'representative' and may be contacted by journalists and media outlets for comment on various issues.
- 2.11 As such, as an AgForce spokesperson, anything said may be quoted as AgForce policy. Accordingly, this protocol is based on the premise that there is no such thing as 'off the record'.
- 2.12 All queries for comment in the media should be directed to the AgForce Media and Communications Team to decide who is the best spokesperson for the query and to provide talking points. This is the case as:
 - (a) Even if a Director or Councillor has been contacted as a 'landholder' or as a 'producer' they are still speaking as an AgForce representative so the query will still need to be directed to the AgForce Media and Communications team. This will ensure that messages leaving the company are consistent and authorised and in doing so, the potential for misrepresentation and misunderstanding is greatly minimised.
 - (b) If a Director or Councillor receives a call from an external body, courteously ask them for their contact details, the nature of their enquiry and advise them that the most appropriate spokesperson on this matter will be provided to them in consultation with the Media and Communications Team.
 - (c) Journalists and media representatives are trained professionals; it is their job to enquire on behalf of the general public about topics which may be controversial or of interest. Always assume that a journalist is on duty, regardless of any assurances, whatever a representative say's or does could be used as part of a story or report. This also includes the instance of writing a letter to the editor as a member of the public or as a landholder.

- 2.13 Breach of this protocol, ie. making representation on behalf of AgForce when not the most relevant spokesperson and/or have not notified the relevant AgForce staff will result in reprimand and action through the General President.

Social media

- 2.14 Directors and Councillors of AgForce are considered public figures. This means that anything on a Director or Councillors social media accounts can be used in the media or by various stakeholders as AgForce policy or representation.
- 2.15 There is no longer a line between personal and public profiles, even a disclaimer is not legally indemnifying.
- 2.16 It is recommended that Directors and Councillors think very carefully before posting on social media and online, this includes commenting on news article and in closed Facebook groups etc.
- 2.17 It is important that our representative's personal opinions do not bring AgForce's brand into disrepute.
- 2.18 AgForce goes by the 3 Rs of Social Media Engagement rule. This is designed to protect the interests of the company. In brief, the 3 Rs ask that when engaging in social media, representative's be clear that what you post reflects AgForce's position and to remember that you are representing AgForce, you take responsibility for ensuring that any references to AgForce are factually correct and accurate and do not breach confidentiality requirements, and that representatives show respect for the individuals and communities with which they interact.
- 2.19 Personal social media accounts must not make independent policy/official statements without the prior approval of the AgForce Media and Communications Team.
- 2.20 The AgForce social media accounts will be used for advocacy and communication to the wider public and Directors and Councillors are allowed, and encouraged, to share these posts through their networks. Any Directors and Councillors found to be using social media for their own lobbying that is not AgForce policy or brings the brand into disrepute will result potential breaches of their duties and will be addressed and actioned through the General President.

During election periods

- 2.21 AgForce wishes to ensure that it does not promote, nor be perceived to promote, the election or re-election prospects of any Director or Councillor. Therefore, the use of AgForce resources for re-election purposes is unacceptable.
- 2.22 AgForce recognises the risk that communications by Directors or Councillors, in their capacities as spokespersons for AgForce, during the election period could result in the Director or Councillor achieving electoral advantage at AgForce's expense.
- 2.23 The election period commences on the day when nominations close to the period when the results of the election are declared.
- 2.24 AgForce therefore requires that members nominated for election or re-election as a Director, Regional president, Commodity President, Regional Councillor or Regional Commodity Councillor may not:

- (a) use AgForce resources for campaigning or promotional purposes (AgForce resources includes but is not limited to staff, internet, email, telephones, stationary, photocopiers and data lists); and
 - (b) represent AgForce in the media in any form.
- 2.25 During the election period, the CEO will act as the primary media spokesperson for AgForce. Should matters require urgent comment by a Director or Councillor, all enquiries should be directed to the CEO who will address the matter and liaise, if required with the full board for decision.

3. Policy Review

- 3.1 This Policy will be reviewed and, if appropriate, updated by the Board every year.

Revision Schedule

Version	Date	Reason	Author	Approved
1.0	Nov 2016	Created	CEO/Board	
1.1	Feb 2017	Approved	CEO/Board	20/2/2017