

## **MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY**

**Approved by Board: 18 June 2019**

**Next review date: June 2020**

**Managed on behalf of the CEO and Board by:  
Deputy Chief Executive Officer**

**\*Revisions to this version are identified on the last page**

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### **1. Purpose of this Policy**

The purpose of this policy is to establish a framework for developing and maintaining effective working relationships with the media. Interplast Australia & New Zealand (Interplast) seeks to ensure clear, consistent and accurate communications with the public and to protect the interests of Interplast by minimising the risk of misrepresentation. Local, state, national and international media are important stakeholders in supporting the achievement of Interplast's strategic objectives.

This policy is closely associated with Interplast's Case Study and Photography Policy and Guide, the Child Protection Policy and Privacy Policy and should be read in conjunction with these policies.

### **2. Scope of the Policy**

This policy applies to the following:

- Interplast staff members, and consultants;
- Interplast volunteers<sup>1</sup>;
- Interplast Board of Directors and Committee members;
- Observers/visitors accompanying an Interplast activity.

### **3. Definitions**

**Media:** Communication channels through which information about Interplast and its work are disseminated. Media includes a range of broadcast channels such as newspapers, magazines, TV, radio, billboards, direct mail, telephone, fax, social media channels and internet. This includes media in Australia and New Zealand and media in countries in the Asia Pacific region where Interplast conducts its activities.

**Media relations** cover the relationships between Interplast and the various media organisations that own these different forms of media.

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<sup>1</sup> Volunteers include medical volunteers (surgeons, anaesthetists, nurses and allied therapists) undertaking an activity overseas or participating in professional development in their own country or overseas and non-medical volunteers, such as those in administrative, promotional or fundraising roles.

**Crisis:** A major unplanned event that threatens to harm Interplast's operations, programs and/or its stakeholders, and may include potential negative publicity and damage to Interplast's reputation.

**Media crisis management:** A process of identifying, assessing, understanding and managing a serious media issue or risk to Interplast and its reputation and to take considered, swift action to recover from the crisis and minimise the damage caused.

#### **4. Legislative Framework and Standards**

As a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct, Interplast is committed to meeting the standards within that Code that relates to truthful communication (Quality Principle 6 Communication; Commitment 1) and respect and understanding for NGOs (Quality Principle 5 Collaboration; Commitment 1). These are outlined in more detail in the policy statement below.

#### **5. Policy Statement**

Interplast works with the media in order to:

- advocate for the goals of Interplast;
- educate and inform the public about the development philosophy and activities of Interplast and its partners by promoting the work and results achieved; and
- assist in raising the public profile of, and in fundraising for Interplast.

Interplast's relationship with the media is grounded in the following principles:

- *Honesty and integrity:* Interplast will strive to ensure that information provided to the media is accurate, accessible and timely. Interplast will never knowingly mislead the public, media or staff on an issue or news story.
- *Transparency:* Interplast will promote openness and accessibility in its dealings with the media, while complying with the law and maintaining confidentiality where appropriate.
- *Clarity:* All communications with the media targeted at the Australian and New Zealand public will be in plain English. Communications with local in-country media throughout the Asia Pacific region will be in the local language, where appropriate and practicable.
- *Reflecting values:* All communications with the media will be consistent with Interplast's organisational values and those in the ACFID Code of Conduct.
- *Attribution:* All communications in general, and with the media, should accurately portray the role and contribution of Interplast and its partners and program donors.
- *Dignified portrayal of local in-country partners and beneficiaries:* Interplast will strive to ensure its communications with the media about local in-country program partners and beneficiaries always respects their dignity, values, history, religion, culture, personal agency and voice. For all stories, photos

and films of direct beneficiaries and others that are disseminated to the media, informed consent must first be obtained and noted from the individuals portrayed, in line with Interplast's Case Study and Photography Policy.

- *Confidentiality*: Personal or contact details of staff, partners, direct beneficiaries, donors, spokespeople or Board members will not be provided to the media without prior consent, in line with Interplast's Privacy Policy. In particular, Interplast must maintain the confidentiality of beneficiaries with sensitive injuries (e.g. acid burns) in order to protect the future safety of those vulnerable individuals.
- *Balance*: Information provided to the media by Interplast will be, to the best of Interplast's knowledge and belief, objective, balanced and accurate.
- *Speaking from evidence and expertise*: Interplast spokespeople will only discuss with the media what is in their area of expertise. They will not speculate on matters where they do not have expertise or evidence and will instead help reporters, where possible, by providing them with reliable sources who do have the required expertise.
- *Respect for other NGOs*: Interplast will ensure that all communications with the media is respectful of other NGOs and avoids denigrating other agencies or making inaccurate or misleading statements in order to create an organisational advantage.

## 6. Policy in Practice

This policy will be embedded within Interplast's organisational culture and practices, consistent with the following guidelines:

### a) Responsibilities for Day-to-Day Media Relations

#### CEO

The CEO is ultimately responsible for approving all external content for media including press releases, media statements, and letters to the editor. The CEO will typically be the official spokesperson and will coordinate contact with the media through the Communications Manager or other relevant person.

Where issues which are potentially damaging raised with Interplast require a public comment, the CEO will escalate these issues to the Board, via the President and their nominee, for Board input and approval of the response in line with Interplast's Delegation Policy.

#### Board

In line with Interplast's Delegation Policy, the Board and CEO will approve responses to issues requiring public comment from Interplast. Depending on the sensitivity of the issue, the President of the Board, or their nominee, will identify the most appropriate person to respond on behalf of Interplast, having obtained a recommendation from the Chief Executive Officer.

### Communications Manager

The Communications Manager will cultivate relationships with journalists, field and filter media enquiries and keep media contact records. Other responsibilities include drafting or coordination of press releases and statements and coordination of media interviews, media kits and background material, liaison with appropriate staff to coordinate responses to media issues and alerting the CEO as soon as possible to potentially sensitive or controversial media issues relevant to the organisation.

The Communications Manager will maintain an Approved Spokesperson List (Appendix 1) and coordinate media training for all those on the list and others (who may not be Interplast spokespeople but who do require a good understanding of the media in order to perform their roles effectively).

The Communications Manager will work with the CEO to respond accurately and promptly to all media issues as they arise.

### Interplast Staff

Interplast staff will not initiate media contact or respond directly to media enquiries. Where possible, staff will advise the Communications Manager or CEO of likely events, announcements or issues that may attract media interest and ensure information provided to the Communications Manager is accurate.

All staff will report emerging issues of potential media and public sensitivity relating to Interplast to the immediate attention of the Communications Manager, as soon as they become aware of them.

Programs staff, in consultation with the Communications Manager, will send press releases and advertisements, using annually updated and approved templates, about visiting volunteer teams to their in-country contacts. Where appropriate these will be provided in the local language(s). Program staff will also ensure that the Volunteer Team Manual includes a copy of the relevant press release and advertisements together with Interplast fact sheets and key messages. These key messages can be used by volunteer team leaders when liaising with in-country stakeholders including media representatives.

### Volunteers

Interplast program volunteers will not initiate media contact or respond directly to media enquiries about Interplast's work in their country of origin or when participating on an Interplast program

All volunteers will report emerging issues of potential media and public sensitivity relating to Interplast to the immediate attention of their nominated Program Activities Coordinator as soon as they become aware of them., who will in turn advise the Communications Manager and/or Chief Executive Officer where sensitive in nature.

When participating in program activities, volunteers may be approached by in-country media to discuss the work they are doing with Interplast. In this situation, Interplast volunteer team leaders will be the spokepeople for Interplast and will ensure their communications are as accurate and respectful of their local partner and beneficiaries as possible, consistent with the approved Interplast fact sheet and key messages, and with this policy. Other members of the volunteer team will not speak with the media, unless specifically authorised to do so by the volunteer team leader. Any pre-arranged in-country media engagements should be discussed and approved by the Communications Manager and CEO, during the pre-departure planning and briefing process.

**b) General Staff Contacted by Media**

If staff are contacted directly by a journalist, they will request the journalist's name, contact details and media agency information,

This information should be passed promptly to the Communications Manager and the journalist told that this will happen.

The Communications Manager will obtain further details about the, and publication or program deadline (date and time), topic, and what they are requesting – for example, an attributable quote, statement or background briefing. The Communications Manager is responsible for coordinating Interplast's media response. All media enquiries and Interplast's responses are to be logged by the Communications Manager.

**c) Media Spokespeople**

All media enquiries should be referred to the Communications Manager immediately, and calls returned as soon as possible. If the enquiry is not within Interplast's scope of operations and expertise, Interplast will help reporters, where possible, by referring them to reliable sources/organisations who do have the required expertise.

An agreed spokesperson, typically the CEO or Board Chair, (nominated by the CEO from the Approved List of Interplast Spokespeople) will speak for Interplast in relation to a specific media story or incident. The agreed spokesperson will be briefed prior to interview and debriefed afterwards. Journalists are to be treated respectfully and courteously at all times.

**d) Press Releases**

All press releases must be issued through the Communications Manager and approved by the CEO. If staff members require the release of information to the media, they will contact the Communications Manager who will assist in drafting a press release or statement for approval by the CEO.

Program Coordinators may issue press releases relating to program activities without input from the Communications Manager, providing it is using a pre-approved template and with the knowledge of the Programs Manager.

Media responses should always be 'on the record'. They will be truthful and accurate, and not include speculation, guesswork or personal opinion. They will not include disparaging comments about other organisations or individuals.

**e) Working with the Media During a Crisis**

When an issue becomes a crisis (as defined in Section 2 of this policy), the CEO will promptly convene a Crisis Management Team (CMT) consisting of the CEO, Deputy CEO, Communications Manager and any other staff members or volunteers involved in the matter, or who have relevant expertise. The role of the CMT is to provide a structure to regain as much control over the event as quickly as possible.

The CEO will also escalate the matter to the Board via the President or their nominee, for their information and will seek their approval for all draft responses when a public comment is sought from Interplast. The CEO will keep the Board updated as a crisis unfolds and seek their input and assistance as required.

In the quest for transparency and clarity, Interplast's media response will always be an approved press release. Individual interviews may also be granted after careful consideration of the story and the intent of the media.

Crisis Management Procedures

In responding to any negative publication, typically as part of a larger crisis, Interplast will follow the crisis management guidelines outlined below:

1. CEO to establish a CMT, and Communications Manager to assist by regular, possibly daily, meetings.
2. CEO to notify and brief the Board on the matter and take direction from the Board where applicable.
3. CEO to nominate a media spokesperson for this specific matter (from the Approved List of Interplast Spokespeople – Appendix 1).
4. Communications Manager and CEO to advise all staff verbally and via e-mail about the nature of the crisis, how it is being managed and how they should respond to any queries from the media or other external groups/individuals.
5. Communications Manager to become the first point of contact for all incoming media phone calls and provide support to the CEO and any other nominated spokespeople.
6. Communications Manager, with the CEO/CMT to develop a media strategy with the CMT and approved by the CEO, that includes:
  - a) key messages and a Q&A, that is then circulated/used;
  - b) media training/briefings for nominated spokesperson in relation to this specific incident;

- c) an accurate and detailed timeline of events leading up to the crisis, which is updated on a daily basis throughout the crisis;
  - d) a media incident contact sheet for all internal stakeholders which includes names, role in relation to the incident, and contact details; and
  - e) press releases approved by the CEO.
7. Communications Manager to develop and circulate a succinct report, including lessons learned, at the end of the incident.
  8. Communications Manager and CEO to coordinate a debrief with CMT, staff and other stakeholders, at the end of the incident.

## **7. Monitoring and Review of Policy**

This policy will be monitored and reviewed in line with the process outlined in the Policy Framework. The Deputy Chief Executive Officer is accountable to the CEO and Board for managing and maintaining this policy.

Where compliance issues are identified, the Communications Manager will work with staff and other relevant stakeholders to address these issues promptly.

Any updates and revisions to this policy must be endorsed by the CEO before being submitted to the Interplast Board for its approval. Policy changes will be reflected, as necessary in updated operational manuals.