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| Title: Media and Communications Policy | |

Media and Communications Policy

Background

Despite the phenomenal impact of social media across all aspects of daily life, Burnet Institute also continues to promote and maximise the potential of traditional media outlets to reach new and existing audiences. Social media has fundamentally changed the way we communicate and engage with supporters of Burnet. However, many of Burnet's long-term donors, stakeholders and general public still access traditional media each day, albeit often online.

Purpose

Burnet Institute recognises the important impact digital and print media plays in building our brand, and promoting our research and public health activities. We encourage all staff to be actively involved in promoting the Institute's programs and projects through a range of communication channels, including traditional electronic media, print, digital, and social media. Burnet Institute is also committed to providing accurate, timely and accessible information about the organisation, its objectives and its activities. This information is promoted and shared for the general public across multiple media platforms in Australia and internationally. Burnet is committed to communicating our work whilst always respecting the dignity of recipient communities.

Scope

Accuracy, timeliness and accessibility of information

All information released by Burnet Institute must be accurate, placed in context, timely, and available across multiple media channels as appropriate to the communication. All publicly released material must have approval by either the Director and CEO, Deputy Director, or Head, Communications. In developing the communications, the process must involve checking by at least three people to ensure its accuracy and context, and minimising any errors. Any communications that involves a DFAT-funded project or activity must have formal approval from DFAT Communications. All communications using story telling or imagery must be checked to ensure it meets Burnet Institute's Brand Guidelines and Story and Photo Guidelines.

Definitions

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Senior Management

A collective term for Burnet's Executive, Program Directors, Heads of Disciplines and Head of International Operations or Executives who represent the employer and who have high level responsibility for the conduct of Burnet's functions.

People Responsibility

A collective term for those who have the day-to-day responsibility for employees' workplace activities and/or is the person in control and management of the workplace. This definition includes those who are responsible for the allocation of tasks to staff, honours and postgraduate students, and the oversight of laboratory or workshop tasks, field trips, contractors and volunteers.

Employee

Is any person employed under a contract of employment or contract of training, whether the contract is express or implied, oral or written. The definition includes, but is not limited to:

- (a) persons employed by Burnet (full-time, part-time or casual);
- (b) persons employed on research grants; and
- (c) postgraduate students and post-doctoral fellows (when they are employed part-time to perform work such as teaching or research assistant)

Contractors

Includes principal consultants, contractors and their sub-contractors, who may be engaged by Burnet for a variety of purposes including construction, building and facilities maintenance and repair, communication installations, deliveries and project work.

Policy statement/overview

1. Media - 1st point of contact - Communications Team

The Communications Team should be the first point of contact by media representatives. Any media enquiries through switchboard or directly to staff members should be referred to a team member in order to solicit a timely and accurate response. The Communications Team is your direct support for all media enquiries and also for pitching your research directly to media outlets.

2. Spokespersons

The Director and CEO, Professor Brendan Crabb AC is Burnet Institute's principal spokesperson for the Institute on matters of policy, official announcements or key issues of an official nature. At times, he may delegate this role to an appropriate person, depending on the issue. Burnet staff are encouraged to share their expertise with media on matters within their area of qualification and expertise. However, all initial contact should come through the Communications Team in the first instance. As Burnet works with many partner organisations, it is important to ensure that the reputation and position of these organisations is also recognised and respected. If issues are likely to impact on these organisations, contact with the relevant person within that organisation must be made prior to communicating to the media. Burnet may also be involved in specific contractual arrangements that limit our ability to discuss certain activities with media outlets. Examples include Australian Aid, ACFID Members, or partner organisations such as World Vision.

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3. Media access to Burnet Institute

Media representatives are permitted access to the Institute. However, representatives are to be accompanied by a member of the Communications Team at all times. Strict adherence to laboratory OH&S standards is mandatory. Should media require access to laboratory facilities the OH&S Manager and/or Facilities Manager must be notified. Burnet's Communications Team should always be aware of a media representative being onsite and will assist with access and managing any issues. Any media outlet filming in laboratories or offices should be accompanied onsite by a member of the Communications Team.

4. Media Releases

Official Burnet Institute media releases are issued to specific, targeted media outlets to maximise awareness and promotion of major Institute announcements, conference presentations, scientific breakthroughs and research papers published in prestigious international journals. They are only to be issued by the Communications Team. Burnet Director and CEO, senior researchers or the relevant staff person relating to the research announcement are usually the key spokespeople referenced in the media release.

5. Issuing Letters to the Editor or opinion pieces

Staff are encouraged to write Letters to the Editor or opinion pieces on areas of their expertise. These should only be issued to the media through the Communications Team after approval from the Director.

6. Crisis communication

If a situation arises that is considered a critical incident i.e., a laboratory accident or a controversial issue adversely affecting Burnet's reputation, major stakeholders including media will require urgent and timely information and an official Burnet response. In these situations:

- A crisis team consisting of executive management should be assembled quickly by the Director and CEO, or nominee, to establish the facts and to decide what action is necessary, including what needs to be communicated quickly to stakeholder groups.
- A single spokesperson is appointed to handle media enquiries (generally the Director and CEO). All media enquiries are directed through the Communications Team.
- A written media statement is prepared by the Communications Team for issue as appropriate - the designated spokesperson must be available to answer questions, by phone or in person, at any point during the crisis period.

7. Access to information

Under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Vic) (Act), Section 13 of that Act provides that the right to obtain access to a document only applies to documents of an agency, or an official document of a Minister. Burnet Institute does not currently fall within the definition of "agency" under the Act. Therefore, the Act does not currently apply to Burnet, and Burnet is not subject to freedom of information requests. Requests for information should be directed through the Head, External Relations. The Institute does however respond to requests for information that are not considered by the Director and CEO to be of a commercial-in-confidence nature or of a matter which could impact of the personal privacy of an individual. Requests for information are evaluated on a case-by-case basis and should be elevated to the Director and CEO for consideration before response.

8. Dealing with the media in overseas settings

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The responsible person for dealing with promotional media issues should be the In-Country representative. Proactive promotion of activities into the media should be encouraged however; any media releases should receive approval from the Communications Team in Melbourne prior to being issued. Crisis management issues that are deemed likely to attract media attention in-country or in Australia, or adversely affect Burnet's reputation, should be dealt with by the In-Country representative in conjunction with the Head of International Operations, Institute Director and CEO, and Head, Communications.

9. Partner Agency Policy

Burnet Institute partners with many organisations, both domestically and internationally. We recognise that comment in the media reflects not only the position of Burnet Institute but also those organisations with which Burnet is partnering. In a number of cases, contractual obligations may restrict Burnet from dealing directly with the media. Guidelines must be followed in accordance with requirements under that contract e.g., DFAT or international partners. Any issue that arises that may attract media attention and is likely to impact on DFAT or the relevant Minister or Secretary, must be notified directly to DFAT by Burnet's Head of International Operations or Head, Communications. Media issues that arise in a setting that involves partner organisations should only be responded to following approval from the partner organisation, either as a joint response or by Burnet Institute with permission of the partner organisation. Any media releases that mention the partner organisation should be approved by that organisation prior to release. The Communications Team should be made aware of any media release from a partner organisation that mentions Burnet Institute, or uses Burnet's corporate logo. Burnet Institute is an active member of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and is committed to full adherence to the ACFID Code of Conduct. The Code requires members to be respectful and considerate of the reputation of other ACFID Members, including not issuing statements about other ACFID Members with the intention of creating a reputation or other advantage.

10. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade – Australian Aid

Burnet Institute is an organisation accredited by DFAT, with funds received by the Institute through Australian Aid. While the activities funded may vary from country to country, the Institute and its collaborating project partners have a responsibility to acknowledge the support provided by Australian Aid, and reflect this on communications and marketing materials where at all possible. Recognition by placement of the Australian Aid logo on all printed and online materials is a requirement for all projects (see Burnet brand guidelines section 12). In all media activities if a project is funded through Australian Aid then this must be acknowledged in any media release. Any media activities or promotional activities in which Australian Aid is to be recognised must first be approved by the DFAT Communications Office before release.

Responsibility for implementation

Board of Directors and all levels of management

Employees, students, contractors, volunteers and collaborators

Related Policies/ Procedures/Guidance

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Social Media - See Burnet Institute Social Media Policy

Use of Images - See Burnet Institute Photo policy

Policy updates - This policy will be reviewed and updated annually.

Need more help?

The Communications Team can assist in preparing for an interview and host media training workshops twice yearly.

For more information regarding the Media Policy or for additional support please contact Head, Communications, Tracy Parish on + 61 3 8506 2321, +61 403 755082 or E: tracy.parish@burnet.edu.au.