

Communications Policy

Effective Date: 1 October 2021

Version: 1.0

Policy Statement

This policy supports the development of consistent external communications by the Public Advocate.

The policy has two objectives:

- To make staff aware of;
 - their obligations as Queensland government employees in regard to external communications; and
 - the implications of the independent statutory status of the Public Advocate on external communications.
- To maintain consistency of language and format associated with all external communications from the Public Advocate

Scope

This policy applies to all staff employed by the Office of the Public Advocate, including permanent, temporary, contract and volunteer staff members.

Principles

Principles applicable to this policy include:

- The status of the Public Advocate as an independent statutory position, appointed under the *Guardianship and Administration Act 2000* and its implications for external communications
- The role of the Public Advocate, which is to work on behalf of adults with impaired decision-making capacity to:
 - Promote and protect their rights, including protecting them from neglect, exploitation, and abuse.
 - Encourage the development of programs to help them reach their greatest degree of autonomy.
 - Promote, monitor, and review the provision of services and facilities for them.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to inform staff that:

- The Public Advocate's role necessitates external communications with key stakeholders and audiences including; members of the community, advocacy and community service organisations, government ministers, agencies, and statutory bodies.
- The systemic focus of the role of the Public Advocate may require external communications that advocate for change and reform to existing government systems and programs that are not necessarily aligned with the objects or policy of the Queensland government (and its employees).

- All communications issued by the Public Advocate must therefore; be authored by the Public Advocate, express the views and opinions of the statutory position holder only (and not the supporting office), and be approved by the Public Advocate prior to release/ issue.
- All external communications must be consistently presented and formatted, using digitised templates and structures for material including web content and social media, as and when required.
- The Public Advocate, and staff of the Office of the Public Advocate, are committed to respecting, protecting, and promoting human rights. Under the *Human Rights Act 2019*, the Public Advocate and the Office of the Public Advocate have an obligation to act and make decisions in a way that is compatible with human rights, and, when making a decision, to give proper consideration to human rights. When preparing any form of external correspondence, the Public Advocate must make decisions in relation to the content of that correspondence that comply with this obligation.

Requirements

The Public Advocate and the Office of the Public Advocate staff are required to be aware of the Public Advocate's obligations under the Act, including the role and functions of the office and its consequent impact on external communication processes and procedures.

Definitions

DoJ	Department of Justice
OPA	Office of the Public Advocate

Legislation

- *The Guardianship and Administration Act 2000.*
- *The Human Rights Act 2019.*

Related polices and delegations

Nil

Supporting documents

OPA procedures;

- Website content

OPA templates:

- Letterhead
- Submissions
- Fact sheets
- Report
- Envelope
- PowerPoint presentation

DoJ templates:

- Executive Services forms and templates

Contact

Manager, Office of the Public Advocate

Approval

Name	Date
John Chesterman, Public Advocate	20 September 2021

Review

A review of this policy is to be conducted every 4 years or more often at the discretion of the OPA Manager and/or the Public Advocate.

A mandatory review will coincide with the appointment term of the Public Advocate.