Writing Style Guide for CGRC

Language Conventions

Specific conventions or grammatical rules to be used in all Council communications:

- The full Council title is 'Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council' - ensure that Cootamundra-Gundagai is always written with no space on either side of the hyphen.

- When referring to the areas of Cootamundra and Gundagai use the term "Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council - Gundagai Administration Office" or "CGRC - Gundagai Administration Office" NOT Cootamundra Area or Gundagai Area.

- Language such as 'us' and 'them' in reference to the former Councils' or former Cootamundra or Gundagai Council staff should not be used.

- The Council should be referred to as 'Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council' initially and then as 'CGRC' or 'Council' depending on context. For instance, the correct use would be *"Council writes to inform you…"* NOT *"The Council writes to inform you…"*

- If the CGRC acronym is to be used, write the name of the organisation in full the first time it is referenced, followed by the abbreviation in brackets.   e.g. 'Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council (CGRC)'.

- Use any other abbreviations sparingly and write the name of the organisation or the word in full the first time it is referenced, followed by the abbreviation in brackets.

- In outgoing letters/correspondence, never refer to Council in the first person (it is not "I" or "We").

- In the middle of a regular sentence only proper nouns should have the first letter capitalised. A proper noun is a name; the name of a person, place, official name of a person of office (e.g. Managing Director, MD) or position of state or government, the title of a creative or non-fiction work, etc.

- Avoid contractions of dates: use 7 June 1995 instead of 7th June 1995 or 7/6/95 (except in tables or illustrations where space is limited).

- Use 'Australian English' not 'American English'.

- Use fonts, logos and colour palette as per Council's Style Guide.

- If using bullet points, use a black bullet point as per this document. If a number list is to be used, use as below:

1. Test

   If a multi-level list is to be used use as below:

1. Test
   a. Test two

Writing Style

CGRC's Tone of Voice (TOV) should be:

- More qualitative than quantitative

- Inclusive, welcoming, responsive, supportive – the qualities of a friend

- More vibrant than subdued – be expressive

- More colourful than neutral

- More extroverted than introverted – be outgoing

Points to be considered when thinking about the way in which information is to be written including the tone of voice and style:

- Express information in plain English without the use of unnecessary words or information.

- Use a style that is appropriate to the communication. For instance, a social media post promoting an event might be informal and provide basic information whereas a letter to rate payers about planning regulation should be formal and contain detailed information.

- The tone of the writing should be warm, respectful and friendly, albeit formal if required.

- Minimise the use of technical terminology and when it is used explain in terms that a lay person could be reasonably expected to understand. Avoid 'Council speak' by stepping back and reading the information as if you were a lay person with little knowledge of the topic.

- When complex information is being communicated simplify it as much as possible without diminishing the meaning.

- Where there is a legal requirement to provide information in a certain way, including using complex language or terminology, explain and acknowledge the reason for the complexity as much as possible.

- When referring to legislation, use the full title of the act initially and then refer its abbreviation. For example, "*The Cootamundra-Gundagai Regional Council privacy practices are regulated by the New South Wales Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 ('PPIP Act')*.

- Use graphic representation or an image where this can contribute to conveying your message, ensuring that the infographic is well explained and fits with the overall message.

- Always ensure images or graphics that they are clear (i.e. no slightly fuzzy photographs) and that labels and legends of graphs or infographics are legible and referenced in the text so the reader understands how they fit the message.

- Be sure that you address all copyright issues when using images. You are only able to use images that Council has the right to use (for instance because Council owns or has purchased the image, or they are free of copyright). Ensure that appropriate permissions have been obtained when using photographs where people are identifiable.