

Amy Crouch

From: Damian Morgan [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 5 March 2021 8:36 AM
To: May Mitchell
Subject: Re: Bundaberg Today - BRC related editorial in tomorrow's newspaper

Thanks May – we appreciate your support.

I look forward to meeting you in person soon.

Regards, Damian

From: May Mitchell <May.Mitchell@bundaberg.qld.gov.au>
Date: Thursday, 4 March 2021 at 8:07 pm
To: Damian Morgan [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Bundaberg Today - BRC related editorial in tomorrow's newspaper

Damian,

Thank you for your communication.

The resurgence of a printed newspaper concentrating on local content (even one edition per week) has been welcomed by many in the community.

My household subscribed to home delivery from the outset.

Kind regards

CR MAY MITCHELL

Representative for Division 9
Portfolio – Health, compliance and enforcement
T 1300 883 699 M 0437 885 384
E may.mitchell@bundaberg.qld.gov.au



From: Damian Morgan [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 4 March 2021 3:43 PM
To: May Mitchell <May.Mitchell@bundaberg.qld.gov.au>
Subject: Bundaberg Today - BRC related editorial in tomorrow's newspaper

Hi May,

We've not yet met, but I'm a co-founder of Bundaberg Today, and a director of the Today News Group.

I'm writing to personally send you a copy of an editorial I've written for tomorrow's paper that relates directly to BRC. (See attached and copied below)

We're very keen to work positively and productively with BRC (as we do with all other Councils where we publish newspapers) and if you would like to talk to me about the content of this article, or anything else we publish, I welcome a confidential conversation. Please call my mobile anytime.

Thanks May, I look forward to meeting you personally in the near future.

Regards,

Damian Morgan
DIRECTOR
TODAY NEWS GROUP



Questions strike a nerve.

Last week, Bundaberg Today asked Bundaberg Regional Council's (BRC) Michael Gorey about the size of the budget for the council's 'news' service BundabergNow.

It seems to have struck a nerve with Mr Gorey, at that time executive officer of communications for BRC, and since then the newly-appointed chief of staff to Mayor Jack Dempsey.

On Saturday 27 February, Mr Gorey published a long opinion piece defending BRC's controversial investment of a substantial amount of ratepayer money in "publishing news" - and in doing so has accused Bundaberg Today of being "envious of BundabergNow's success".

This week the council stopped delivery of Bundaberg Today to their offices.

As co-founder of Bundaberg Today and a director of the Today News Group, I am responding directly to his claims.

Bundaberg Today is not envious - we're curious. That's our job. We're journalists.

Bundaberg Today is a local newspaper publisher and we're proud advocates of the Bundaberg region.

Our news coverage is objective, independent and focused on achieving the most positive outcomes for the community and we would not be doing our job if we didn't ask questions of the council, its elected representatives and their staff.

A Harvard Business Review article in March last year stated: "Democracies need independent, fact-based journalism to provide a voice for a diverse range of people, to watchdog the powerful, and to keep members of a society informed...The demise of local newspapers - which are still by far the main source of original reporting in their communities - is also linked to a rise in local corruption and an increase in polarisation, as news consumers rely more on partisan-inflected national outlets for their information."

Bundaberg Today stepped into a gap that it must be argued has been caused by the rise and rise of BundabergNow.

It is on the public record that Bundaberg Regional Council made the decision to no longer support local print (Bundaberg NewsMail) media through advertising and instead positioned itself as a direct, ratepayer-funded competitor to all independent media in its region.

It touts itself as being recognised as a "legitimate" news channel by Google, Microsoft and Facebook.

We at Bundaberg Today say there can be no doubt that the council-run and lavishly ratepayer-funded BundabergNow operation - which has a large journalism team providing content for a wide range of platforms and even its own cameraman for TV broadcasts - is partisan to reflecting only that which suits Bundaberg Regional Council decision-makers.

Bundaberg Today is happy to state its position clearly for all to hear.

We say that the most critical role news media plays in a democracy is holding the powerful to account, and central to that endeavour in regional areas is holding local government to account on behalf of the communities we serve.

Freedom of the press is democracy's correcting mechanism against corruption.

Historically, when governments start "publishing" their own "news" it is called propaganda.

BundabergNow has already been branded as delivering propaganda in a news report published by the ABC about its large-scale ratepayer-funded media operations, followed up by Media Watch coverage.

The ABC is one of Australia's finest institutions and also is government-owned. But it has a fiercely protected Charter of Independence to ensure ABC journalists can ask tough questions of powerful and popular politicians (ask our Prime Minister!).

Chinese state-owned media, viewed with justified and growing suspicion, does not have a Charter of Independence. Nor does BundabergNow.

BundabergNow is owned and controlled directly by the council on which it reports. All of its staff sit in the council's employ. It is anything but independent or non-partisan.

A council reporting on itself is like the fox saying it will look after the chickens. People are right to be suspicious. It's a journalist's job to be suspicious.

Mr Gorey wrote in his article at the weekend that "when a journalist starts asking about the size of the communications team and its budget, I immediately suspect self-interest on the part of their employer".

His instinctive response is as revealing as it is astonishing.

Why on earth should Mr Gorey immediately suspect a journalist/news outlet simply doing their clearly-stated job to provide transparent information on behalf of the public that trusts and relies on them?

If doing business is "self-interest" or even "looking out for community interest", we agree - Bundaberg Today's business is to deliver news and sell newspapers/subscriptions.

Bundaberg Regional Council provides so-called "free" news - which isn't free at all, because it is already paid for through ratepayer funds - while its true role is to deliver the essential services to the region such as rubbish collection, some area of road building/maintenance, parking management, local libraries, and so on.

So Mr Gorey and (according to your new job title) your direct supervisor Mayor Jack Dempsey, Bundaberg Today will continue to keep asking questions, and they might get a lot tougher than a simple request for a budget about BundabergNow.

That's our job as an independent, genuine news outlet. I suggest we'd all be better off if we stuck to our real jobs.

Damian Morgan
DIRECTOR
TODAY NEWS GROUP



Queensland's largest independent regional newspaper group

BUNDABERG | CENTRAL QLD | GLADSTONE | GYMPIE | NOOSA | SOUTHERN DOWNS | SOUTH, CENTRAL & NORTH BURNETT

This email and/or associated attachments and links may contain confidential, privileged or personal information. If you are not an intended recipient, you must not deal with or rely on any information herein and please advise the sender or call Council on 1300 883 699. Council undertakes virus protection but excludes all liability for transmission any potential viruses (or similar). Council may collect your personal information which will be used for the purposes outlined in this communication. This information will only be accessed by authorised Council officers and will be handled in accordance with Council's Privacy Statement governed by the Information Privacy Act 2009. Visit <https://www.bundaberg.qld.gov.au/privacy> for further information.

Released under
Right to Information Act 2009

Amy Crouch

From: Paul Pedersen [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 6 April 2021 5:41 PM
To: Tim Dunne; Jade Connor
Cc: John Martinkovic; May Mitchell
Subject: FW: Query about the recently appointed Mayor Advisor role

Good afternoon Tim and Jade.

I have received a query today from Councillor May Mitchell, Councillor from Bundaberg RC. (See Below).

Can you please provide some advice regarding the Mayor Advisor role at Bundaberg Council from the context provided by Cr Mitchell.

Please call as required.

Paul.

Paul Pedersen
Senior Advisor-Southern Region
Strategy and Service Delivery
Local Government Division

Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning
Level 1/ 14 Branyan Street, BUNDABERG QLD 4670.
[REDACTED]

I acknowledge the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community.

I pay my respect to them and their cultures, and to the elders both past and present.

From: May Mitchell <May.Mitchell@bundaberg.qld.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 6 April 2021 5:17 PM
To: Paul Pedersen [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Query about the recently appointed Mayor Advisor role

Thank you Paul.

I'm seeking advice from the department based on the following information so I can give further consideration about whether there would be grounds to formally follow up my concerns with the CEO or not.

27/1/2021 Council adopted:

"That Council allow the Mayor to appoint a Councillor Advisor in accordance with Section 197A of the Local Government Act 2009 and the Local Government Regulation 2012 (Part 2A)"

11/2/2021 CEO advised Michael Gorey is to be appointed to the new position of Mayor's Chief of Staff, effective Monday, 1 March. Mr Gorey was Executive Officer Communications prior to appointment.

26/3/2021 I brought it to the attention of the CEO & GM Organisational services that the Mayor's Chief of Staff's email contact card showed an org structure of 6 people in the communications section reporting to him. This structure has since been removed from the email contact card.

30/3/2021 I brought it to the attention of the CEO & GM Organisational services that the Mayor's Chief of Staff's email contact card showed him to have membership of (recipient) 10 operational email groups relating to managers, supervisors and communications. These have since been removed from the email contact card.

The Councillor Advisor (Mayor's Chief of Staff) is one of eight people who have administrator access to the Bundaberg Now Face Book page. A free site providing local good news & information to the community separate to the official Bundaberg Regional Council Face Book page.

Mr Gorey continues to write regular articles (not always Council business) for Bundaberg Now which most do not appear to be speaking on behalf of the Mayor or include quotes from the Mayor.

My concern is that there does not appear to be enough separation from his former role to current role; i.e. being titled Chief of Staff and by retaining direct access and administrator rights to the operational side of the Bundaberg Now website / Facebook pages.

Kind regards

CR MAY MITCHELL
Representative for Division 9
Portfolio – Health, compliance and enforcement
T 1300 883 699 M 0437 885 384
E may.mitchell@bundaberg.qld.gov.au



From: Paul Pedersen [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 6 April 2021 3:29 PM
To: May Mitchell <May.Mitchell@bundaberg.qld.gov.au>
Subject: FW: Query about the recently appointed Mayor Advisor role

This may assist as well. Extract from Act.

Division 2A Councillor advisors

197A, Appointment and functions of councillor advisors

(1)A local government prescribed under section 197D(1)(a) may, by resolution, allow a councillor to appoint 1 or more appropriately qualified persons (each a councillor advisor) to assist the councillor in performing responsibilities under this Act.

Examples of assistance—

administrative support, coordinating media activities, event management functions, policy development, office management

Paul Pedersen
Senior Advisor-Southern Region
Strategy and Service Delivery
Local Government Division

Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning
Level 1/ 14 Branyan Street, BUNDABERG QLD 4670.

I acknowledge the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community.

I pay my respect to them and their cultures, and to the elders both past and present.

From: Paul Pedersen
Sent: Tuesday, 6 April 2021 3:26 PM
To: may.mitchell@bundaberg.qld.gov.au
Cc: John Martinkovic [REDACTED]
Subject: Query about the recently appointed Mayor Advisor role

Good afternoon Councillor Mitchell.

Thank you for your call earlier re: your query about the recently appointed Mayor Advisor role at Bundaberg Regional Council.

I will forward your query to the Department's Governance team for initial review.

As you discussed:

- Mr Michael Gorey was recently appointed into the newly created Mayor's Advisor role.
- Shortly after Mr Gorey's appointment the role title was changed to Mayoral Chief of staff.
- Mr Gorey is one of eight people who has administrator access to the Bundaberg NOW face book page, and is actively placing information about Council onto that page which you are unsure is appropriate for his role.

Councillor I would as you to review this information and if you believe I have missed anything please edit and return to me. I will then send to Governance for advice.

Thank you

Paul Pedersen
Senior Advisor-Southern Region
Strategy and Service Delivery
Local Government Division

Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning
Level 1/ 14 Branyan Street, BUNDABERG QLD 4670.

I acknowledge the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community.

I pay my respect to them and their cultures, and to the elders both past and present.

This email and any attachments may contain confidential or privileged information and may be protected by copyright. You must not use or disclose them other than for the purposes for which they were supplied. The confidentiality and privilege attached to this message and attachment is not waived by reason of mistaken delivery to you. If you are not the intended recipient, you must not use, disclose, retain, forward or reproduce this message or any attachments. If you receive this message in error please notify the sender by return email or telephone, and destroy and delete all copies. The Department does not accept any responsibility for any loss or damage that may result from reliance on, or use of, any information contained in this email and/or attachments.

This email and/or associated attachments and links may contain confidential, privileged or personal information. If you are not an intended recipient, you must not deal with or rely on any information herein and please advise the sender or call Council on 1300 883 699. Council undertakes virus protection but excludes all liability for transmission any potential viruses (or similar). Council may collect your personal information which will be used for the purposes outlined in this communication. This information will only be accessed by authorised Council officers and will be handled in accordance with Council's Privacy Statement governed by the Information Privacy Act 2009. Visit <https://www.bundaberg.qld.gov.au/privacy> for further information.

Released under
Right to Information Act 2009

Amy Crouch

From: Paul Pedersen [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 13 April 2021 2:28 PM
To: May Mitchell
Cc: Denise Hallmark; Tim Dunne; Jade Deacon
Subject: RE: Query about the recently appointed Mayor Advisor role

Good afternoon Councillor Mitchell.

Thank you for bringing your query about the recently appointed Mayor Advisor role to the Department. As mentioned in the previous email, the below advice has been provided by the Department's Governance team.

You mention Mr Gorey was a former employee of Council, and as such it appears thoughtful time is being taken for him to fully transfer from the role of a local government employee, to Councillor Advisor. You have demonstrated that Council is taking steps to remove Mr Gorey from operational matters (i.e. changing the organisational structure and removing him from internal mailing lists) and as such most of the immediate matters are being resolved.

With regard to Mr Gorey having administrator access to the Bundaberg Now Face Book page (the page). As it appears the page is an official council page (it says so on the 'about' section of the page), permission to have administrator access is ultimately within the authority of the CEO. For good governance reasons the Department would recommend the CEO does remove this action. If the website is an official council service, approval to post to the site should only come from the CEO. This may also help Mr Gorey ensure he meets his obligations under the advisor code of conduct and act in accordance with the local government principle of good governance if he is removed as a page administrator.

For example, under the code of conduct section titled 'Interact appropriately with council employees', Mr Gorey must at a minimum ensure he does not direct or appear to influence how employees manage the page under the direction of the CEO/council manager. And staff should not be under the impression they are receiving cues from the mayor's office for what content is posted on the page and how to moderate comments. Any interactions with employees regarding management of the page risk breaching the code of conduct. Mr Gorey also needs to comply with the council's social media policy if it has one.

From a good governance perspective, what you have raised is about improving governance and the clear separation between the mayor's office and the role of the communication team. Mr Gorey not being an administrator of the page will strengthen this clear separation. Governance benefits of not being an administrator include:

- Efficiency and reduced duplication because it will be clearer to employees who are responsible for drafting and posting content, as well as who is setting the direction for the strategy behind posted content on the page, i.e. CEO/council manager
- It is more transparent and clearer for the community to know who is responsible and accountable for the posts and moderation, i.e. council employees not the mayor. Indeed any negativity about how the page is moderated can be addressed by employees without being attributed to the Mayor or Councillors.
- Better for integrity because it will be clearer what the strategy is behind posted content, and that content will not be aimed at promoting the interests of individuals rather a page for the community in general.

A good resource with scenario examples is in the department's code of conduct supporting information. Although not directly relevant to this situation there is some good information that could be shared with the Mayor and Mr Gorey.

You may wish to forward the above advice to the CEO and/or Mayor for their information. To do this you could make an information request to the CEO for advice about Mr Gorey's continuing administrator access or advice about other steps the CEO/council has taken to ensure good governance given Mr Gorey's new role. You do however need to

recognise that you should be careful to ensure you do not direct or appear to direct the CEO to take any course of action.

Many thanks again

Regards

Paul.

Paul Pedersen
Senior Advisor-Southern Region
Strategy and Service Delivery
Local Government Division

Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning
Level 1/ 14 Branyan Street, BUNDABERG QLD 4670.

I acknowledge the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community.

I pay my respect to them and their cultures, and to the elders both past and present.

From: Paul Pedersen
Sent: Tuesday, 6 April 2021 5:38 PM
To: May Mitchell <May.Mitchell@bundaberg.qld.gov.au>
Subject: RE: Query about the recently appointed Mayor Advisor role

Thank you Councillor.

I will send through to Tim Dunne-Manager Governance, Jade Connor-Senior Project Officer Governance and CC John Martinkovic-Regional Director. Just so you know who is providing advice and aware of your query.

Please call as required.

Paul

Paul Pedersen
Senior Advisor-Southern Region
Strategy and Service Delivery
Local Government Division

Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning
Level 1/ 14 Branyan Street, BUNDABERG QLD 4670.

I acknowledge the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community.

I pay my respect to them and their cultures, and to the elders both past and present.

From: May Mitchell <May.Mitchell@bundaberg.qld.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 6 April 2021 5:17 PM
To: Paul Pedersen [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Query about the recently appointed Mayor Advisor role

Thank you Paul.

I'm seeking advice from the department based on the following information so I can give further consideration about whether there would be grounds to formally follow up my concerns with the CEO or not.

27/1/2021 Council adopted:

"That Council allow the Mayor to appoint a Councillor Advisor in accordance with Section 197A of the Local Government Act 2009 and the Local Government Regulation 2012 (Part 2A)"

11/2/2021 CEO advised Michael Gorey is to be appointed to the new position of Mayor's Chief of Staff, effective Monday, 1 March. Mr Gorey was Executive Officer Communications prior to appointment.

26/3/2021 I brought it to the attention of the CEO & GM Organisational services that the Mayor's Chief of Staff's email contact card showed an org structure of 6 people in the communications section reporting to him. This structure has since been removed from the email contact card.

30/3/2021 I brought it to the attention of the CEO & GM Organisational services that the Mayor's Chief of Staff's email contact card showed him to have membership of (recipient) 10 operational email groups relating to managers, supervisors and communications. These have since been removed from the email contact card.

The Councillor Advisor (Mayor's Chief of Staff) is one of eight people who have administrator access to the Bundaberg Now Face Book page. A free site providing local good news & information to the community separate to the official Bundaberg Regional Council Face Book page.

Mr Gorey continues to write regular articles (not always Council business) for Bundaberg Now which most do not appear to be speaking on behalf of the Mayor or include quotes from the Mayor.

My concern is that there does not appear to be enough separation from his former role to current role; i.e. being titled Chief of Staff and by retaining direct access and administrator rights to the operational side of the Bundaberg Now website / Facebook pages.

Kind regards

CR MAY MITCHELL
Representative for Division 9
Portfolio – Health, compliance and enforcement
T 1300 883 699 M 0437 885 384
E may.mitchell@bundaberg.qld.gov.au



From: Paul Pedersen [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 6 April 2021 3:29 PM
To: May Mitchell <May.Mitchell@bundaberg.qld.gov.au>
Subject: FW: Query about the recently appointed Mayor Advisor role

This may assist as well. Extract from Act.

Division 2A Councillor advisors

197A, Appointment and functions of councillor advisors

(1)A local government prescribed under section 197D(1)(a) may, by resolution, allow a councillor to appoint 1 or more appropriately qualified persons (each a councillor advisor) to assist the councillor in performing responsibilities under this Act.

Examples of assistance—

administrative support, coordinating media activities, event management functions, policy development, office management

Paul Pedersen

Senior Advisor-Southern Region

Strategy and Service Delivery

Local Government Division

Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning
Level 1/ 14 Branyan Street, BUNDABERG QLD 4670.

I acknowledge the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community.

I pay my respect to them and their cultures, and to the elders both past and present.

From: Paul Pedersen
Sent: Tuesday, 6 April 2021 3:26 PM
To: may.mitchell@bundaberg.qld.gov.au
Cc: John Martinkovic [REDACTED]
Subject: Query about the recently appointed Mayor Advisor role

Good afternoon Councillor Mitchell.

Thank you for your call earlier re: your query about the recently appointed Mayor Advisor role at Bundaberg Regional Council.

I will forward your query to the Department's Governance team for initial review.

As you discussed:


- Mr Michael Gorey was recently appointed into the newly created Mayor's Advisor role.
- Shortly after Mr Gorey' appointment the role title was changed to Mayoral Chief of staff.
- Mr Gorey is one of eight people who has administrator access to the Bundaberg NOW face book page, and is actively placing information about Council onto that page which you are unsure is appropriate for his role.

Councillor I would as you to review this information and if you believe I have missed anything please edit and return to me. I will then send to Governance for advice.

Thank you

Paul Pedersen
Senior Advisor-Southern Region
Strategy and Service Delivery
Local Government Division

Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning
Level 1/ 14 Branyan Street, BUNDABERG QLD 4670.



I acknowledge the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community.

I pay my respect to them and their cultures, and to the elders both past and present.

This email and any attachments may contain confidential or privileged information and may be protected by copyright. You must not use or disclose them other than for the purposes for which they were supplied. The confidentiality and privilege attached to this message and attachment is not waived by reason of mistaken delivery to you. If you are not the intended recipient, you must not use, disclose, retain, forward or reproduce this message or any attachments. If you receive this message in error please notify the sender by return email or telephone, and destroy and delete all copies. The Department does not accept any responsibility for any loss or damage that may result from reliance on, or use of, any information contained in this email and/or attachments.

This email and/or associated attachments and links may contain confidential, privileged or personal information. If you are not an intended recipient, you must not deal with or rely on any information herein and please advise the sender or call Council on 1300 883 699. Council undertakes virus protection but excludes all liability for transmission any potential viruses (or similar). Council may collect your personal information which will be used for the purposes outlined in this communication. This information will only be accessed by authorised Council officers and will be handled in accordance with Council's Privacy Statement governed by the Information Privacy Act 2009. Visit <https://www.bundaberg.qld.gov.au/privacy> for further information.

Released under
Right to Information Act 2009

Amy Crouch

From: Steve Johnston - CEO
Sent: Tuesday, 6 April 2021 1:22 PM
To: May Mitchell
Cc: Christine Large
Subject: RE: Chief of Staff/Bundaberg Now

May

To clarify there are currently eight administrators not seven and Michael is one them.

STEVE JOHNSTON
Chief Executive Officer



From: Steve Johnston - CEO
Sent: Tuesday, 6 April 2021 1:08 PM
To: May Mitchell <May.Mitchell@bundaberg.qld.gov.au>
Cc: Christine Large [REDACTED]
Subject: Chief of Staff/Bundaberg Now

May

I refer to your enquiry this morning in relation to the Mayors Chief of Staff/Advisor being able to post stories on Council' social media platforms. There are currently seven staff who have access rights to undertake the role of administrators. The Executive Officer Communications or myself (under Council's Media Relations policy) can nominate employees to do this. In addition, that policy also enables the Mayor's Chief of Staff/Advisor to act as a spokesperson for the Mayor. I'm satisfied that under that policy Michael is not breaching any aspect of it in relation to his continued involvement in posting stories. I've also checked the Qld Government Code of Conduct for Councillor Advisors and his Employment Contract and can find nothing in either document that would restrict him from doing this. To ensure that the process is unambiguous I've also asked that his PD be updated to reflect this role.

I would note that "complaints about the conduct of a councillor advisor are to be made to the CEO of the local government or their delegate, who will assess whether a councillor's advisor's conduct, while on or off duty, is in breach of this code". If you wish to lodge a formal complaint I will refer it to Council's Chief Legal Officer for further advice

Regards



Help us plant
one million trees

Find out more at ourbundabergregion.com.au
#onemilliontreesbundaberg



Released under
Right to Information Act 2009

Amy Crouch

From: May Mitchell
Sent: Thursday, 15 April 2021 9:55 AM
To: Steve Johnston - CEO
Subject: RE: Councillor Advisor / Mayor's Chief of Staff as an administrator of Bundaberg Now

Steve

Unless there is something specific you want to know about my enquiry I don't see any reason to action your request.

Be assured it was professional, not inflammatory and restricted to seeking advice on whether Councillor Advisor / Mayor's Chief of Staff should have administrator access to Bundaberg Now.

Please let me know if there is anything else I can be of assistance with.

Kind regards

CR MAY MITCHELL
Representative for Division 9
Portfolio – Health, compliance and enforcement
T 1300 883 699 M 0437 885 384
E may.mitchell@bundaberg.qld.gov.au



From: Steve Johnston - CEO [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 15 April 2021 8:38 AM
To: May Mitchell <May.Mitchell@bundaberg.qld.gov.au>
Subject: Re: Councillor Advisor / Mayor's Chief of Staff as an administrator of Bundaberg Now

May could you provide me with the email /letter you sent to the Department seeking their advice please prior to me formulating a response please

Steve

Sent from my iPhone

On 15 Apr 2021, at 8:07 am, May Mitchell <May.Mitchell@bundaberg.qld.gov.au> wrote:

Steve,

Thank you for your responses on 6th April 2021 (attached) regarding my verbal enquiry asking if the Mayor's Chief of Staff / Councillor Advisor is one of the 8 administrators (as shown by Facebook) for

the Bundaberg Now page. My enquiry arose after seeing two posts attributed to Mr Gorey in relation to weather announcements which carried content so current that it seemed very plausible the content may have been posted by Mr Gorey because the administration office was closed for business over the Easter public holiday long weekend, indicating he may have access as an administrator.

If the posts were published in isolation of other events, I would not have felt concerned about the potential for any perceived lack of separation between his role as Councillor Advisor and his former role as Executive Officer Communications. However, having occurred in conjunction with events noted in the following points I do have concerns from a good governance perspective.

- 27/1/2021 Council adopted:
“That Council allow the Mayor to appoint a Councillor Advisor in accordance with Section 197A of the Local Government Act 2009 and the Local Government Regulation 2012 (Part 2A)”
- 11/2/2021 you as CEO advised Councillors Michael Gorey was to be appointed to the new position of Mayor’s Chief of Staff, effective Monday, 1 March. (I am unable to comprehend the rationale behind the name change.)
- Mayor’s Chief of Staff / Councillor Advisor (Mr Gorey) was Executive Officer Communications prior to appointment and was also a member of the ELT. The person appointed to replace Mr Gorey has not been given the same position title (now Communications Manager) and is not a member of the ELT, which could give the impression they do not hold the same level of seniority Mr Gorey had.
- 26/3/2021 I brought it to your attention and the attention of the GM Organisational Services that the Mayor’s Chief of Staff’s email contact card showed an organisation structure of 6 people in the communications section reporting to him (including the appointee who replaced him but is now known as Communications Manager). I note this structure has since been removed from the email contact card.
- 30/3/2021 I brought it to your attention and the attention of the GM Organisational Services that the Mayor’s Chief of Staff’s email contact card showed him to have membership of multiple operational email groups relating to managers, supervisors and communications. I note these have since been removed from the email contact card.
- After his appointment as Councillor Advisor / Mayor’s Chief of Staff Mr Gorey has written articles for Bundaberg Now. Not every post appears to be speaking on behalf of the Mayor or include quotes from the Mayor. I acknowledge I have not seen a posted story attributed to Mr Gorey after 5/4/2021.

After reading your initial response on 6th April I was conscious it did not appear to convey any awareness / concern that the Mayor’s Chief of Staff / Councillor Advisor, as a former head of department and former ELT member who has retained access as an administrator of Bundaberg Now might be perceived as having a conflict or having influence over content or moderation of comments on the page. Instead, your advice to me was that you intend to change the Councillor Advisor PD.

Given that previously in relation to another matter you advised me by letter on 19/5/2020 that Mr Gorey may have breached sections of Council’s Employee Code of Conduct Policy, regarding declarable conflicts of interest and was requested to update his Register of Interest, I believe my concerns in relation to good governance are not unfounded.

I have sought advice from the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning. Please see below an excerpt of the response I have received from Paul Pedersen Senior Advisor-Southern Region; he having received advice from the department’s governance team.

Thank you for bringing your query about the recently appointed Mayor Advisor role to the Department. As mentioned in the previous email, the below advice has been provided by the Department’s Governance team.

You mention Mr Gorey was a former employee of Council, and as such it appears thoughtful time is being taken for him to fully transfer from the role of a local government employee, to Councillor

Advisor. You have demonstrated that Council is taking steps to remove Mr Gorey from operational matters (i.e. changing the organisational structure and removing him from internal mailing lists) and as such most of the immediate matters are being resolved.

With regard to Mr Gorey having administrator access to the Bundaberg Now Face Book page (the page). As it appears the page is an official council page (it says so on the 'about' section of the page), permission to have administrator access is ultimately within the authority of the CEO. For good governance reasons the Department would recommend the CEO does remove this action. If the website is an official council service, approval to post to the site should only come from the CEO. This may also help Mr Gorey ensure he meets his obligations under the advisor code of conduct and act in accordance with the local government principle of good governance if he is removed as a page administrator.

For example, under the code of conduct section titled 'Interact appropriately with council employees', Mr Gorey must at a minimum ensure he does not direct or appear to influence how employees manage the page under the direction of the CEO/council manager. And staff should not be under the impression they are receiving cues from the mayor's office for what content is posted on the page and how to moderate comments. Any interactions with employees regarding management of the page risk breaching the code of conduct. Mr Gorey also needs to comply with the council's social media policy if it has one.

From a good governance perspective, what you have raised is about improving governance and the clear separation between the mayor's office and the role of the communication team. Mr Gorey not being an administrator of the page will strengthen this clear separation. Governance benefits of not being an administrator include:

- Efficiency and reduced duplication because it will be clearer to employees who are responsible for drafting and posting content, as well as who is setting the direction for the strategy behind posted content on the page, i.e. CEO/council manager*
- It is more transparent and clearer for the community to know who is responsible and accountable for the posts and moderation, i.e. council employees not the mayor. Indeed any negativity about how the page is moderated can be addressed by employees without being attributed to the Mayor or Councillors.*
- Better for integrity because it will be clearer what the strategy is behind posted content, and that content will not be aimed at promoting the interests of individuals rather a page for the community in general.*

A good resource with scenario examples is in the department's code of conduct supporting information. Although not directly relevant to this situation there is some good information that could be shared with the Mayor and Mr Gorey.

You may wish to forward the above advice to the CEO and/or Mayor for their information.

On the back of Mr Pedersen's response and his suggestion that I may like to forward it to you and or the Mayor, I feel it necessary to ascertain from you if after having read it; do you still hold the same views expressed in your first response to me (see attached)? What is the status of the proposed update to the Councillor Advisor PD to reflect his role as administrator and to ask what advice can you offer about Mr Gorey's continued access as an administrator, or what steps you have taken to ensure good governance given Mr Gorey's new role?

Kind regards

CR MAY MITCHELL

**Representative for Division 9
Portfolio – Health, compliance and
enforcement**

T 1300 883 699 **M** 0437 885 384

E

may.mitchell@bundaberg.qld.gov.au

<image001.png>

<image002.png>

<image003.png>

<image004.png>

<image005.png>

Released under
Right to Information Act 2009

<image008.jpg>

<mime-attachment>

Released under
Right to Information Act 2009

Amy Crouch

From: May Mitchell
Sent: Monday, 19 April 2021 10:03 AM
To: Steve Johnston - CEO
Cc: Jack Dempsey; Christine Large
Subject: Re: Councillor Advisor / Mayor's Chief of Staff as an administrator of Bundaberg Now

Thank you Steve

Cr May Mitchell
Representative for Division 9
T: 1300 883 699 M: 0437 885 384
E: may.mitchell@bundaberg.qld.gov.au

From: Steve Johnston - CEO [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, April 19, 2021 9:56:56 AM
To: May Mitchell <May.Mitchell@bundaberg.qld.gov.au>
Cc: Jack Dempsey <Jack.Dempsey@bundaberg.qld.gov.au>; Christine Large [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Councillor Advisor / Mayor's Chief of Staff as an administrator of Bundaberg Now

May

I don't intend to respond to advice I didn't commission, have no knowledge of what was requested (despite me requesting same) nor do I have a full copy of that advice; only what I presume is a cut and paste.

I am satisfied with the current arrangements and don't believe there are any issues from a governance perspective.

Regards



STEVE JOHNSTON

Chief Executive Officer
T 4130 4261 M 0459 843 990



From: May Mitchell <May.Mitchell@bundaberg.qld.gov.au>
Sent: Thursday, 15 April 2021 8:07 AM

To: Steve Johnston - CEO [REDACTED]

Subject: Councillor Advisor / Mayor's Chief of Staff as an administrator of Bundaberg Now

Steve,

Thank you for your responses on 6th April 2021 (attached) regarding my verbal enquiry asking if the Mayor's Chief of Staff / Councillor Advisor is one of the 8 administrators (as shown by Facebook) for the Bundaberg Now page. My enquiry arose after seeing two posts attributed to Mr Gorey in relation to weather announcements which carried content so current that it seemed very plausible the content may have been posted by Mr Gorey because the administration office was closed for business over the Easter public holiday long weekend, indicating he may have access as an administrator.

If the posts were published in isolation of other events, I would not have felt concerned about the potential for any perceived lack of separation between his role as Councillor Advisor and his former role as Executive Officer Communications. However, having occurred in conjunction with events noted in the following points I do have concerns from a good governance perspective.

- 27/1/2021 Council adopted:
"That Council allow the Mayor to appoint a Councillor Advisor in accordance with Section 197A of the Local Government Act 2009 and the Local Government Regulation 2012, (Part 2A)"
- 11/2/2021 you as CEO advised Councillors Michael Gorey was to be appointed to the new position of Mayor's Chief of Staff, effective Monday, 1 March. (I am unable to comprehend the rationale behind the name change.)
- Mayor's Chief of Staff / Councillor Advisor (Mr Gorey) was Executive Officer Communications prior to appointment and was also a member of the ELT. The person appointed to replace Mr Gorey has not been given the same position title (now Communications Manager) and is not a member of the ELT, which could give the impression they do not hold the same level of seniority Mr Gorey had.
- 26/3/2021 I brought it to your attention and the attention of the GM Organisational Services that the Mayor's Chief of Staff's email contact card showed an organisation structure of 6 people in the communications section reporting to him (including the appointee who replaced him but is now known as Communications Manager). I note this structure has since been removed from the email contact card.
- 30/3/2021 I brought it to your attention and the attention of the GM Organisational Services that the Mayor's Chief of Staff's email contact card showed him to have membership of multiple operational email groups relating to managers, supervisors and communications. I note these have since been removed from the email contact card.
- After his appointment as Councillor Advisor / Mayor's Chief of Staff Mr Gorey has written articles for Bundaberg Now. Not every post appears to be speaking on behalf of the Mayor or include quotes from the Mayor. I acknowledge I have not seen a posted story attributed to Mr Gorey after 5/4/2021.

After reading your initial response on 6th April I was conscious it did not appear to convey any awareness / concern that the Mayor's Chief of Staff / Councillor Advisor, as a former head of department and former ELT member who has retained access as an administrator of Bundaberg Now might be perceived as having a conflict or having influence over content or moderation of comments on the page. Instead, your advice to me was that you intend to change the Councillor Advisor PD.

Given that previously in relation to another matter you advised me by letter on 19/5/2020 that Mr Gorey may have breached sections of Council's Employee Code of Conduct Policy, regarding declarable conflicts of interest and was requested to update his Register of Interest, I believe my concerns in relation to good governance are not unfounded.

I have sought advice from the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning. Please see below an excerpt of the response I have received from Paul Pedersen Senior Advisor-Southern Region; he having received advice from the department's governance team.

Thank you for bringing your query about the recently appointed Mayor Advisor role to the Department. As mentioned in the previous email, the below advice has been provided by the Department's Governance team.

You mention Mr Gorey was a former employee of Council, and as such it appears thoughtful time is being taken for him to fully transfer from the role of a local government employee, to Councillor Advisor. You have demonstrated that Council is taking steps to remove Mr Gorey from operational matters (i.e. changing the organisational structure and removing him from internal mailing lists) and as such most of the immediate matters are being resolved.

With regard to Mr Gorey having administrator access to the Bundaberg Now Face Book page (the page). As it appears the page is an official council page (it says so on the 'about' section of the page), permission to have administrator access is ultimately within the authority of the CEO. For good governance reasons the Department would recommend the CEO does remove this action. If the website is an official council service, approval to post to the site should only come from the CEO. This may also help Mr Gorey ensure he meets his obligations under the advisor code of conduct and act in accordance with the local government principle of good governance if he is removed as a page administrator.

For example, under the code of conduct section titled 'Interact appropriately with council employees', Mr Gorey must at a minimum ensure he does not direct or appear to influence how employees manage the page under the direction of the CEO/council manager. And staff should not be under the impression they are receiving cues from the mayor's office for what content is posted on the page and how to moderate comments. Any interactions with employees regarding management of the page risk breaching the code of conduct. Mr Gorey also needs to comply with the council's social media policy if it has one.

From a good governance perspective, what you have raised is about improving governance and the clear separation between the mayor's office and the role of the communication team. Mr Gorey not being an administrator of the page will strengthen this clear separation. Governance benefits of not being an administrator include:

- Efficiency and reduced duplication because it will be clearer to employees who are responsible for drafting and posting content, as well as who is setting the direction for the strategy behind posted content on the page, i.e. CEO/council manager
- It is more transparent and clearer for the community to know who is responsible and accountable for the posts and moderation, i.e. council employees not the mayor. Indeed any negativity about how the page is moderated can be addressed by employees without being attributed to the Mayor or Councillors.
- Better for integrity because it will be clearer what the strategy is behind posted content, and that content will not be aimed at promoting the interests of individuals rather a page for the community in general.

A good resource with scenario examples is in the department's code of conduct supporting information. Although not directly relevant to this situation there is some good information that could be shared with the Mayor and Mr Gorey.

You may wish to forward the above advice to the CEO and/or Mayor for their information.

On the back of Mr Pedersen's response and his suggestion that I may like to forward it to you and or the Mayor, I feel it necessary to ascertain from you if after having read it; do you still hold the same views expressed in your first response to me (see attached)? What is the status of the proposed update to the Councillor Advisor PD to reflect his role as administrator and to ask what advice can you offer about Mr Gorey's continued access as an administrator, or what steps you have taken to ensure good governance given Mr Gorey's new role?

Kind regards

CR MAY MITCHELL

Representative for Division 9

Portfolio – Health, compliance and enforcement

T 1300 883 699 M 0437 885 384

E may.mitchell@bundaberg.qld.gov.au





Released under
Right to Information Act 2009

Amy Crouch

From: Amanda Pafumi
Sent: Friday, 26 March 2021 1:21 PM
To: May Mitchell
Cc: Steve Johnston - CEO
Subject: Re: Email contact card details

Hi Councillor Mitchell

I have been advised this is now updated and will be correct online once systems refresh in the next hour or so.

Kind regards,

Amanda Pafumi
[REDACTED]

On 26 Mar 2021, at 12:34 pm, May Mitchell <May.Mitchell@bundaberg.qld.gov.au> wrote:

Steve,

Please see attached.

As a Councillor Advisor cannot direct local government employees, is there a lag in relation to updating the email contact card details after the appointment of Councillor Advisor & Communications Manager?

Kind regards

CR MAY MITCHELL
Representative for Division 9
Portfolio – Health, compliance and
enforcement

T 1300 883 699 M 0437 885 384

E

may.mitchell@bundaberg.qld.gov.au

<image001.png>

<image002.png>

<image003.png>

<image004.png>

<image005.png>

<image007.jpg>

<image008.jpg>

<Screenshot 2021-03-25 195750.gif>

<Screenshot 2021-03-26 093439.gif>

Amy Crouch

From: May Mitchell
Sent: Friday, 26 March 2021 12:34 PM
To: Steve Johnston - CEO
Cc: Amanda Pafumi
Subject: Email contact card details
Attachments: Screenshot 2021-03-25 195750.gif; Screenshot 2021-03-26 093439.gif

Steve,

Please see attached.

As a Councillor Advisor cannot direct local government employees, is there a lag in relation to updating the email contact card details after the appointment of Councillor Advisor & Communications Manager?

Kind regards

CR MAY MITCHELL

Representative for Division 9

Portfolio – Health, compliance and enforcement

T 1300 883 699 M 0437 885 384

E may.mitchell@bundaberg.qld.gov.au





Michael Gorey

Mayor's Chief of Staff • Mayor & Councillors

Start audio call Start chat Send email ...

Overview

Contact

Organization

Memberships

LinkedIn



Michael Gorey
Mayor's Chief of Staff
Mayor & Councillors

People reporting to Michael Gorey (6)



Megan Dean
Communications Manager



Becc Kurtz
Executive Assistant to the C...



Maria McMahon
Internal Communications Of...



Claire Dobbins
Marketing Advisor - Websites



Trish Mears
Community Engagement A...



Betty Kao
Executive Assistant/Researc...



Megan Dean

Communications Manager • Communications

Start audio call Start chat Send email

Overview

Contact

Organization

Memberships

LinkedIn

 Michael Gorey
Mayor's Chief of Staff
Mayor & Councillors

 Megan Dean
Communications Manager
Communications

People reporting to Megan Dean (5)



Ashley Clark
Communications Officer Co...



Paul Donaldson
Communications Officer-Co...



Morgan Everett
Content Assistant



Emma Reid
Communications Officer - C...



Craig Ross
Communications Officer - C...

Amy Crouch

From: Amanda Pafumi
Sent: Wednesday, 31 March 2021 12:46 PM
To: May Mitchell
Cc: Steve Johnston - CEO
Subject: RE: Email contact card details

Hi Cr Mitchell

Yes, this has been revised as well.

Thank you.

AMANDA PAFUMI
General Manager, Organisational Services
T 1300 883 699



From: May Mitchell <May.Mitchell@bundaberg.qld.gov.au>
Sent: Tuesday, 30 March 2021 2:46 PM
To: Amanda Pafumi [REDACTED]
Cc: Steve Johnston - CEO [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Email contact card details

Thank you Amanda,

Would it also be appropriate to revise the internal email lists the Mayor's Chief of Staff is still included in as a recipient, where the list relates to operational matters or his previous role?

Michael Gorey
 Mayor's Chief of Staff • Mayor & Councillors
 Start audio call Start chat Send email

Overview Contact Organization **Memberships** LinkedIn

- BRC Communications
- Grp_Communications_Bundaberg Now
- Grp_Communications_Photos
- Grp_Communications_Publishing plan
- Grp_Communications_Story List
- Managers
- MBX-BRC Communications
- PCG Website Project

Michael Gorey
 Mayor's Chief of Staff • Mayor & Councillors
 Start audio call Start chat Send email

Overview Contact Organization **Memberships** LinkedIn

- Grp_Communications_Publishing plan
- Grp_Communications_Story List
- Managers
- MBX-BRC Communications
- PCG Website Project
- Supervisors List
- TempAllstaff
- ToolBox - Agenda

Released under Right to Information Act 2009

Kind regards

CR MAY MITCHELL
 Representative for Division 9
 Portfolio – Health, compliance and enforcement
 T 1300 883 699 M 0437 885 384
 E may.mitchell@bundaberg.qld.gov.au





From: Amanda Pafumi <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Friday, 26 March 2021 1:21 PM
To: May Mitchell <May.Mitchell@bundaberg.qld.gov.au>
Cc: Steve Johnston - CEO <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Re: Email contact card details

Hi Councillor Mitchell

I have been advised this is now updated and will be correct online once systems refresh in the next hour or so.

Kind regards,

Amanda Pafumi
[REDACTED]

On 26 Mar 2021, at 12:34 pm, May Mitchell <May.Mitchell@bundaberg.qld.gov.au> wrote:

Steve,

Please see attached.

As a Councillor Advisor cannot direct local government employees, is there a lag in relation to updating the email contact card details after the appointment of Councillor Advisor & Communications Manager?

Kind regards

CR MAY MITCHELL
Representative for Division 9
Portfolio – Health, compliance and enforcement
T 1300 883 699 M 0437 885 384
E may.mitchell@bundaberg.qld.gov.au

<image001.png>

<image002.png>

<image003.png>

<image004.png>

<image005.png>

<image007.jpg>

<image008.jpg>

<Screenshot 2021-03-25 195750.gif>

<Screenshot 2021-03-26 093439.gif>

Released under
Right to Information Act 2009

Amy Crouch

From: Paul Pedersen [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 6 April 2021 3:29 PM
To: May Mitchell
Subject: FW: Query about the recently appointed Mayor Advisor role

This may assist as well. Extract from Act.

Division 2A Councillor advisors

197A, Appointment and functions of councillor advisors

(1)A local government prescribed under section 197D(1)(a) may, by resolution, allow a councillor to appoint 1 or more appropriately qualified persons (each a councillor advisor) to assist the councillor in performing responsibilities under this Act.

Examples of assistance—

administrative support, coordinating media activities, event management functions, policy development, office management

Paul Pedersen

Senior Advisor-Southern Region

Strategy and Service Delivery
Local Government Division

Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning
Level 1/ 14 Branyan Street, BUNDABERG QLD 4670.

I acknowledge the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community.

I pay my respect to them and their cultures, and to the elders both past and present.

From: Paul Pedersen
Sent: Tuesday, 6 April 2021 3:26 PM
To: may.mitchell@bundaberg.qld.gov.au
Cc: John Martinkovic [REDACTED]
Subject: Query about the recently appointed Mayor Advisor role

Good afternoon Councillor Mitchell.

Thank you for your call earlier re: your query about the recently appointed Mayor Advisor role at Bundaberg Regional Council.

I will forward your query to the Department's Governance team for initial review.

As you discussed:

- Mr Michael Gorey was recently appointed into the newly created Mayor's Advisor role.
- Shortly after Mr Gorey' appointment the role title was changed to Mayoral Chief of staff.
- Mr Gorey is one of eight people who has administrator access to the Bundaberg NOW face book page, and is actively placing information about Council onto that page which you are unsure is appropriate for his role.

Councillor I would as you to review this information and if you believe I have missed anything please edit and return to me. I will then send to Governance for advice.

Thank you

Paul Pedersen
Senior Advisor-Southern Region
Strategy and Service Delivery
Local Government Division

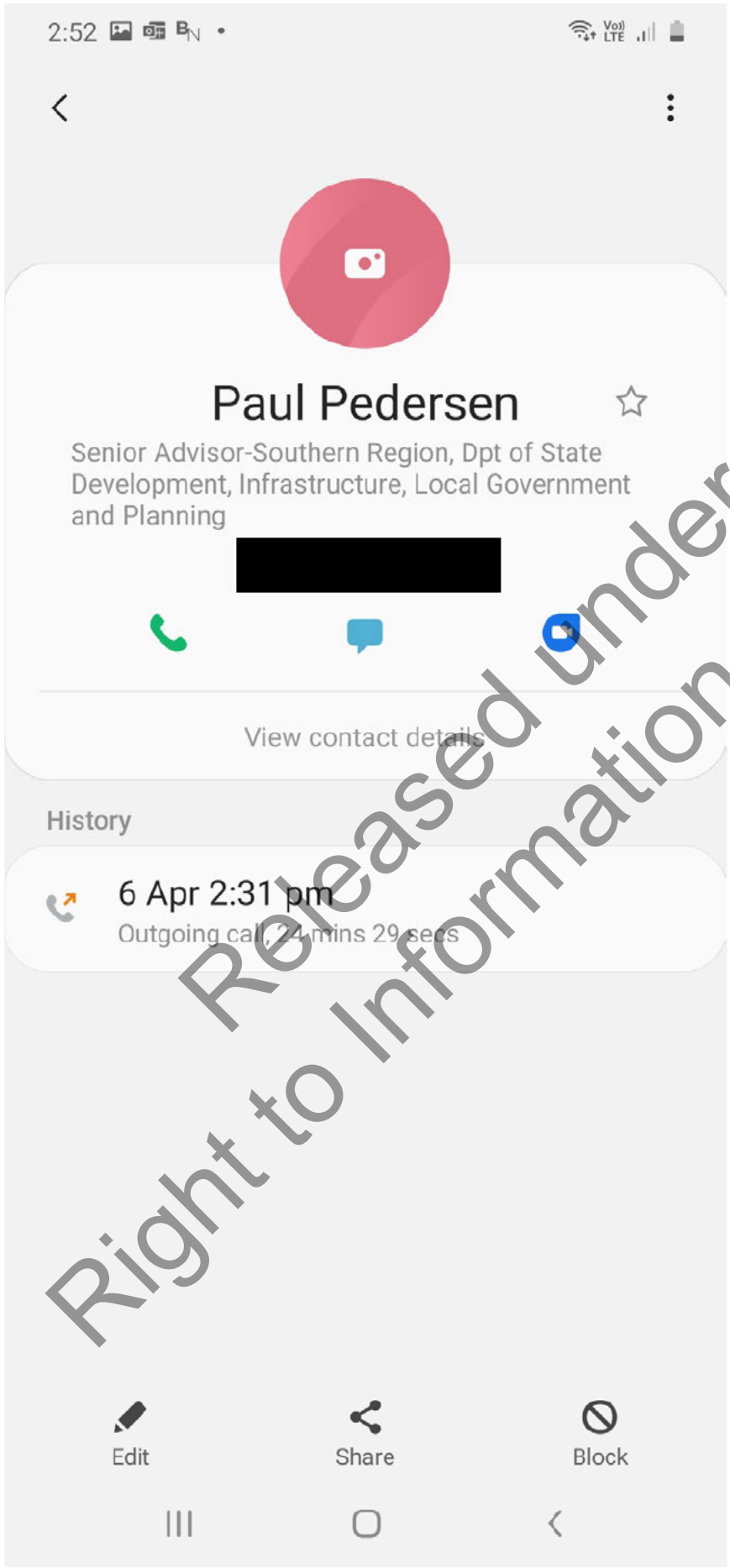
Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning
Level 1/ 14 Branyan Street, BUNDABERG QLD 4670.

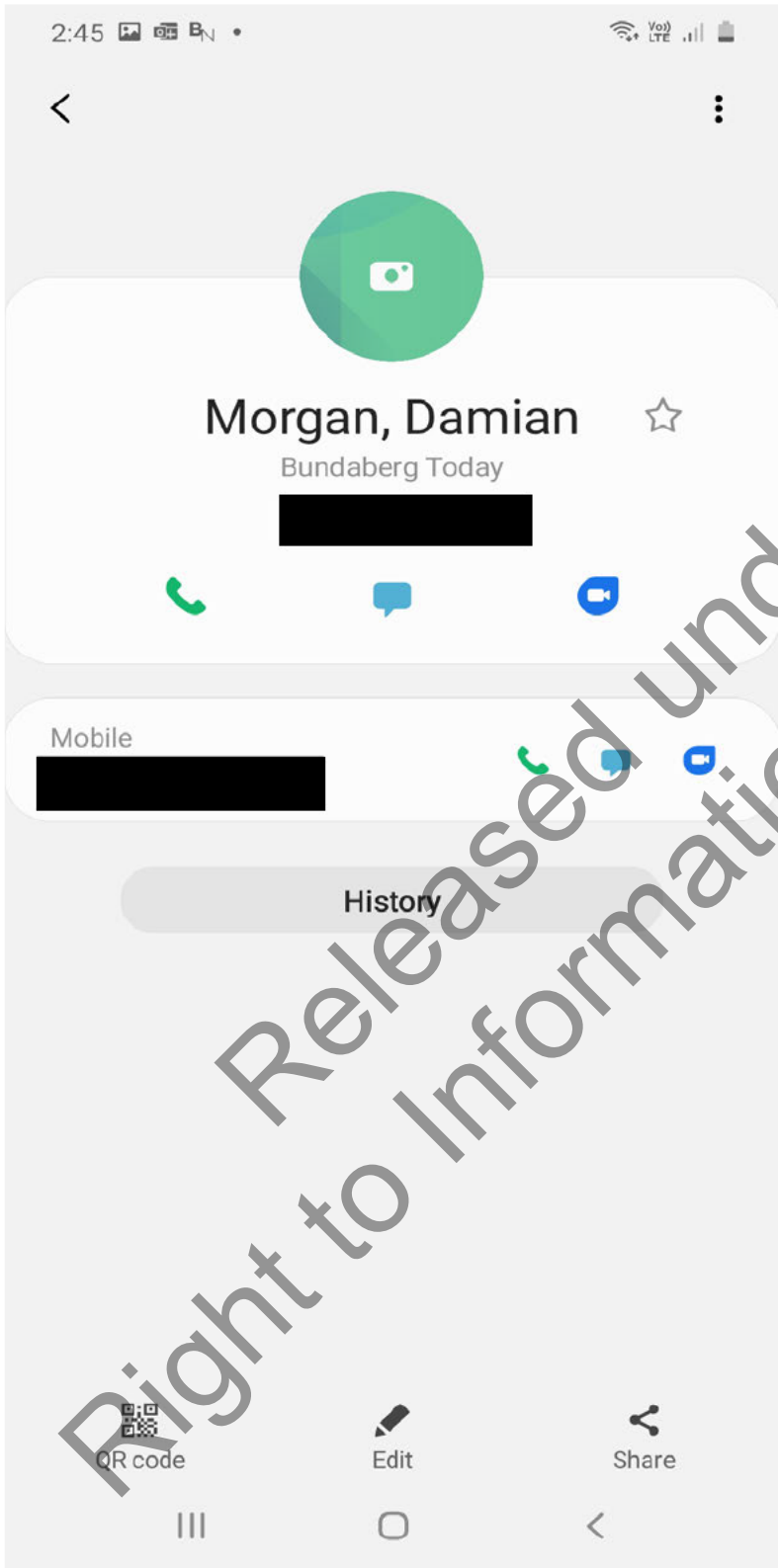
I acknowledge the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community.

I pay my respect to them and their cultures, and to the elders both past and present.

This email and any attachments may contain confidential or privileged information and may be protected by copyright. You must not use or disclose them other than for the purposes for which they were supplied. The confidentiality and privilege attached to this message and attachment is not waived by reason of mistaken delivery to you. If you are not the intended recipient, you must not use, disclose, retain, forward or reproduce this message or any attachments. If you receive this message in error please notify the sender by return email or telephone, and destroy and delete all copies. The Department does not accept any responsibility for any loss or damage that may result from reliance on, or use of, any information contained in this email and/or attachments.

Released under Act 2009
Right to Information








2:45


VoLTE

< History

 15 Mar 3:13 pm
Incoming call/Mobile
3 mins 21 secs

 15 Mar 3:03 pm
Outgoing call/Mobile
0 mins 14 secs

 15 Mar 9:16 am
Outgoing call/Mobile
0 mins 24 secs

 13 Mar 9:18 am
Incoming call/Mobile
2 mins 15 secs

Released under
Right to Information Act 2009

