

PURPOSE

AIMS conducts a range of communications activities to promote the Institute's activities and the impact of its research. This policy establishes a clear set of requirements for people and parties involved in communicating information publicly about the Institute's activities and the impact of its research so they may do so within an authorised and accountable environment.

Effective communication is essential to ensure that AIMS' reputation for scientific excellence and integrity is protected and enhanced. This includes ensuring that communications are purposeful, clear, consistent and coordinated.

The quality and accuracy of communications contributes to the achievement of AIMS' goals and has a significant bearing on the Institute's public image and reputation.

SCOPE

This policy relates to persons engaging in professional and personal discourse in the public domain relevant to their role at AIMS. It applies to staff (including casual and temporary staff), AIMS Council members, students, external contractors visiting or working on AIMS properties and any other parties that have entered into arrangements with AIMS to participate in AIMS activities. The policy does not include the publication of scientific reports or articles in science journals.

POLICY STATEMENT

As a publicly funded research agency, AIMS has a statutory requirement to facilitate the application or utilisation of the results of its research and enhance the nation's scientific capabilities. AIMS also encourages promoting activities and achievements that provide scientific solutions to demonstrate value to the nation.

The Institute is committed to communicating such information openly, accurately, honestly and in a timely manner.

This policy also acknowledges that responsibility for public commentary about the formulation and implementation of government policy rests with the Australian Government.

Communicating through the Media

AIMS science communication staff enable researchers to manage and maximise the opportunities of external engagement with the media, while also managing any adverse consequences that may affect the Institute and staff.

The AIMS Media Procedure details the means in which media engagement takes place within AIMS.

Staff (and those included in the above policy scope) involved in media activity are obliged to abide by the principles outlined in the AIMS Media Procedure, the Institute's Terms and Conditions of Employment and its Code of Conduct.

Notifications to Council, Minister and key stakeholders

Recognition of the perceptions, concerns and communication needs of partners and key stakeholders is critical to building and maintaining credible long-term relationships and enhancing AIMS' reputation.

As part of the ongoing focus on effective communication:

- AIMS Council will be kept informed of significant issues relating to the communications of the Institute and of media activity that has the potential to impact on AIMS' reputation (either positively or negatively).
- The responsible Minister is also to be kept informed, in a timely and accurate way, of significant issues relating to public commentary. In particular, AIMS is to provide prior notice to the Minister and their department, of significant announcements, media releases and events that are likely to attract parliamentary interest or significant media attention.
- The different communication needs, information preferences and expectations of AIMS' wide range of stakeholders will be accommodated. Coordination with relevant research partners/funders is to take place before information pertaining to partnerships and science collaborations is released via the media and other publicly available channels. Information release is to be carried out consistent with any contractual obligations, and appropriate acknowledgement requirements are to be met.
- Due consideration is to be given to informing industry bodies or other interest groups when relevant public announcements are to be made through the media.

Social Media

AIMS uses social media to promote its work and engage with stakeholders, the science community, professionals and the public.

Despite the accessibility of using social media for personal use, the professional application of social media is a distinct communication channel within AIMS. Social media should not replace other official channels but complement them. The social media content should align with that available through other official channels.

The Social Media Procedure covers the use of official AIMS social media accounts and personal accounts. Staff (and those included in the above policy scope) who use official AIMS social media accounts and accounts for personal and professional use must adhere to the principles outlined in the Social Media Procedure, the Institute's Terms and Conditions of Employment and its Code of Conduct.

REFERENCES

AIMS Social Media Procedure AIMS-IC-06
AIMS Media Procedure AIMS-IC-05
AIMS Code of Conduct AIMS-HR-08
Ministerial Statement of Expectations

DEFINITIONS

These definitions apply to all documents in the Communications Policy.

Communications – any officially released news item or statement made in the public sphere and any public statement or comment made through open communication channels that pertain to AIMS research or any scientific or organisational position.

Channel – the method by which a statement is provided to a particular audience: this includes media, web site, conference presentation, or social media accounts.

Media – those organisations that provide news services such as the mainstream television, radio and online and print media with regular bulletins or publication cycles, and established networks and business premises.

Social media - forms of online electronic communication for social networking (such as blogs, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter etc) through which users create virtual communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as photographs and video).

Stakeholders –those individuals and organisations considered to have a genuine interest in AIMS' activities and scientific research. They may include research organisations, NGOs, interest groups, professional associations, elected officials, local and state and Federal government agencies, and industry peak bodies.