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**Media Policy  
2021**

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

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### **Document History**

<b>Doc No.</b>	<b>Date Amended</b>	<b>Details/Comments eg Resolution No.</b>
1	September 2021	Endorsed at Council Meeting 28 September 2021

### **Further Document Information and Relationships**

List here the related strategies, procedures, references, policy or other documents that have a bearing on this Policy and that may be useful reference material for users of this Policy.

<b>Related Legislation*</b>	<p>Local Government Act 1993</p> <p>Government Information Public Access Act 2009</p> <p>Privacy and Personal Information Act 1998</p> <p>State Records Act 1998</p>
<b>Related Policies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Code of Conduct</li> <li>• Complaint Management Policy</li> <li>• Privacy Policy</li> <li>• Interaction between Councillors and Staff Policy</li> <li>• Records Management Policy</li> </ul>
<b>Related Procedures/ Protocols, Statements, documents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procedures for preparing a media release</li> <li>• Media procedures (in development)</li> <li>• Social media user guidelines (in development)</li> </ul>

Note: Any reference to Legislation will be updated in the Policy as required. See website <http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/> for current Acts, Regulations and Environmental Planning Instruments.

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**1. OBJECTIVES**

This Media Policy establishes a communication protocol between Council and the media that aims to be consistent, well informed, timely and appropriately managed to take advantage of the media’s role in the sharing of information to and within the community.

This Policy establishes a framework for an effective working relationship with media representatives, including the identification of Council’s authorised spokespersons and the responsibilities of Councillors and Council staff.

This Media Policy contributes to Council’s consistent communication strategy for an informed and engaged public while protecting and enhancing Council’s reputation. It applies to Council’s own media publishing platforms including newsletter, website and social media.

**2. SCOPE**

This policy applies to internally generated media communications as well as communications between Council officials and media outlets.

**3. DEFINITIONS**

Council affairs	Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ matters before the council;</li> <li>○ council policy;</li> <li>○ interpretation of policy;</li> <li>○ management of council business or staff;</li> <li>○ other council affairs and business; or</li> <li>○ other matters that may commit the council’s resources.</li> </ul>
Council official	Includes Councillors, Council staff, administrators, Council committee members, conduct reviewers and delegates of Council.
Media	Communication channels through which news, data, information and entertainment are broadcast, including, but not limited to, broadcast, print and online outlets including social media
Media spokesperson	Person/s identified as having authority to speak on behalf of Council
Social media	Online platforms designed to share content between users

#### **4. STATEMENT**

Council is committed to connecting with the community using a wide range of traditional and contemporary communication methods, of which media plays a significant role. Media can also be a key influencer of Council's reputation, and for both these reasons it is important that Council has an established framework for interaction with the media.

Council will proactively pursue media opportunities to connect in a genuine way with both the community and a broader audience.

Council will embrace opportunities presented by the media and actively pursue positive media exposure.

Media organisations and their representatives will be treated equally, respectfully and without bias.

Council will actively engage with media to:

- promote the projects and services of Council
- inform the community about projects, policies, initiatives and activities
- engage the community on key decisions Council might be making
- provide essential updates to the community during a crisis or emergency
- promote the local government area to visitors
- correct any reported inaccuracies should they arise

Council will also use media as a means of listening to and keeping abreast of activities, interests and communications, distributed by individual members of the community or stakeholder groups that relate to council service areas.

#### **5. LEGISLATIVE AND STRATEGIC CONTEXT**

This policy is intended to be read and applied consistently with the roles and responsibilities of the Mayor, Councillors and the General Manager under the NSW *Local Government Act 1993*, and their conduct obligations under the Council's adopted Code of Conduct.

This policy is intended to be read and applied consistently with the implied right of freedom of political expression under the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution, as interpreted by the High Court of Australia.

#### **6. SPOKESPERSON AUTHORITY AND DELEGATION**

The Mayor and the General Manager are the official spokespeople on Council affairs, as per the NSW Local Government Act (1993) unless another Councillor or Council employee has been formally delegated the role of spokesperson.

### **6.1. Staff**

The General Manager is the official spokesperson on operational matters. The General Manager may delegate other Council staff to speak on their behalf where appropriate.

Staff as private citizens are entitled to enter into public debate and make comment on civic affairs provided they do not give the impression they are speaking in their official position or on behalf of Council. Staff must also ensure that any comments to the media are not in breach of the Code of Conduct.

### **6.2. Mayor and Councillors**

The Mayor is the principal spokesperson of the governing body on the affairs of the Council. The Mayor has the discretion to delegate this role to other Councillors, for example, when the Mayor is not available or where another Councillor is best placed to comment, because the issue is of particular interest to them or is within their particular area of expertise. The Mayor can also authorise a Committee Chairperson to speak on issues concerning the deliberations and decisions made by that Committee.

The roles of Councillors include representing the collective interests of residents, ratepayers and the local community, and facilitating communication between the local community and the governing body. In so doing, they engage with the community through various forums including media, where they make political or other comments about Council affairs.

When engaging with the media:

- Councillors may openly discuss matters of interest with the media unless disclosure of certain information contravenes Council's obligations of confidentiality or privacy, duty of care, or could infringe other laws or regulations that govern its operations.
- Councillors have an obligation to support Council decisions and shall not use the media to damage Council's reputation or undermine public confidence in the Council or local government generally.
- As members of the community, Councillors are entitled to offer their personal views on matters which are the subject of community engagement, always bearing in mind how that may be perceived given their substantive role with Council. Councillors should be clear to the media when they are expressing their personal opinions about Council affairs.
- Refrain from using the media to make negative personal reflections on each other or Council staff.

### **6.3. Media enquiries and request for interviews**

Media enquiries and request for interviews with a Council spokesperson should be directed to Council's Communications Officer.

In the absence of a Communications Officer, media enquiries should be directed to the Executive Officer and/or to the General Manager or Mayor.

Deadlines for interview requests should be accommodated wherever possible, however no Council staff member or Councillor is expected or encouraged to give on-the-spot interviews.

## **7. REPUTATION AND RISK**

Council will openly discuss matters of interest with media unless disclosure of information contravenes Council's obligations of confidentiality or privacy, duty of care, or could infringe on other laws or regulations that govern its operations.

When communicating resolutions of Council, it may be pertinent to include considerations discussed at public meetings (as they publicly appear in webcasts) in instances where such detail may assist community understanding of a complex issue, subject to the information not contravening Council's obligations as stated above.

Council will collect, retain and dispose of media communication in line with Council's Records Management Policy.

### **7.1. Proactive engagement and transparency**

Council will wherever possible proactively release information to media and make the Mayor, General Manager or their approved delegate available for comment or interview in a timely manner.