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## **Media Policy (Councillors)**

## Document Version Control

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## 1. Scope

The Media Policy provides a framework to assist Council when dealing with the media and to ensure that media engagement by Councillors is consistent, accurate and professional and enhances Council's reputation.

Effective media engagement can assist in keeping the community informed, explain decisions and promote community confidence in Council and its decisions.

## 2. Purpose

The Media Policy has the following objectives:

- to maintain the accuracy, reliability, and integrity of information
- ensure confidential information is managed appropriately
- reduce the risk to reputation where information is not managed appropriately
- to promote positive media relationships
- to clearly indicate Council's authorised spokespersons
- to ensure appropriate authorisation and responsibility for any information provided to media outlets.

## 3. Who can engage with the media

### The CEO

- 3.1 The CEO is the official spokesperson for Council on operational and administrative matters.
- 3.2 The CEO may delegate to other council staff to speak on their behalf where appropriate, (for example, where the delegated staff member has professional expertise regarding the subject matter, or the CEO is unavailable).

### The Mayor

- 3.3 The Mayor is the principal member and spokesperson of the governing body of the Council, including representing the views of the Council as to its local priorities (section 226(c) of the *Local Government Act 1993*).
- 3.4 If the Mayor is unavailable, the Deputy Mayor may act as Council's spokesperson.
- 3.5 The Mayor may delegate their role as spokesperson to other Councillors where appropriate, (for example, where another Councillor is best placed to comment, because the issue is of particular interest to them, or it is within their particular area of expertise).

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## Councillors

- 3.6 As a member of the governing body and as a representative of the community, councillors are free to express their personal views to the media.
- 3.7 When engaging with the media Councillors:
- must not purport to speak for Council unless authorised to do so.
  - must clarify when speaking to the media that they are expressing their personal views as an individual councillor and that they are not speaking for Council (unless authorised to do so)
  - must uphold and accurately represent the policies and decisions of Council
  - must not disclose council information unless authorised to do so, and
  - must seek information and guidance from the CEO / Media Coordinator where appropriate before providing comment to the media to ensure they have the most up-to-date and relevant information and have considered reputational or other risks.
- 3.8 In the interests of promoting a positive, safe and harmonious organisational culture, Councillors should endeavour to resolve personal differences privately and must not prosecute them publicly through the media.
- 3.9 Where Councillors (including the Mayor) become aware of potential issues that could result in media interest, they should provide this information to the CEO/ Media Coordinator.

## Induction and training

- 3.10 Media engagement training will be provided to Councillors as part of their induction or refresher training or as part of their ongoing professional development program.

## Councillors' questions about media engagement

- 3.11 Councillors must direct any questions about their obligations under this policy to the CEO.

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## 4. Standards of conduct when engaging with the media

- 4.1 Councillors must comply with Council's Code of Conduct when engaging with the media in an official capacity or in connection with their role as a council official.
- 4.2 Councillors must not share information or make comments to the media through either direct or indirect mechanisms that:
- a) are defamatory, offensive, humiliating, threatening, or intimidating to other council officials or members of the public
  - b) contains profane language or is sexual in nature
  - c) constitutes harassment and/or bullying within the meaning of the Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW, or is unlawfully discriminatory
  - d) is contrary to their duties under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* and their responsibilities under any policies or procedures adopted by Council to ensure workplace health and safety
  - e) contains content about Council, council officials or members of the public that is misleading or deceptive
  - f) divulges confidential Council information
  - g) breaches the privacy of other council officials or members of the public
  - h) contains allegations of suspected breaches of Council's Code of Conduct or information about the consideration of a matter under the Procedures for the Administration of the Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW
  - i) could be perceived to be an official comment on behalf of Council where they have not been authorised to make such comment
  - j) commits Council to any action
  - k) violates an order made by a court
  - l) breaches copyright
  - m) advertises, endorses, or solicits commercial products or business.

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## 5. Use of media during emergencies

- 5.1 During emergencies, such as natural disasters or public health incidents, the Communications and Engagement Team will be responsible for coordinating media releases and statements on behalf of the Council.
- 5.2 Councillors must avoid providing comment or information to the media that is inconsistent with official advice issued by Council and any other agency coordinating the emergency response.
- 5.3 Training on media engagement during emergencies may be provided to Councillors.

## 6. Media engagement in the lead up to elections

- 6.1 This policy does not prevent the Mayor or Councillors who are candidates at a council or any other election from providing comment to the media in their capacity as candidates at the election.
- 6.2 Any media comment provided by the Mayor or Councillors who are candidates at a council or another election must not be provided in an advertisement, newspaper column, or a radio or television broadcast paid for by Council or produced by Council or with council resources.

## 7. Records management requirements

- 7.1 Media content created and received by Councillors acting in their official capacity is a Council record and may be subject to information access applications made under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*. These records must also be managed in accordance with the requirements of the *State Records Act 1998* and Council's approved records management policies and practices.

## 8. Definitions

In this Media Policy, the following terms have the following meanings:

**council official** means Councillors, members of staff and delegates of Council (including members of committees that are delegates of Council)

**Media Coordinator** Means the position assigned by the CEO within the organisation to undertake that role, currently Communications and Engagement Manager

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<b>media</b>	means print, broadcast and online media used for communicating information to the public, including, but not limited to, newspapers, magazines, internet publishers, radio, and television broadcasters
<b>personal information</b>	means information or an opinion (including information or an opinion forming part of a database and whether or not recorded in a material form) about an individual whose identity is apparent or can reasonably be ascertained from the information or opinion
<b>social media</b>	means online platforms and applications, such as but not limited to social networking sites, wikis, blogs, microblogs, video and audio sharing sites, and message boards, that allow people to easily publish, share and discuss content. Examples of social media platforms include, but are not limited to Facebook, X (Twitter), Snapchat, LinkedIn, Yammer, YouTube, Instagram, Flickr and Wikipedia

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## 9. References and Legislation

Office of Local Government Model Media Policy 2022

City of Ryde Social Media Policy

City of Ryde Code of Conduct

Local Government Act 1993

Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009

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