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Media Policy

Document Version Control

Document Name:	Media Policy
CM Reference WORD:	D21/51096
CM Reference PDF:	D14/94484
Document Status:	Approved by General Manager / Approved by Council
Version Number:	Version 1.2
Review Date:	April 2021
Owner:	Communications and Engagement Department
Endorsed By:	Council on 19 October 2010
Distribution:	Internal and External

Change History

Version	Review Date	Author	Reason for Change
1.0	10 October 2010	Community Relations	Adopted by Council
1.1	26 September 2014	Communications and Media	Updated into new template
1.2	9 April 2021	Communications and Engagement	Updated into new template and amended titles and departments

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1. Executive Summary

The Media Policy has been developed to ensure that all staff and Councillors understand their obligations and responsibilities when dealing with the media. The Policy clearly states who can issue a media release and discuss topics related to Council matters when approached by the media for comment.

2. Scope

This Media Policy is one of a suite of communication channels the City of Ryde uses to inform the public of Council activities, policies and events.

The Media Policy provides a framework for Councillors and delegated staff to communicate with media organisations to promote positive coverage of Council affairs and respond to enquiries and concerns in a fair, accurate and reliable manner.

3. Purpose

The Media Policy has the following objectives:

- to ensure consistency by Councillors and staff in dealing with the media
- to promote open exchange of information between Council and the media
- to limit the publication of inaccurate information which promotes conflict or embarrassment for employees and Councillors
- to limit the possibility of miscommunication and reputation risk
- 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.

4. Policy Objectives

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that all staff and Councillors are clear about their roles and responsibilities relating to their interaction with the media as an employee and representative of Council.

5. Key Guidelines

- the Mayor and the General Manager are Council's official spokespersons on all matters
- the General Manager may nominate other staff to act as spokespeople for the Council
- the Mayor may nominate another Councillor to speak on a particular matter

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- the Media Officer is responsible for coordinating media liaison and issuing press releases and has been delegated authority to respond to media enquiries on behalf of Council
- no staff member, other than those authorised by the General Manager are to handle an enquiry from the media without prior approval from one of the above
- information given to the media of a controversial, legal or ethical nature requires the approval of the General Manager and / or the Mayor.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

The Mayor	Council's official spokesperson on all policy matters. Authorised signatory for Letters to the Editor on policy issues.
Deputy Mayor	Act as the Mayor's delegated spokesperson if the Mayor is not available.
Councillors	Provide the media with comment, identifying that this is provided as their own personal opinion and not representing the official position of Council.
General Manager	Authorised to make statements on behalf of Council to the media. Council's official spokesperson on all policy, operations and administration issues. Authorised signatory for Letters to the Editor on these issues.
Directors / Manager Communications and Engagement	Authorised to make statements on behalf of Council to the media provided there has been prior consultation with the General Manager and statements are made in conformity with any directions given by the General Manager.
Media Officer	Responsible for coordinating responses and providing information to the media on behalf of Council. Responsible for distributing all written media comment to media organisations.
Staff	No media role unless requested by the Media Officer, Director or General Manager to provide information or comment.

7. Dealing with the Media

- all media enquiries should be directed to the Media Officer
- employees must not speak to the media about matters related to Council unless authorised to do so

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- employees may not provide any comment or information to the media with the intention of contesting or undermining Council policy or casting Council, Councillors or Council staff in a negative light
- employees may speak to the media or write Letters to the Editor as private individuals with the following restrictions:
 - a) they do not comment on Council business or policy
 - b) they are not identified as Council employees
 - c) their comments are not perceived as representing official Council position or policy.
- from time to time it may be necessary for a Letter to the Editor to be written as an official Council communication to inform the community about a particular matter. Such letters must be issued through the Media Officer subject to the approval of the Mayor and / or General Manager
- in the event of an industrial dispute (or an incident likely to lead to an industrial dispute), statements on behalf of Council employees should be issued via the relevant union
- when appropriate, a member of Council staff may be nominated as the sole spokesperson on a specific issue, event or initiative within their operational portfolio, to ensure consistency of message
- staff should treat all media outlets equally and should avoid giving one outlet preferential treatment. Media releases should be distributed to all media outlets at the same time
- when a media organisation or representative requests information on a specific topic, the response must be provided exclusively to that organisation or representative
- staff should avoid providing information “off the record” during media interviews. It is best to assume that everything said to any media representative may appear in the media
- contractors or service providers employed by Council must refer all media enquiries relating to Council to the Media Officer.

8. Councillors and the Media

- every Councillor has a right to express a private opinion on any issue, whether or not that opinion reflects Council’s official position, but Councillors must carefully identify the role in which they speak or make comment
- whenever Councillors publicly express their own opinions, they must make it clear they are speaking for themselves, unless delegated by the Mayor, and not for Council, unless they are supporting a Council position
- when Councillors speak "for the Council" when delegated by the Mayor, they must express and support Council’s entire policy on the issue at hand.

9. Media Releases

- staff may prepare draft media releases for review, but they must be forwarded to the Media Officer for review and distribution (if approved) to ensure they maintain Council’s branding and language style

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- under no circumstances should a City of Ryde media release be issued without the Media Officer’s knowledge and the prior approval of the General Manager, the Mayor or delegated authority
- a media release should never be issued quoting a Councillor or member of staff without that person’s prior knowledge
- staff with specialist knowledge may be quoted in media releases with the permission of the relevant delegated authority
- media releases must be approved by the General Manager or the delegated authority before posting on the Council website; and
- all new employees are to be given Council’s Media Policy as a part of the induction process.

10. References and Legislation

This Policy incorporates information from:

Local Government Act 1993

Local Government (General) Regulation 2005

The City of Ryde would like to thank and acknowledge the City of Newcastle and Bathurst Regional Council for their contribution to this Policy.

11. Review Process and Endorsement

- This policy is to be endorsed by the Executive Team and adopted by Council.
- This policy should be reviewed annually
- Edits to this policy such as titles, departments or directorate names, updates to legislation or branding updates are considered minor in nature and not required to be formally endorsed
- Substantial changes to this policy are to be endorsed by the Executive Team and adopted by Council.

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