

## Media Policy

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### 1. Scope

- 1.1 This Policy applies to all City of Parramatta Council (**Council**) Officials, including Councillors and Staff, who engage with the Media.
- 1.2 The Policy applies to all engagement with the Media on Council-related matters, whether face-to-face, online, by phone, any phone messaging system or in writing, and whether acting in an official capacity on behalf of Council or not.
- 1.3 This Policy does not apply to Social Media use, the framework for which is established under Council's Social Media Policy.

### 2. Purpose

- 2.1 This Policy provides a framework for the administration and management of Council's interactions with the Media.
- 2.2 This Policy aims to ensure Media engagement by Council Officials is consistent, accurate, and professional, and enhances Council's reputation.

### 3. Policy

#### Principles

- 3.1 Council is committed to upholding and promoting the following principles of Media engagement:

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**Openness** Council will promote an open exchange of information between Council and the Media.

**Consistency** Council will ensure consistency by all Councillors and Staff when communicating with the Media in an official capacity.

**Accuracy** The information Council shares with the Media will be a source of truth for the community, and Council will endeavour to correct inaccuracies when they occur.

**Timeliness** Council will ensure that Media enquiries are responded to in a timely manner.

## Administrative Framework for Engagement with the Media

3.2 The Chief Executive Officer (**CEO**), or their delegate, will assign a suitably qualified member of Staff to be Council's Media Coordinator.

3.2.1 The CEO, or their delegate, may assign more than one member of Staff to be a Media Coordinator.

3.3 The Media Coordinator's role is to:

- (a) be the lead point of contact for all Media enquiries, requests for interviews, and requests to film or photograph Council Staff, facilities, or events for news and current affairs purposes;
- (b) be responsible for managing the preparation of Media statements prior to their release;
- (c) liaise with relevant Staff regarding Media enquiries and requests, where appropriate;
- (d) ensure that Media statements are approved by the Lord Mayor and/or CEO prior to their release, as appropriate;
- (e) develop Media training and/or induction to be provided to relevant Staff and Councillors;
- (f) maintain a record of all Media enquiries and responses;
- (g) ensure that Media organisations and their representatives are treated by Council professionally, equally, and without bias;
- (h) ensure that Media enquiries are dealt with promptly; and
- (i) ensure that all Media releases are published on Council's website.

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Who Can Engage with the Media

3.4 The CEO:

3.4.1 The CEO is the official spokesperson for Council on operational and administrative matters.

3.4.2 The CEO may delegate to other Staff to speak on their behalf where appropriate, such as where the Staff member has professional expertise regarding the subject matter, or where the CEO is unavailable.

3.5 The Lord Mayor:

3.5.1 Pursuant to section 226(c) of the *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW), the Lord Mayor is the principal member and spokesperson of the Governing Body of Council, including representing the views of Council as to its local priorities.

3.5.2 Where the Lord Mayor is unavailable, the Lord Mayor and CEO will determine an appropriate delegate to be the Council's spokesperson.

3.6 Councillors:

3.6.1 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, subject to the requirements set out in this Policy.

3.6.2 When engaging with the Media, Councillors:

- (a) must not purport to speak for the Council unless authorised to do so;
- (b) 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;
- (c) must uphold and accurately represent the policies and decisions of Council;
- (d) must not disclose Council information, unless authorised to do so; and
- (e) must seek information and guidance from the Corporate Affairs Manager where appropriate before providing comment to the Media, to ensure they have the

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most up-to-date and relevant information and have considered reputational or other risks.

3.6.3 In the interests of promoting a positive, safe, and harmonious organisational culture, Councillors should endeavour to resolve personal differences privately and must not prosecute grievances publicly through the Media.

3.6.4 Where Councillors (including the Lord Mayor) become aware of potential issues that could result in Media interest, they should provide this information to the Corporate Affairs Manager.

3.7 Council Staff:

3.7.1 Staff must not speak to the Media about matters relating to Council unless approved as a delegate by the CEO and Lord Mayor, and authorised by the Corporate Affairs Manager to do so.

3.7.2 If Staff receive a Media enquiry or are invited to comment to the Media on a matter relating to Council, they must refer the enquiry to the Corporate Affairs Manager.

3.7.3 Staff are free to express their personal views to the Media on matters that do not relate to Council, but in doing so, must not make comments that reflect badly on Council or that bring it into disrepute.

3.7.4 If authorised to speak to the Media, Staff:

- (a) must uphold and accurately represent the policies and decisions of Council;
- (b) must not disclose Council information, unless authorised to do so by the Corporate Affairs Manager; and
- (c) must seek information and guidance from the Corporate Affairs Manager, 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.

3.7.5 Where Staff become aware of potential issues that could result in Media interest, they should provide this information to the Corporate Affairs Manager.

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Standards of Conduct When Engaging with the Media

- 3.8 All Media engagement by Council Officials must be conducted in a professional, timely, and respectful manner.
- 3.9 Council Officials 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.
- 3.10 Council Officials 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 Council's Code of Conduct, or is unlawfully discriminatory;
  - (d) is contrary to their duties under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (NSW) and their responsibilities under any policies or procedures adopted by Council to ensure workplace health and safety;
  - (e) contains content about the 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; or
  - (m) advertises, endorses, or solicits commercial products or business.

Use of Media During Emergencies

- 3.11 During emergencies, such as natural disasters or public health incidents, the Corporate Affairs Manager and Media Team Leader will be responsible for coordinating Media releases and statements on behalf of Council.

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- 3.12 Council Officials must not provide comment or information to the Media that is inconsistent with official advice issued by Council and any other agency coordinating the emergency response.

Media Engagement in the Lead up to Elections

- 3.13 This Policy does not prevent the Lord Mayor or Councillors who are candidates at a local government or any other election from providing comment to the Media in their capacity as candidates at the election.

- 3.14 Any Media comment provided by the Lord Mayor or Councillors who are candidates at a local government 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.

**4. Delegation**

- 4.1 There are Administrative and/or Legislative Delegations applicable to this Policy, which are provided for in Council's Delegations Manual.

**5. Procedure**

- 5.1 Media content created and received by Council Officials acting in their official capacity is a Council record. These records must be managed in accordance with the requirements of the *State Records Act 1998 (NSW)*, and Council's records management policies and procedures.

- 5.1.1 Media content created and received by Council Officials acting in their official capacity may be subject to information access applications made under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW)*.

- 5.2 Council may provide training to Council Officials who engage or are authorised to engage regularly with the Media.

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

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5.2.2 Council will ensure a suitably trained media spokesperson is available to represent Council during times of emergency.

5.3 Councillors must direct any questions about their obligations under this Policy to the Corporate Affairs Manager.

5.4 Concerns or complaints about the administration of Council's engagement with the Media should be made to the Corporate Affairs Manager in the first instance.

5.5 Alleged breaches of this Policy will be dealt with by following the processes set out in Council's Code of Conduct.

## 6. Definitions

Councillor	A person elected or appointed to civic office as a member of the Governing Body of Council, including the Lord Mayor.
Council Official	Refers to Councillors, members of Staff, and delegates of Council including members of committees
Governing Body	The elected representatives, called Councillors, comprise the Governing Body of City of Parramatta Council.
Media	Refers to 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. For the purposes of this Policy, Media does not include Social Media.
Media Coordinator	Means a person appointed under clause 3.2 of this Policy
Social Media	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, Twitter, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Yammer, YouTube, Instagram, WeChat, TikTok, Flickr, and Wikipedia.
Staff	A person who is directly employed by Council on a full time, part time, temporary, or casual basis.

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<b>REFERENCES</b>	<i>Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW)</i> <i>Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)</i> <i>State Records Act 1998 (NSW)</i> <i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW)</i>
<b>ASSOCIATED POLICIES</b>	Code of Conduct Councillor and Staff Interaction Policy Social Media Policy
<b>ATTACHMENTS</b>	Nil

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