



**Policy Owner:** Director Corporate Services

**Direction:** 5. Our Civic Leadership

## 1. STATEMENT OF INTENT

- 1.1 To set out the approved guidelines for communication with the media on Council's behalf.
- 1.2 To ensure the media are provided with factually correct and timely information.
- 1.3 To uphold the principle of 'open government' as set out in North Sydney Council's vision statement.

## 2. ELIGIBILITY

- 2.1 All Council staff and Councillors, where the latter are representing Council's official position. All service providers and contractors employed by Council.
- 2.2 All written or verbal statements released to the media on Council's behalf.

## 3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 Media statement - a written statement issued by the Council that states its position on a matter of Council business, Council policy or public interest.
- 3.2 Media comment - verbal statement issued by the Council that states its position on a matter of Council business, Council policy or public interest.
- 3.3 Council spokesperson - the Mayor is the official spokesperson for the Council. In the absence of the Mayor, the General Manager or the Communications and Events Manager will assume the role of Council spokesperson.

## 4. PROVISIONS

- 4.1 All media statements are prepared by the Communications and Events Manager and approved prior to release by the Mayor, General Manager and

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relevant officers. Media statements issued on behalf of the Council must be in the approved format.

- 4.2 All media enquiries must be referred in the first instance to the Communications and Events Manager. In the absence of the Communications and Events Manager, media enquiries should be referred to either the Mayor or the General Manager.
- 4.3 Staff must not communicate with the media unless prior approval has been obtained from the General Manager. Providing approval is given staff may provide factual information to the media on Council business or policy matters.
- 4.4 Council staff and Councillors must not discuss staff, confidential legal advice or commercial in-confidence matters with the media.
- 4.5 Councillors may communicate with the media provided their comments are not perceived as representing official Council position or policy.
- 4.6 Councillors may not communicate with Council staff via social media, this includes being 'friends' with Council staff on Facebook etc.
- 4.7 Council staff may speak to the media as private individuals, with the following restrictions:
  - a) that they do not comment on Council business or policy;
  - b) that they are not identified as Council employees; and
  - c) that their comments are not perceived as representing official Council position or policy.
- 4.8 Contractors or service providers employed by Council must refer all media enquiries relating to Council to the Communications and Events Manager.
- 4.9 Requests to film or photograph Council staff, properties or events for news and current affairs purposes must be referred to the Communications and Events Manager for prior approval.
- 4.10 All Council and Committee meetings are open to the media, except those dealing with staff issues, confidential legal advice or commercial in-confidence matters.
- 4.11 All Council documents that are on the public record are open to perusal by the media, except those relating to staff, confidential legal advice and commercial in-confidence matters. All file perusals by the media are subject to the provisions of related legislation and Council policies dealing with privacy and access to information.

- 4.12 Unauthorised release of Council documents by staff or Councillors will be subject to disciplinary action.
- 4.13 In the event of an emergency in the North Sydney local government area involving serious injury to and/or death of residents, Councillors or Council staff, or significant damage to Council assets, the following procedure will apply to all Councillors and Council staff:
- a) The Communications and Events Manager must be notified immediately of details of the incident. The Communications and Events Manager is on 24-hour call.
  - b) Details of the incident must not be discussed with any media representative unless approved in advance by the General Manager.

## **5. RESPONSIBILITY/ACCOUNTABILITY**

- 5.1 The Mayor is the Council's official spokesperson and is responsible for:
- a) Speaking to and supporting the resolutions and policies of Council
  - b) Providing comment on other matters of public interest.
- 5.1 In the absence of the Mayor, the General Manager is the Council's official spokesperson. The General Manager is responsible for providing comment on Council policy and all operational matters relating to the Council.
- 5.2 In the absence of the Mayor and the General Manager, the Communications and Events Manager is the Council's official spokesperson. The Communications and Events Manager is responsible for providing comment on Council policy and matters of fact relating to Council business.
- 5.3 Other staff may be delegated to provide comment to the media on Council policy and matters of fact relating to Council business, but only if prior approval is obtained from the General Manager.

## **6. RELATED POLICIES/DOCUMENTS/LEGISLATION**

The Policy should be read in conjunction with the following Council policies and documents:

- Access to Council Information Policy
- Business Continuity Plan
- Code of Conduct - Councillors and Staff

- Code of Conduct - Contractors, their Staff and Business Associates
- Code of Conduct - Volunteers and Community Representatives
- Code of Meeting Principles and Practices
- Confidentiality of Employee Information Policy (staff policy)
- Corporate Communications and Visual Standards Manual
- Councillor Access to Information and Staff Interaction Policy
- Filming in Council Area Policy
- Open Government Policy
- Privacy Management Plan
- Social Media Policy (staff policy)
- Web Access and Email Policy (staff policy)

<b>Version</b>	<b>Date Approved</b>	<b>Approved by</b>	<b>Resolution No.</b>	<b>Review Date</b>
1	21 July 2003	Council	763	2004/05
2	2 August 2004	Council	794	2008/09
3	16 February 2009	Council	61	2012/13
4	8 August 2011	Council	507	2012/13
5	18 February 2013	Council	61	2016/17
6	15 December 2014	Council	565	2018/19
7	25 June 2018	Council	214	2020/21