



MEDIA POLICY

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to effectively communicate Council affairs to the media and the public and ensure the information provided is accurate and reliable.

APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to Councillors, Council staff and Council Officials.

SCOPE

This policy applies to situations where Councillors, Council staff or Council Officials: communicate with the media about Council affairs; attend public speaking engagements; or make comments on Council affairs where it is reasonably foreseeable that the comment will be made public.

BACKGROUND

Communicating with the media is an important part of achieving Council's broader commitment to transparency and open, honest communication with the public. In communicating with the media, the NSW Defamation Act 2005 and the Privacy Act 1988 should be observed.

DEFINITIONS

Council Officials	Councillors, all permanent, part-time, temporary, casual staff, Council committee members, Council delegates and volunteers and contractors employed by Council.
Media	Includes print communication such as newspapers, local newspapers, magazines, newsletters, brochures and other documents; and broadcast communication including radio and television and the World Wide Web.
Public comment	Includes public speaking engagements, (including comments to radio or television), expressing views in letters to the press, in books, notices, articles or in any medium where it is reasonably foreseeable that the publication or circulation will enter the public domain.

POLICY GUIDELINES

1. PUBLIC COMMENT



1.1 Council will openly discuss matters of interest with the media unless disclosure of certain information contravenes Council's duty of care, or could infringe laws or regulations that govern its operations.

1.2 The Mayor and the General Manager are the official spokespersons on matters before the Council or Council business including Council policy, interpretation of policy or actions that may commit the Council's resources to any purpose.

1.3 Managers can nominate specialist members of staff to respond to technical questions on operational matters only. The Mayor and/or the General Manager must approve of other information before it is issued or distributed to the media.

1.4 As members of the community, Councillors are entitled to enter into public debate and make comment on matters, provided that they do not give the impression that they are speaking on behalf of Council.

1.5 Council staff must not make political or controversial comments relating to Council decisions and/or events, or about Council staff and elected representatives.

1.6 As members of the community, Council Committee members are entitled to enter into public debate in their private capacity and make comment, provided that they clearly state that such public comment reflects personal opinion and not that of Council.

1.7 The Manager Place and Projects and Communications Coordinator are responsible for coordinating and distributing articles, columns and newsletters on behalf of the Mayor or the Council. In each circumstance, the responsible officer must ensure the information contained in the document is accurate and is formatted in accordance with the Hunter's Hill Council Branding Guideline.

1.8 Council's Communications Co-ordinator is responsible for preparing and distributing all Media Releases. All media releases must be approved by the General Manager prior to release and must be in the approved format contained in the Hunter's Hill Council Style Guide.

2.1 All media enquiries are to be dealt with promptly and should be directed in the first instance to Council's Communications Officer.

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

3. SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES In the case of official investigations, accidents or enquiries into business dealings or actions with possible legal consequences, any statements made to the media must be authorised and supplied by the General Manager with the input and approval of legal counsel.

4. INCORRECT INFORMATION In the event that the media has publicly circulated incorrect information about Council, the Communications Officer will investigate how the information came to be published and if necessary, issue a media release clarifying the incorrect information.



5. BREACHES

Breaches of this policy will be investigated and dealt with by the General Manager and/or the Mayor and may involve referral to the Code of Conduct committee.

RELATED POLICIES

Hunter's Hill Council Code of Conduct
Hunter's Hill Council Communication Policy
Hunter's Hill Council Style Guide

POLICY AUTHORITY

The Policy Authority is the General Manager

GETTING HELP

For interpretations, resolution of problems and special situations please contact Council's Acting Manager Place and Projects, or the General Manager.