

Media Policy



1.0 Purpose

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

The Policy clearly states who can issue a media release/statement and discuss topics related to Council matters when approached by the media for comment.

2.0 Scope

It applies to engagement between Council Officials and the media. It does not apply to social media use (Council Officials can refer to the *Social Media Policy* for more information). This policy should also be read in conjunction with the Council's *Code of Conduct*.

3.0 Terms and Definitions

In this Policy, the terms below have the following meanings.

Term	Definition
Council Official	Has the same meaning it has in the <i>Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW</i> and includes Councillors, members of staff of a Council, administrators, Council Committee Members, and delegates of Council.
Council Spokesperson	Person(s) with delegated authority to speak on behalf of Council to the media.
Media	<p>The term "media" used in this Policy 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.</p> <p>This term also includes journalism students.</p>
Media Comment or Statement	A written statement to inform the factual position of Council on a matter of business.
Media Enquiry or Request	An enquiry made by the media about Council business or for official Council comment.
Media Release	A proactive written news piece for the purpose of promoting Council to the public through the media.



Term	Definition
Personal Information	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.
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.
Team Member	A permanent or temporary term, full time or part time employee of Council, and includes a person appointed to a position with Council under a contract of employment.

4.0 Policy Statement

Council is committed to effective, transparent and responsive customer-centric communication and recognises the importance of the media in communicating with the community and other stakeholders.

This Policy is aligned with the *Leading and Engaged* destination of the *CBCity 2036 Community Strategic Plan* to deliver innovative, responsive, forward thinking leaders providing well managed open government, and an engaged and empowered community that participates in decision making and active citizenship.

5.0 Policy Criteria

The following criteria outlines which Council Officials are authorised to engage with the media and their roles and responsibilities when interacting with the media. The criteria are designed to:

- Protect and enhance the reputation of Council while promoting positive coverage of Council affairs.
- Ensure that communication with the media is undertaken in a timely, accurate and appropriate manner that clearly and consistently represents Council's strategic vision and voice.
- Promote and maintain a positive relationship between Council and the media.
- Mitigate the risk of inaccurate or inconsistent information being communicated to the media.

5.1 Appointment and role of spokespeople

Council's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) has appointed a select number of Council officials to act as Council's official spokespeople on the CEO's behalf.

Chief Executive Officer:

- The CEO is the official spokesperson for the Council on operational and administrative matters.
- The CEO may delegate other Council Officials to speak on their behalf where appropriate,



(for example, where the delegate has professional expertise regarding the subject matter).

Mayor:

- The Mayor is Council's official spokesperson on all policy matters and matters of public interest.
- The Mayor is the principal member and spokesperson of the governing body of Council, including representing the views of the Council as to its local priorities (section 226(c) of the *Local Government Act 1993*).
- If the Mayor is unavailable, they can delegate their role as spokesperson to another Councillor.

Members of staff with media delegation:

A select number of members of staff have been provided delegated authority by the CEO to speak with the media.

Members of staff delegated to speak to the media must:

- Uphold and accurately represent the policies and decisions of the Council.
- Not disclose confidential Council information.
- Seek information and guidance from the CEO or Communications Unit, as 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.

Members of staff without delegation:

Members of staff without delegation are not to provide comment, unless given special delegation by the CEO. Approval to speak with media is coordinated by the Communications Unit.

If members of staff receive a media enquiry or they are invited to comment to the media on a matter relating to the Council, they must refer the enquiry to the Communications Unit.

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

Where members of staff become aware of potential Council issues and matters that could result in media interest, they should provide this information in the first instance to the CEO or Communications Unit.

If members of staff without delegation:

- Receive a telephone media enquiry they must obtain the callers' details, reason for the call and the name of the media organisation the caller is representing and then refer the enquiry to the Communications Unit at media@cbc.city.nsw.gov.au
- Receive an email media enquiry they must refer the enquiry to the Communications Unit at media@cbc.city.nsw.gov.au
- Are approached by the media or invited to comment to the media on a matter relating to the Council, they must respond that they do not have the delegation to provide comment and refer the enquirer contact the Communications Unit at media@cbc.city.nsw.gov.au



Councillors:

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.

When engaging with the media Councillors must:

- Not purport to speak for the Council unless authorised to do so.
- Clarify when speaking to the media that they are expressing their personal views as an individual Councillor and they are not speaking for the Council (unless authorised to do so).
- Uphold and accurately represent the policies and decisions of the Council
- Not disclose Council information unless authorised to do so.
- Seek information and guidance from the CEO or Communications Unit 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.

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.

Where Councillors (including the Mayor) become aware of potential Council issues and matters that could result in media interest, they should provide this information in the first instance to the CEO or Communications Unit.

5.2 Tone

All media engagement by Council Officials must be conducted in a professional, timely and respectful manner. It must also adhere to Council's Tone and Voice Guidelines.

5.3 Induction and training

Council can provide training to Council Officials who engage or are authorised to engage with the media. 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.

5.4 Councillors' questions about media engagement

Councillors must direct any questions about their obligations under this Policy to the CEO or Manager Communications.

5.5 Standards when engaging with the media

Council Officials must comply with the Council's *Code of Conduct* when engaging with the media in an official capacity or in connection with their role as a Council official.

Council Officials must not share information or make comments to the media through either direct or indirect mechanisms that:

- Are defamatory, offensive, humiliating, threatening, or intimidating to other Council Officials or members of the public;
- Contains profane language or is sexual in nature;
- Constitutes harassment and/or bullying within the meaning of the Model Code of Conduct



for Local Councils in NSW, or is unlawfully discriminatory;

- Is contrary to their duties under the Work Health and Safety Act 2011 and their responsibilities under any policies or procedures adopted by the Council to ensure workplace health and safety;
- Contains content about the Council, Council Officials or members of the public that is misleading or deceptive;
- Divulges confidential Council information;
- Breaches the privacy of other Council officials or members of the public
- Contains allegations of suspected breaches of the 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;
- Could be perceived to be an official comment on behalf of the Council where they have not been authorised to make such comment;
- Commits the Council to any unauthorised action;
- Violates an order made by a court;
- Breaches copyright; and
- Advertises, endorses, or solicits commercial products or business.

5.6 Media enquiry and request management

All media enquiries received by members of staff must be referred to the Communications Unit in the first instance.

Members of staff must not communicate with the media unless approval is obtained from the CEO. Members of staff without approval must, if contacted by the media, advise that they are not authorised to provide information or comment and forward their enquiry to the Communications Unit.

Following approval by the CEO, members of staff are only to provide factual information on Council business or policy matters. All responses must be approved by the Communications Unit prior to distribution.

Requests to film or photograph members of staff (excluding Councillors), properties or events for broadcast or print purposes must be referred to the Communications Unit for prior approval.

5.7 Use of media during emergencies

During emergencies, such as natural disasters or public health incidents, the Communications Unit will be responsible for coordinating media releases and statements on behalf of the Council, in collaboration with CEO and Mayor.

When interacting with the media in an official capacity Council Officials must not provide comment or information that is inconsistent with official advice issued by the Council and any other Commonwealth or State agency coordinating the emergency response.

Training on media engagement during emergencies can be provided to Council Officials as deemed appropriate by the CEO.



5.8 Media engagement in the lead up to elections

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 electoral candidates.

Any media comment or advertisement provided by the Mayor or Councillors in their capacity as electoral candidates must not be paid for by Council or produced by Council or made with Council resources.

5.9 Records management requirements

Media content created and received by Council Officials (including 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 be managed in accordance with the requirements of the *State Records Act 1998* and Council's approved records management policies and practices.

6 Approval and Review

6.2 Policy Owner

Manager Communications

6.3 Authorisation

Adopted by Canterbury Bankstown Council on [DD/MM/YYYY].

6.4 Reviews and Modifications

The next review is due on [DD/MM/YYYY].

7 Related Documents

7.2 Laws and Standards

- *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (NSW)
- *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW)
- *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* (NSW)
- *State Records Act 1998* (NSW)
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (NSW)

7.3 Policies and Procedures

- Code of Conduct
- Complaints Management Policy
- Delegations from Chief Executive Officer Policy
- Procedures for the Administration of the Model Code of Conduct
- Social Media Policy



Circular Details	Circular No 22-37 / 12 December 2022 / A842728
Previous Circular	22-24: <i>Consultation on draft Model Media Policy</i>
Who should read this	Councillors / General Managers / Council governance and communications staff
Contact	Council Governance/ (02) 4428 4100 / olg@olg.nsw.gov.au
Action required	Information / Council to Implement

Model Media Policy

What's new or changing

- The Office of Local Government (OLG) has finalised the Model Media Policy (the model policy).
- The model policy has been developed following two rounds of consultation with the local government sector and reflects best practice in the local government sector.

What this will mean for your council

- The model policy is not mandatory, and councils are free to choose whether to use or to adapt it for their own purposes. If adopted, the policy will operate to supplement the provisions of councils' adopted codes of conduct.

Key points

- OLG has previously issued a Model Social Media Policy, Councillor and Staff Interaction Policy and Councillor Expenses and Facilities Policy for use by councils.
- The Model Media Policy, Model Social Media Policy, Councillor and Staff Interaction Policy and Councillor Expenses and Facilities Policy are available on OLG's website - <https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/councils/governance/best-practice-governance-policies-consulations/>.

Where to go for further information

- For further information, contact OLG's Council Governance Team on (02) 4428 4100.

Melanie Hawyes

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