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## Policy Matters - 12 September 2023

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**ITEM 6.1**                      **Media Policy**

**AUTHOR**                      **City Future**

### **PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND**

In December 2022, the Office of Local Government (OLG) released its Model Media Policy (Model Policy) (Circular No 22-37/12 December 2022/A8427) to provide a framework to assist councils when dealing with the media.

The policy has been developed by OLG to supplement the provisions of councils' adopted Code of Conduct and Model Social Media Policies.

In the main, the Model Policy provides a framework to assist Council when dealing with the media and to ensure that media engagement by Council Officials is consistent, accurate and professional, and enhances Council's reputation.

### **ISSUE**

The purpose of this report is to seek Council's in principle support for the Draft Policy and that it be placed on public exhibition for comment.

### **RECOMMENDATION** That -

1. In principle, Council endorse the Draft Media Policy.
2. The Draft Policy be placed on public exhibition for comment.
3. A further report be brought back to Council, following the public exhibition process.

### **ATTACHMENTS**                      [Click here for attachment\(s\)](#)

- A. Draft Media Policy
- B. OLG Model Media Policy Circular

## **POLICY IMPACT**

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The Draft Policy specifically applies to engagement between Council Officials and the media – and supplements the provisions of Council’s adopted Code of Conduct.

The Policy provides both relevant guidance and clarity in engaging with the media and importantly ensuring the need for:

- Maintaining the accuracy, reliability, and integrity of information;
- Ensuring confidential information is managed appropriately; and
- The increased exposure and risk to reputation where information is not managed appropriately.

The Draft Policy also sets out an exemplar approach by incorporating examples of best practice from the media policies of a diverse range of NSW councils, as well as from Commonwealth and State Government agencies.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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The introduction of the policy will not result in any material financial impact for Council.

## **COMMUNITY IMPACT**

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Effective media engagement can assist councils to keep their community informed, explain decisions and to promote community confidence in the council and its decisions.

How a council is portrayed in the media impacts greatly on how the organisation is perceived. Media can be an effective tool to promote council programs, events, and initiatives. In addition, media can be invaluable in times of crisis or emergency when information needs to be communicated to the public.

## DETAILED INFORMATION

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### Media Policy

The Draft Policy is informed by the OLG's Model Media Policy released in 2022 as part of a suite of best practice governance policies for the local government sector.

OLG has recommended councils introduce a Media Policy to supplement their existing Codes of Conduct and assist councils in keeping their community informed, explain decisions and to promote community confidence in the council and its decisions.

The draft Policy has been developed to identify who can issue a media release/statement and discuss topics related to Council matters when approached by the media for comment.

The draft Policy's key components include:

- Appointment and role of spokespeople, as well as who has delegation to speak to the media (5.1)
- Standards when engaging with the media (5.5)
- Media enquiry and request management (5.6)
- Use of media during emergencies (5.7)

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.

### Next Steps

Subject to Council endorsing the Draft Policy, the Policy document will be placed on public exhibition for comment.

Following the exhibition period, a further report – which will assess any submissions received - will be submitted to Council for its consideration.