



CUMBERLAND  
CITY COUNCIL

# Media Policy

## AUTHORISATION & VERSION CONTROL

<b>Policy Number</b>	POL-040
<b>Policy Owner</b>	Manager Strategic Communications
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## **BACKGROUND**

Aligning to Cumberland City Council's Community Strategic Plan 2017-2027, Council is committed to building stronger relationships with the local community and openly engaging with media to maximise, reach and facilitate the efficient dissemination of relevant, accurate and timely information.

Council's ability to reach and inform a wide range of stakeholders is supported by a proactive media program and designated in-house media services to support both Council and its staff.

## **PURPOSE**

The Policy aims to:

- Contribute to a cohesive and proactive media relations program.
- Assist in adding reputational value to the organisation
- Set clear stakeholder roles and responsibilities
- Mitigate risk and reduce the opportunity for miscommunication and distribution of inaccurate information
- Identify Council's authorised spokespersons
- Provide consistency for Council officials when dealing with the media

## **SCOPE**

This Policy establishes the Council's procedures for responding to and initiating media contacts. It applies to all Council officials, which includes Councillors, Council staff, Council committee members, conduct reviewers and delegates of Council.

For the purpose of this policy, media comprises all print, broadcast and online media as well as management of media enquiries coming into council as a result of public speaking engagements, social media posts and other forms of communication where it could be reasonably expected that the comments might be recorded or circulated to the wider community.

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

In administering its media program and community information, Council ensures that it complies with the NSW *Local Government Act 1993* No.30 and the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* No.52.

## DEFINITIONS

**Media:** Newspapers, magazines, journals, radio, television, journalists, digital media and all forms of communication distributed to a wider audience.

**Media comment:** Verbal statement issued by Council formal channels that states its position on a matter of formal business, Council policy of public interest.

**Media statement:** Written statement issued by Council formal channels that states its position on a matter of formal business, Council policy of public interest.

**Media release:** A written, pre-approved statement, issued by council to the media, used to communicate with the community to respond to an issue or to improve knowledge of council services and activities.

**Council official:** All Councillors and members of Council staff including temporary and casual employees, volunteers, service providers and contractors employed by Council.

## PRINCIPLES

Openness and transparency are guiding principles of the Council.

Council aims to regularly promote and inform stakeholders on activities, decisions, events and achievements relevant to the community. A proactive approach to the release of information is maintained, unless there is an overriding public interest against disclosure.

Only certain persons designated in this policy are authorised to communicate with the media on behalf of Council.

## REQUIREMENTS (ROLES)

Each stakeholder plays a role in the Council's ability to engage with media effectively and deliver accurate information.

<b>All Council officials</b>	Council officials are not to comment on any confidential matters (such as staff, personal information, legal advice, and commercial-in-confidence matters). The roles of various Council officials regarding contact with the media are listed below in more detail.
<b>Mayor</b>	Council's official spokesperson on all policy matters and key decisions and an authorised signatory for letters to the editor on policy issues.
<b>Deputy Mayor</b>	Acts as the Mayor's delegated spokesperson if the Mayor is not available.
<b>Councillors</b>	Provides the media with comment while clearly indicating it is their own personal opinion and does not represent the official position of Council.
<b>General Manager</b>	The General Manager is the Council's official spokesperson on all operational and administrative issues and an authorised signatory for letters to the editor on related issues.
<b>Internal Ombudsman</b>	The Internal Ombudsman Shared Service (IOSS) with the endorsement of the IOSS Management Committee, may issue media statements and make public comment on any matters

	relating to the IOSS. Any media enquiry in relation to the IOSS should be referred in the first instance to the Internal Ombudsman who, as appropriate, will liaise with the General Manager and the Director Community and Organisation Development to keep them apprised.
<b>Manager Strategic Communications and Officer/s</b>	Coordinates all media related materials with delegated authority to liaise with media and prepare media responses on behalf of Council. All media enquiries must be sent to <a href="mailto:media@cumberland.nsw.gov.au">media@cumberland.nsw.gov.au</a>
<b>Employees, contractors, volunteers</b>	Individuals employed by Cumberland City Council are not authorised spokespeople of the organisation, unless they have received delegation from the General Manager.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

**Statements and responses to the media should be made in writing. This will assist Council in preparing accurate and consistent information while also maintaining accurate records.**

### Strategic Communications Group

- The Strategic Communications Group is the primary point of contact for media enquiries and maintaining relationships with local and mainstream media.
- The Strategic Communications Group coordinates and monitors day- to-day media activity and enquiries while ensuring the Policy is implemented across the organisation.
- All media release content and key messages must be reviewed and approved by the Director Community and Organisation Development.
- Media-related advice and training is delivered by the Council's Strategic Communications Group. This may include advice on strategic messaging, permissions and approvals prior to media release or newsletter distribution.
- Written comment which quotes the Mayor, the General Manager or Council staff must be approved by that person or their nominated representative before being issued.
- The Strategic Communications Group provides advice and support to the Mayor and General Manager as required on proactive and reactive media.

### Mayor

- The Mayor is Council's official spokespersons on all policy matters and key decisions made by Council.
- The Mayor may nominate another Councillor to speak on a particular matter.
- The Mayor is to approve all media releases from the Council where he is the spokesperson.

### Councillors

- Each Councillor has a right to express a personal opinion on any issue, speak on behalf of the community they represent, whether or not that opinion or proposal reflects Council's official position. Councillors must carefully identify the role in which they speak or write.
- Whenever Councillors publicly express their own opinions they must make it clear they are speaking for themselves, unless delegated by the Mayor, unless they are supporting a Council position.
- When Councillors speak 'for the Council', when delegated by the Mayor, they must express and support Council's entire policy on the issue at hand.

## **General Manager**

- The General Manager is the Council's official spokesperson on all operational and administrative issues and an authorised signatory for letters to the editor on related issues.
- The General Manager may nominate other employees to act as spokespeople for the Council only for operational or administrative matters.
- Information provided to the media of a controversial, legal or ethical nature requires pre-approval of the General Manager and/or the Mayor.

## **Internal Ombudsman**

- The Internal Ombudsman Shared Service with the endorsement of the Internal Ombudsman Shared Service Management Committee, may issue media statements and make public comment on any matters relating to the Internal Ombudsman Shared Service.
- Where the Internal Ombudsman Shared Service considers it to be in the public interest, or in the interest of a person or the member Council, the Internal Ombudsman Shared Service may, with the endorsement of the Internal Ombudsman Shared Service Management Committee, publish a report relating generally to the performance of duties under the Internal Ombudsman Shared Service Governance Charter or to a case investigated by the Internal Ombudsman Shared Service, whether or not the matters in the report are the subject of a report to Council under the Governance Charter.
- The Internal Ombudsman will liaise with the Director Community and Organisation Development to ensure Council is aware of ongoing communication.

## **Employees (including contractors and volunteers)**

- No employee is to address any enquiry from the media without prior approval from the General Manager.
- Contractors or service providers employed by Council must refer all media enquiries relating to Council to the Director Community and Organisation Development.
- Media enquiries received outside of the Council's Strategic Communications Group must be redirected to [media@cumberland.nsw.gov.au](mailto:media@cumberland.nsw.gov.au) or contact the Director Community and Organisation Development.
- Staff members may prepare draft media release content. However, material must be provided to the Strategic Communications Group for review and approval prior to distribution.
- Employees may access media outlets in their personal capacity as residents or ratepayers but should be mindful of their obligations under Council's Code of Conduct. When acting in a personal capacity, staff should be aware of their association with Cumberland City Council and must not imply that they are speaking on behalf of Cumberland City Council, or discuss their work or any matter relating to Council.

## **MEDIA ACCESS TO COUNCIL INFORMATION AND PROPERTY**

Allocated seating will be provided for media outlets at all Council meetings. Requests from media outlets to film or photograph Council staff, facilities, meetings and events must be referred to the Strategic Communications Group for determination in consultation with relevant Council staff.

## RECORD KEEPING

The Strategic Communications Group will maintain a record of media enquiries and responses. All media releases will also be posted to Council's website. All records are to be stored in the Council's Electronic Records Management System.

## OTHER EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Staff must seek prior approval from their manager to speak at any external conference or presentation, and should only speak publicly about their area of expertise.

Where possible, external communications that may attract media attention – such as presentations or other publications – should be brought to the attention of the Director Community and Organisation Development prior to release by emailing [media@cumberland.nsw.gov.au](mailto:media@cumberland.nsw.gov.au)

## MISUSE OF INFORMATION

Staff must not misuse information gained in their official capacity and they must take care to maintain the integrity and security of official documents and information for which they are responsible. All personal information gained in the course of employment with the Council should be treated as being confidential.

Staff may only disclose official information or documents acquired in the course of his or her employment when authorised to do so or when required in the course of duty or by law (e.g. under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009*; or when called to give evidence in court, except where there is a claim of privilege available).

Staff may issue information that is either public knowledge or that would be given to any member of the public seeking that information. If there is uncertainty as to whether information is public knowledge, the matter should be treated as being confidential until advised otherwise by a Director (refer to the Council's Code of Conduct).

## PRIVACY LEGISLATION

Any officer involved with media-related matters and making available information to the public should be familiar with the *NSW Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (PPIP Act)*. Any information that is about an individual, whose identity could reasonably be ascertained from the information, is "personal information". Officers dealing with the media should be familiar in particular with the provisions relating to accuracy and disclosure of personal information.

Personal information can only be provided to the media if:

- The person has consented; or
- The disclosure to the media is directly related to the purpose for which the information was collected, and the Council has no reason to believe that the individual concerned would object to the disclosure; or
- The individual concerned is reasonably likely to have been aware, or has been made aware in accordance with section 10 of the *PPIP Act*, that information of that kind is usually disclosed to the media.

If there are any doubts as to what can or cannot be made available to the media, then the officer should contact the Executive Manager Corporate Services. If doubt still exists,

then the matter should be referred directly to NSW Information and Privacy Commission (telephone 1800 472 679) for advice.

## **BREACHES**

Breaches of this Policy may be dealt with in accordance with [Cumberland City Council's Code of Conduct](#) available at [www.cumberland.nsw.gov.au](http://www.cumberland.nsw.gov.au) Cumberland Council

## **RELATED LEGISLATION**

[Local Government Act 1993 \(NSW\) No. 30](#)

[Government Information \(Public Access\) Act 2009 \(NSW\) No.52](#)

[Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 \(NSW\) No.48](#)

[Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 \(NSW\) No. 133](#)

[Work Health and Safety Act 2011 \(NSW\) No.10](#)

[Copyright Amendment \(Digital Agenda\) Act 2000 \(Cth\)](#)

[Copyright Act 1968 \(Cth\)](#)

[Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988 NSW No. 35](#)

## **RELATED DOCUMENTS AND COUNCIL POLICY**

[Cumberland Council Print and Digital Newsletter Guidelines](#)

[Cumberland Council Code of Conduct 2017](#)

[Cumberland Council Complaints Management Policy](#)

[Cumberland Council Community Strategic Plan 2017-2027](#)

[Cumberland Council Code of Meeting Practice](#)

[Cumberland Council Public Interest Disclosures Policy](#)

[Cumberland Council Internal Ombudsman Shared Service Governance Charter](#)