

Media Policy

September 2018

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Part A Preliminary

1 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this Policy is to:
 - 1.1.1 ensure City of Newcastle (CN) provides consistent, accurate and timely communications through the media;
 - 1.1.2 establish appropriate protocols for distributing CN information to print, online and broadcast media;
 - 1.1.3 identify CN's authorised spokespersons, and define roles and responsibilities within CN for working with the media;
 - 1.1.4 ensure there is appropriate authorisation and responsibility for information provided; and
 - 1.1.5 establish protocols for responding to enquiries from the media.

2 Scope

- 2.1 This Policy applies to City Officials including full-time, part-time, contractors, casual, work experience, trainees, Councillors, volunteers or committee members and external consultants/agencies where they are:
 - 2.1.1 communicating with media about CN affairs and related matters;
 - 2.1.2 writing editorial including opinion pieces and letters to the editor;
 - 2.1.3 attending public speaking engagements; or
 - 2.1.4 making comments on CN affairs where it is reasonably foreseeable the comments will be published in the media.
- 2.2 Applications for information under the GIPA Act are processed separately to this Policy.

3 Principles

- 3.1 CN is committed to open communication with the community through the media.
- 3.2 CN recognises the independence of the media and the key role it plays in ensuring Council is accountable to its community.
- 3.3 CN will make all reasonable attempts to deal with media inquiries promptly and accurately. CN will also try at all times to have a relevant City officer available to respond to the media in a timely manner.
- 3.4 CN has an important relationship with the media, as it provides an opportunity to:
 - 3.4.1 **Share information** about CN services, activities and decisions.
 - 3.4.2 **Involve the community** in dialogue about the provision of services and planning for the future.
 - 3.4.3 **Promote and celebrate** the achievements of CN and the local community.
 - 3.4.4 **Limit** the publication of inaccurate information.

Part B Regulations, Responsibilities and Authorisations

4 Official spokespersons

- 4.1 As the elected leader of the City, the Lord Mayor is CN's official spokesperson. In the absence of the Lord Mayor, the Deputy Lord Mayor will be CN's spokesperson.
- 4.2 The CEO can also act as CN's official spokesperson.

5 Media comments and enquiries

- 5.1 All media enquiries should be directed to the Major Events and Corporate Affairs Unit. This Unit is responsible for coordinating CN's media liaison.
- 5.2 Formal statements to the media on behalf of CN must be issued through the Major Events and Corporate Affairs Unit.
- 5.3 Directors are authorised to provide information to the media on operational matters with approval of the CEO, in consultation with the Lord Mayor.
- 5.4 City officers may represent CN to the media on matters of factual information only if approved by the Manager Major Events and Corporate Affairs Unit. City officers must not express personal views regarding CN matters and in general should only provide information in respect of their area of responsibility.
- 5.5 From time to time, the CEO may also authorise individuals other than City officers to represent CN to the media, for example Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Committee.
- 5.6 Before making comment to the media, City Officials must ensure the comment is approved in accordance with this Policy.
- 5.7 Volunteers may be contacted by the media for information or comment concerning a particular issue. Individuals are free to make personal comments to the media however they should not be identified as representing CN or expressing views on behalf of CN.
- 5.8 Where a media release is prepared by another organisation, external consultant or agency, which relates to a CN project or in which CN is involved, it must be forwarded to CN's Major Events and Corporate Affairs Unit for approval of the content before it is released.
- 5.9 Media releases and responses to media enquiries should be and managed according to CN's Record Management Policy.
- 5.10 City Officials are encouraged to advise the Major Events and Corporate Affairs Unit of forthcoming events or any occurrence that may be of interest to the media to enable a forward media program to be developed. This should be done with reasonable notice to the Unit.

6 Councillors in the media

- 6.1 Councillors may debate the merits of proposed or adopted decisions of Council in the media. In doing so they must:
 - 6.1.1 make it clear that comments are being made as an individual and are not necessarily the view of CN;
 - 6.1.2 when speaking on an issue that has not gone before the Council for a decision, make it clear that the issue is yet to be determined by Council;
 - 6.1.3 ensure comments are respectful and courteous to CN and City Officials;
 - 6.1.4 make reasonable efforts to ensure that their comments are factual and do not unnecessarily bring the reputation of City officers into disrepute;
 - 6.1.5 contact the CEO or relevant Director to confirm details of any issue specific to the operation of CN in which they are yet to be formally briefed; and
 - 6.1.6 not discuss confidential information.

7 Roles

Who	Role
Lord Mayor	City of Newcastle's official spokesperson.
Deputy Lord Mayor	Act as the Lord Mayor's delegated spokesperson if requested by the Lord Mayor.
Councillors	Provide the media with comment, identifying that this is provided as their own opinion and not representing the official position of the elected Council, unless requested by the Lord Mayor.
CEO	City of Newcastle's official spokesperson on operational and administrative matters.
Directors, Service Unit Managers, City officers	<p>Provide information to the Major Events and Corporate Affairs Unit within their area of expertise when requested.</p> <p>Advise the Major Events and Corporate Affairs Unit of forthcoming events to enable a forward media program to be developed.</p> <p>Advise the Major Events and Corporate Affairs Unit of any occurrence that may be of interest to the media.</p>
Manager Major Events and Corporate Affairs Unit	<p>Approve the release of information to the media.</p> <p>Approve media interviews with City officers other than delegated spokespeople.</p>
Major Events and Corporate Affairs Unit	<p>Prepare and distributing all written content to media organisations.</p> <p>Coordinate all media inquiries on behalf of CN.</p>
Volunteers and committee members	Volunteers and committee members must indicate they are not speaking 'on behalf of' CN or any CN committee or facility.
External consultants/agencies	Seek approval from the Manager Major Events and Corporate Affairs Unit prior to providing information to the media.

Part C Confidentiality

8 Confidential Information

- 8.1 All confidential information must remain confidential and not be provided to the media, or any other member of the public. This includes information provided during closed Council meetings or other official meetings.
- 8.2 Under no circumstances can City Officials, including contractors or volunteers discuss, confidential legal advice or commercial-in-confidence matters with the media.
- 8.3 Improper release of personal and/or confidential information is a breach of the City's Code of Conduct.

Annexure A - Definitions

CEO means Chief Executive Officer of the City of Newcastle and includes their delegate or authorised representative.

References to the Chief Executive Officer are references to the General Manager appointed under the *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW).

City of Newcastle (CN or City) means Newcastle City Council.

City officer means part time, temporary and casual officers, and volunteers.

City Official means a:

- Councillor;
- City officer;
- individuals engaged by CN under a contract to provide services to or on behalf of CN (such as consultants and contractors); and
- individuals having public official functions where their conduct could be investigated by an Investigating Authority (such as members of CN committees and volunteers).

Council means the elected Council.

GIPA Act means the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (NSW).

Media means all print, broadcast, published, social and digital news sources, external to CN.

Online content means any content or piece of information found on digital spaces, including social media, where people may, but not limited to, comment, contribute, create, forward, post, upload, and share.

Policy means the Media Policy.

Unless stated otherwise, a reference to a section or clause is a reference to a section or clause of this Policy.

Document Control

Policy title	Media Policy
Policy owner	Chief Executive Officer
Policy expert/writer	Manager Major Events and Corporate Affairs
Associated Procedure Title (if applicable)	N/a
Procedure owner (if applicable)	N/a
Prepared by	Major Events and Corporate Affairs
Approved by	Council
Date approved	25/09/2018
Policy approval form reference	ECM# 5708085
Commencement Date	25/09/2018
Next revision date (date policy will be revised)	25/09/2021
Termination date	25/09/2022
Version	Version number 4
Category	Council
Keywords	Media, social media, online, journalists, spokesperson, liaison, newspapers, communication, reporting
Details of previous versions	Version 1 - ECM 1985646 Version 2 - ECM 4014241 Version 3 - ECM 4659404
Legislative amendments	Nil
Relevant strategic direction	Open and Collaborative Leadership
Relevant strategy	Nil
Relevant legislation/codes (reference specific sections)	<i>Local Government Act 1993</i> (NSW) LGA S 8 LGA Ss.377 & 378

Other related policies/ documents/ strategies	Code of Conduct Policy Social Media Guidelines Open and Collaborative Leadership Strategy
Related forms	Nil
Required on website	Yes
Authorisations	Refer Section 7 Roles