

Media Policy

December 2024

Version: 5



City of
Newcastle

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Part A - Preliminary

1 Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this Policy is to:

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 Context

2.1 This Policy is developed as a City of Newcastle initiative consistent with the Local Government Act 1993 (NSW).

3 Scope

- 3.1 This Policy applies to CN Officials including all employees, those on work experience, trainees and volunteers, Contractors, Councillors, committee members and external consultants/agencies where they are
 - 3.1.1 communicating with media about CN affairs and related matters;
 - 3.1.2 writing editorial including opinion pieces and letters to the editor;
 - 3.1.3 attending public speaking engagements; and
 - 3.1.4 making comments on CN affairs where it is reasonably foreseeable the comments will be published in the media.
- 3.2 Applications for information under the GIPA Act are processed separately to this Policy.

4 Principles

- 4.1 CN is committed to open communication with the community through the media.
- 4.2 CN recognises the independence of the media and the key role it plays in ensuring Council is accountable to its community.
- 4.3 CN will make all reasonable attempts to deal with media enquiries promptly and accurately. CN will also try at all times to have a relevant CN Official available to respond to the media in a timely manner.
- 4.4 CN has an important relationship with the media, as it provides an opportunity to:
 - 4.4.1 Share information about CN services, activities and decisions.
 - 4.4.2 Involve the community in dialogue about the provision of services and planning for the future.
 - 4.4.3 Promote and celebrate the achievements of CN and the local community.
 - 4.4.4 Limit the publication of inaccurate information.

Part B - Roles and responsibilities

5 Official spokespersons

- 5.1 Consistent with the *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW) s 226 (c) as the elected leader of the City, the Lord Mayor is CN's official spokesperson of the governing body.
- 5.2 The CEO is CN's official spokesperson on operational matters.
- 5.3 If unavailable, the Lord Mayor should delegate their official spokesperson role in the first instance to the Deputy Lord Mayor in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1993* (NSW) s 231. If the Deputy Lord Mayor is unavailable, the Lord Mayor may delegate to other Councillors on a case-by-case basis.
- 5.4 The CEO may delegate their official spokesperson role on a case-by-case basis.

6 Media comments and enquiries

- 6.1 All media enquiries regarding or relating to CN made to CN employees and contractors should be directed to the Media Engagement Economy & Corporate Affairs who are responsible for coordinating CN's media liaison.
- 6.2 Formal statements to the media on behalf of CN must be issued through Media Engagement Economy & Corporate Affairs.
- 6.3 Executive Directors are authorised to provide information to the media on operational matters with approval of the CEO and a notification to the Lord Mayor and staff.
- 6.4 CN Officials may represent CN to the media on matters of factual information only if approved by Media Engagement Economy & Corporate Affairs. CN Officials must not express personal views regarding CN matters and in general should only provide information in respect of their area of responsibility.
- 6.5 From time to time, the CEO may also authorise individuals other than CN Officials to represent CN to the media, for example the Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Committee.
- 6.6 Before making comment to the media, CN Officials must ensure the comment is approved in accordance with this Policy.
- 6.7 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.
- 6.8 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 Media Engagement Economy & Corporate Affairs for approval of the content before it is released.
- 6.9 Media releases and responses to media enquiries should be managed according to CN's Record Management Policy.
- 6.10 CN Officials and Contractors are encouraged to advise Media Engagement Economy & Corporate Affairs 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.

7 Councillors in the media

- 7.1 Councillors may debate the merits of proposed or adopted decisions of Council in the media. In doing so they must:
- 7.1.1 Make it clear that comments are being made as an individual and are not necessarily the view of CN;
 - 7.1.2 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;
 - 7.1.3 Ensure comments are respectful and courteous to CN and CN Officials;
 - 7.1.4 Make reasonable efforts to ensure that their comments are factual and do not unnecessarily bring the reputation of CN Officials or Contractors into disrepute;
 - 7.1.5 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
 - 7.1.6 Not discuss information provided to Councillors confidentially. This includes confidential Council reports.

Part C - Roles

POSITION	RESPONSIBILITY
Lord Mayor	<p>City of Newcastle's official spokesperson of the governing body of Council, including representing the views of the Council.</p> <p>The Lord Mayor may delegate their role as spokesperson to other Councillors where appropriate for example where another Councillor is best placed to comment because the issue is of particular interest to them, or it is within their particular area of expertise.</p>
Deputy Lord Mayor	<p>In accordance with the Local Government Act 1993 (NSW) s 231, the Deputy Lord Mayor may act as City of Newcastle's official spokesperson of the governing body of Council, including representing the views of the Council at the request of the Lord Mayor or if the Lord Mayor is prevented by illness, absence or otherwise from exercising the function or if there is a casual vacancy in the office of Lord Mayor.</p>
Councillors	<p>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.</p>
CEO	<p>City of Newcastle's official spokesperson on operational and administrative matters.</p>
Executive Directors	<p>Review and endorse media releases or official briefs for approval prior to progression to the CEO and/or Lord Mayor.</p> <p>Be spokespeople and provide information to the media on operational matters with approval of the CEO.</p>

Executive Managers	<p>Provide information to Media Engagement Economy & Corporate Affairs within their area of expertise when requested.</p> <p>Advise Media Engagement Economy & Corporate Affairs of forthcoming events to enable a forward media program to be developed.</p> <p>Advise Media Engagement Economy & Corporate Affairs of any occurrence that may be of interest.</p>
CN Officials, Contractors	<p>Staff as private citizens are permitted to provide media comment or enter public debate so long as they do not give the impression they are speaking on behalf of City of Newcastle and do not breach the Code of Conduct.</p> <p>Provide information to Media Engagement Economy & Corporate Affairs within their area of expertise when requested.</p> <p>Advise Media Engagement Economy & Corporate Affairs of forthcoming events to enable a forward media program to be developed.</p> <p>Advise Media Engagement Economy & Corporate Affairs of any occurrence that may be of interest to the media.</p>
Manager Media Engagement Economy & Corporate Affairs	<p>Approve the release of information to the media.</p> <p>Approve media interviews with CN Officials other than delegated spokespeople.</p>
Media Engagement Economy & Corporate Affairs	<p>Prepare and distribute all written content to media organisations. Coordinate all media responses on behalf of CN.</p>
Volunteers and committee members	<p>Volunteers and committee members must indicate they are not speaking 'on behalf of' CN or any CN committee or facility.</p>
External consultants/ agencies	<p>Seek approval from the Manager Media Engagement Economy & Corporate Affairs prior to providing information to the media.</p>

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 CN Officials, 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 CN'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.

CN Official means anyone employed by CN and CN volunteers.

Contractor means individuals engaged by CN under a contract to provide services to or on behalf of CN. This includes those working on CN matters via agencies.

Council means the elected Council

Councillor means a member of 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 and podcasts, 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.

Annexure B - Policy Authorisations

This Policy Authorisation may be updated and amended by the CEO from time to time.

In accordance with section 378 of the *Local Government Act 1993*, the Chief Executive Officer delegates the following functions to the positions listed:

Title of Authorisation	Description of Authorisation	Position Number and Title
Releasing Media Information	Authority to release information to the media	P20377 Media Engagement Economy & Corporate Affairs

Document Control

Policy Title:	Media Policy
Audience:	City of Newcastle staff, elected council, community
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Policy Owner:	Chief Executive Officer
Policy Writer:	Executive Manager Media Engagement Economy & Corporate Affairs
Approved by:	Council
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Related Document Information, Standards & References

Related Legislation:	Local Government Act 1993 (NSW) s.8, 377 & 378
Related Policies (Council & Internal):	Codes of Conduct Social Media Policy
Related Procedures, Guidelines, Forms or documents:	Nil
Standards, Codes or other references:	Nil

Relevant Newcastle 2040 Theme/s

Term / Abbreviation
Liveable, Sustainable, Creative, Achieving Together

Version History

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Version 1 - ECM 1985646 Version 2 - ECM 4014241 Version 3 - ECM 4659404 Version 4 - ECM 6531039