

MEDIA

Policy | Strategy and Engagement

This policy sets the protocols for dealing with the media and responding to media enquiries across all business units of Council for Councillors and Council workers.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with Council's Social Media Policy.

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Service Unit:	Communication and Engagement		
Responsible Officer:	Coordinator Communication and Engagement		
Responsible Director:	Director Organisation and Community Capacity		
Authorisation Date:	17 August 2020	Review Date:	17 August 2022
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1 Background

1.1 Title of the Policy and Commencement Date

The Media Policy takes effect upon adoption by Council.

1.2 Purpose of the Policy

To encourage and proactively respond to opportunities for media coverage of Council business to connect with the community, and to ensure a fair, accurate and consistent representation of Council and Council business across all media outlets.

2 Objective

2.1 Objectives and Coverage of the Policy

- Clearly define Council's delegated media spokespeople and responsibilities for media involvement;
- Provide a single point of contact for both incoming media enquiries and outgoing initiation of media coverage;
- Ensure consistent, transparent and timely interactions with all media outlets to maximise opportunities for positive media coverage and connection with the community;
- Encourage identification of proactive opportunities for media coverage across all business units of Council; and
- Manage and minimise Council's reputational risk through provision of appropriate, accurate and authorised information.

3 Application

3.1 Application of this Policy

This Policy applies to all Councillors and Council staff including permanent, casual and temporary employees; volunteers; contractors; or consultants in relation to interaction with the media.

This policy does not extend to disaster management or emergency events when the Business Continuity Plan or Disaster Recovery Plan will apply.

4 Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

Term	Meaning
Worker	Any person engaged by Singleton Council as defined in the <i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011</i> .
Councillor	Elected representatives of Singleton Council, including the Mayor.



Term	Meaning
Delegated spokesperson	Any Singleton Council worker with delegations to interact with the media in an official capacity on behalf of Council.
Media	Any organisation that prepares or disseminates mass media information, including print media such as newspapers, magazines and newsletters; broadcast media including radio and television; and online and social media platforms.

5 Principles/Body

5.1 Procedural Statement

Singleton Council recognises the importance of all media outlets as channels to provide information to the community, as well as for Council to engage with the community; provide information about Council's activities and services; promote Council events; and reinforce Council's brand and image.

All media enquiries will be managed by Council's Communications and Engagement team, and media organisations and their representatives will be treated equally and without bias.

The following principles underpin Council's interaction with the media:

- All media enquiries relating to Council and the activities of Council (including contractors or consultants engaged by Council) must be directed to the Coordinator Communications and Engagement in the first instance to ensure Council's response is coordinated, consistent and accurate.
- Only Council workers with appropriate delegations are permitted to speak to, or be interviewed by media outlets unless with the express approval of the General Manager.
- In circumstances where the General Manager has granted an exceptional delegation, professional officers must provide comment on operational matters related to their field of expertise on a one-off basis only.
- All interactions with media by delegated spokespersons must enhance Council's reputation and image by provision of accurate and relevant information in a professional manner.
- In situations where media representatives have attended a public event where comments or a presentation by Council workers have been made, Council workers must advise the Coordinator Communication and Engagement as soon as possible.
- Councillors may communicate with the media provided they make it clear they are expressing their personal opinion and not purporting to represent the position of Council; their comments do not bring Council into disrepute; and do not disclose any confidential information relating to Council.
- Councillors are entitled to engage with the community via the media. However, they must ensure they do not make comments that:
 - compromises their capacity to perform their official duties in an unbiased manner;



- has the potential to have a negative impact on working relationships within Council or with external parties;
 - is offensive, humiliating, threatening, bullying or intimidating to other Councillors, Council workers or those who deal with Council;
 - has the capacity to damage Council's reputation or contains content about Council that may be misleading or deceptive;
 - divulges confidential Council information;
 - breaches the privacy of other Council officials or those who deal with Council;
 - contains allegations of suspected breaches of the Code of Conduct or information about the consideration of a matter under the Code of Conduct; or
 - could be perceived to be an official comment on behalf of Council where they have not been authorised to make such comment.
- Councillors must not release information independently before Council's official distribution through official channels.
 - All media requests must be acted on in an appropriate and timely manner with regard to media deadlines where practicable, unless in exceptional circumstances relating to Council workers' availability and time constraints.
 - Council workers are encouraged to contact the Council's Communications and Engagement team with opportunities for pro-active/positive media stories.
 - Council workers without appropriate delegations must not initiate contact with the media unless authorised by the General Manager. If a worker is contacted directly, they must refer to enquiry to the Communications and Engagement team.
 - All Council news releases and approaches to media outlets will be coordinated by Council's Communications and Engagement team.
 - Where issues of significant public interest or Council policies are to be discussed in a public forum, or where there is the likelihood of contentious issues, Council workers must inform the Coordinator Communication and Engagement in the first instance as soon as possible prior to the event. For example: court cases, ongoing public criticism of a particular issue, protests, or conflict between stakeholders.
 - The General Manager is to be immediately alerted to any contentious or political media issue or enquiry.
 - Council workers commenting publicly on any issue unrelated to Council should do so from a private address; not use their Council affiliation and/or title; and clearly indicate they are expressing their personal opinion.
 - Media representatives may visit, photograph, audio record or film Council worksites or restricted areas only with prior permission granted by the General Manager and in accordance with Council's Work Health and Safety Policies and Procedures.



6 Relevant Legislation

- *Spam Act 2003*
- *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*
- *Local Government Act 1993*
- *Defamation Act 2005*
- *State Records Act 1998*
- *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 (GIPA)*
- *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*
- *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000*
- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991*

7 Document Information

Related documents and reference information in this section provides a single reference point to develop and maintain site compliance information.

7.1 Related Documents

Related documents, listed in **Table 7-1** below, are internal documents directly related to or referenced from this document.

Number	Title
POL/1011	Code of Conduct Policy
POL/8055	Information Management (Recordkeeping) Policy
19/87488	Information Communication Technology Security Procedure
	OLG – Local Government Filming Protocol
POL/40009	Social Media Policy
18/8772	Singleton Council Brand and Identity Style Guide
17/79459	Business Continuity Plan
14/41181	Delegations Register

Table 7-1 – Related documents

8 Responsible Officer / Policy Owner

Ownership of this policy rests with the Coordinator Communications and Engagement.

9 Responsibilities

Parties or Persons	Responsibilities
Mayor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council's official spokesperson on policy related matters supported by a Council resolution; advocacy or representations to other levels of government or external agencies; and upcoming events.



Parties or Persons	Responsibilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorised signatory for Letters to the Editor on these matters.
Deputy Mayor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act as the Mayor's delegated spokesperson if the Mayor is not available.
Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May enter into public debate as private citizens and make comment on civic matters provided they identify their position is their own opinion and that it does not represent the position of Council. • The communication must not disclose confidential information or bring Council into disrepute. • Must refrain from using the media to make negative reflections on each other or Council workers that could be reasonably interpreted to undermine public confidence in the Council. • Must not release information independently before Council's official distribution through official channels.
General Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council's official spokesperson on all operational, service delivery and administration matters. • Authorised signatory for Letters to the Editor on these matters.
Communications and Engagement team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversees all interaction with the media including responding to media enquiries in accordance with deadlines where practicable; initiating media interest; and preparation and dissemination of news releases. • Briefing the Mayor, General Manager and Council workers on matters that may generate media interest. • Providing media guidance to Council workers who are delegated spokespeople and in relation to the parameters of this Policy.
Delegated spokespeople	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can interact with the media in an official capacity on behalf of Council. • All interactions must enhance Council's reputation and image.
Council workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must refer all media enquiries to Coordinator Communications and Engagement in the first instance. • Must not respond to or initiate contact with the media on behalf of Council. • Are encouraged to contact Council's Communications and Engagement team with opportunities for proactive and positive media stories. • Must inform the Coordinator Communications and Engagement in the first instance where items of significant public interest or Council policies are to be discussed in a public forum, or where there is the likelihood of contentious issues. • May make public comment on matters unrelated to Council from a private address; not use their Council affiliation and/or title; and clearly indicate they are expressing their personal opinion.



10 Approval

As per cover sheet.

11 Monitoring

This policy will be monitored by the Coordinator Communications and Engagement to ensure compliance.

12 Review Date

This policy, once adopted, is to remain in force until it is reviewed by Council. This policy is to be reviewed approximately every two (2) years to ensure that it meets legislative requirements.

13 Last Review Date

This policy was last reviewed in July 2018.

14 Record Keeping, Confidentiality and Privacy

This policy is to be made available for public viewing as required under the *Government Information (Public Access) 2009, NSW*.

15 Breaches and Sanctions

Any breaches of this Policy will be referred to the General Manager for appropriate action.

