
POLICY TITLE:	MEDIA POLICY
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FOLDER NUMBER:	F2007/00307
POLICY OWNER / DIVISION:	Office of the General Manager
POLICY OWNER / BRANCH:	Strategy and Place
FUNCTION:	Communications and Engagement
RELEVANT LEGISLATION:	Local Government Act 1993 NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988 NSW The Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 NSW Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 NSW The Privacy Act 1988 Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 NSW Work Health and Safety Act 2011 NSW Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW 2015 Australian Constitution Copyright Act 1968 Cth Copyright Amendment (Digital Agenda) Act 2000 Cth
POLICY ADOPTION/AMENDMENT DATE:	11 May 2022 REPORT NUMBER: CS4/22
REVIEW YEAR:	2024
AMENDMENT HISTORY:	8 July 2020 – GM14/20
RELATED POLICIES:	Draft Crisis Communications Policy Code of Conduct for Staff Code of Conduct for Councillors Social Media Determination Social Media Policy for Councillors

INTRODUCTION

The role of media at Hornsby Shire Council

Our goal is to form transparent and trustworthy relationships with our community through media.

This media policy outlines how all media activities are to be managed by all Hornsby Shire Council staff and representatives.

We commit to delivering timely, accurate, relevant, honest and respectful information and updates to our community through our channels and by openly engaging with the media. Achieving these

goals as an organisation will enable Council to be a voice the community can trust, listen to and engage with across a variety of issues.

Policy scope

In this media policy, we unpack different media activities, roles, responsibilities, approval processes, media relations and ethical principles. Beyond this policy, our Communications and Engagement team can provide additional guidance around the acceptable use of media for Hornsby Shire Council.

The media policy covers you if you are:

- an employee of Hornsby Shire Council
- an agency, casual, temporary or contract member of staff working for or on behalf of Council
- staff of third-party suppliers contracted to or providing services to Council
- volunteers working with us on Council projects
- students on work placements with Council.

POLICY PURPOSE

This policy acts as a guide for Council staff and representatives who communicate and engage on behalf of Council through media. Our foremost priorities in our media activities are to protect Council's reputation and positive profile, and to maintain productive media relationships.

The purpose of this policy is to identify Council's authorised spokespeople and to establish media protocols and approval processes for effective Council media activity. When communicating on behalf of Council, all staff and officers must adhere to our Code of Conduct. Any media activity that breaches Council policy or code will be subject to investigation.

PRINCIPLES

In addition to abiding by Council policy, every Council representative participating in media activities should ensure they hold to universal media and news standards. Delegated Council representatives who share information with the media and public should ensure everything they distribute, state and share is:

- truthful
- accurate
- objective
- impartial
- fair
- accountable (to the Council, media and public).

Definitions

Media	All forms of communication distributed to a wider audience, including—but not limited to—newspapers, magazines, journals, radio, television, journalists, digital and social media.
Media comment	A verbal statement issued by a delegated Council representative and distributed via a formal channel to state a position on a matter of formal business or Council policy of public interest.
Media statement	A written statement issued by a delegated Council representative to state a position on a matter of formal business or Council policy of public interest.
Media release	A written and pre-approved statement issued by Council to media to share information and updates in response to an issue or about Council activities.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Mayor

The Mayor is Council's official spokesperson on all policy matters and key decisions. The Mayor is an authorised signatory for letters to the editor on policy issues. If the Mayor is unavailable, the Deputy Mayor acts as Council's delegated spokesperson.

The Mayor may nominate Councillors to speak on behalf of Council.

Councillors

Councillors have the right to express their personal opinion on any issue and to speak on behalf of the community they represent. When Councillors comment, they should clearly express their views are personal and do not reflect the official position of Council. When delegated to speak on behalf of Council by the Mayor, Councillors must express and support Council's entire policy on the issue at hand.

General Manager

The General Manager is Council's official spokesperson on all operational and administrative issues and is an authorised signatory for letters to the editor on related issues. They have final approval of all media statements and responses, in consultation with the Mayor, unless otherwise delegated to a Divisional Manager.

The General Manager may nominate Council staff to act as spokespeople for Council operational and administrative matters.

Communications and Engagement Manager

The Communications and Engagement Manager manages and coordinates all communications and engagement activities, including media-related materials. They also have oversight and sign-off on all external media statements and responses.

Communications Coordinator

The Communications Coordinator sits within the Communications and Engagement team and reports to the Communications and Engagement Manager.

The Communications Coordinator has the delegated authority to liaise with media and prepare media responses on behalf of Council. However, as per the Code of Conduct, they do not have the authority to issue statements without appropriate approvals—from the Communications and Engagement Manager, relevant Directors and the General Manager as required—prior to sending any responses or media releases.

The Communications Coordinator is the primary contact for media enquiries and is responsible for maintaining relationships with local and mainstream media. All media enquiries must be sent to media@hornsby.nsw.gov.au.

The Communications Coordinator will maintain a record of all media enquiries and responses. All media releases will be posted on Council's website.

Communications and Engagement team

Authorised members of the Communications and Engagement team support the Communications Coordinator by managing and monitoring day-to-day media enquiries and activity.

The Communications and Engagement team advises to the Mayor, Councillors, the General Manager and delegated Council officials as required.

Employees, contractors and volunteers

Hornsby Shire Council representatives are not authorised to speak on behalf of the organisation, unless they have received delegation from the General Manager. Staff members are encouraged to share information with the Communications Coordinator that could be used as a basis for a media release. Or, they may prepare a draft for media release but must supply it to the Communications and Engagement team for review, approval and distribution.

Approvals

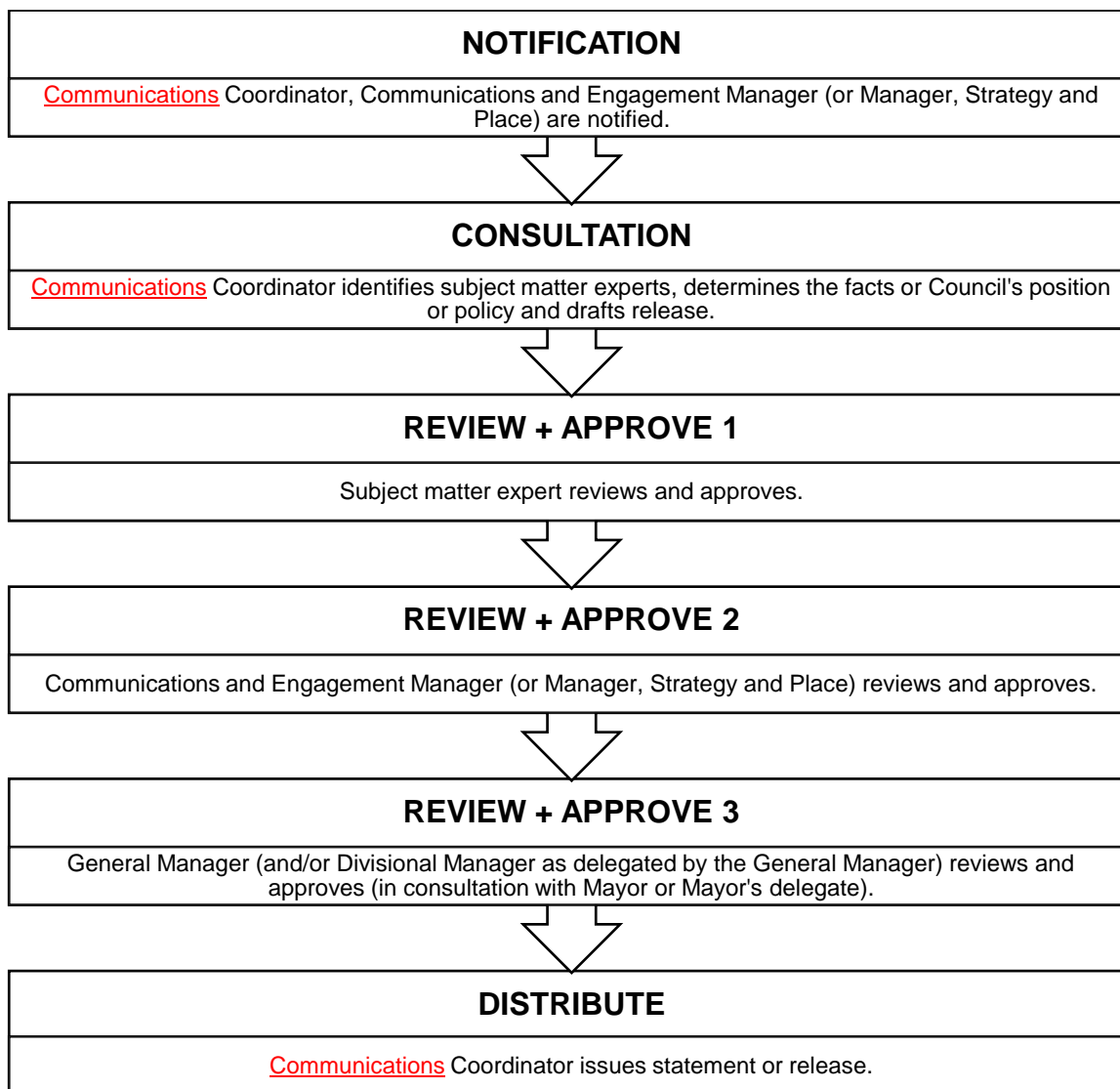
Seek approval for content prior to distribution.

- Where possible, Council will respond to all reasonable media enquiries.
- It is the responsibility of the Communications and Engagement team to give media-related advice and training where necessary. This may include advice on strategic messaging prior to release and distribution.

- When preparing media materials to address incoming enquiries or for Council-issued releases, the Communications Coordinator should seek appropriate consultation with relevant subject-matter experts.
- All media releases, content and key messages must be reviewed and approved by the Communications Coordinator, the Communications and Engagement Manager, and the relevant Director and the General Manager as necessary prior to release and distribution by the Communications Coordinator.
- Written comment quoting the Mayor must be reviewed and approved by the General Manager and the Communications Coordinator.
- Media releases related to policy must be approved by the Mayor (particularly where a policy is quoted in the release).
- Media outlet requests to film or photograph Council staff, facilities, meetings and events must be referred to the Communications and Engagement Manager who will consult with and seek approval from the General Manager and relevant Council staff.

Approval and review process

Incoming media enquiry or Council-initiated release



PRIVACY

We comply with Australian legislation and requirements, including [The Privacy Act 1988](#) and [The NSW Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998](#) (PPIP), which regulate how personal information is collected, used, stored, secured and disclosed.

The PPIP Act stipulates that any information about an individual, whose identity could be reasonably ascertained from the information is “personal information”. Personal information can only be disclosed to the media if:

- the person has consented
- 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

- 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.

MISUSE OF COUNCIL INFORMATION

If a staff member or Council representative wishes to act in a personal capacity while accessing media outlets, they should express they are not speaking on behalf of Hornsby Shire Council. In line with the Council's Code of Conduct, employees should be aware of their association with Council and refrain from discussing their work or any matter relating to Council.

Any information staff gain in their official capacity is confidential. Staff should take care to maintain the security and integrity of official documents and information. Staff may only disclose official information and documentation in the course of their employment when authorised to do so or by law. Staff should never publish or distribute internal communications between staff or trusted partners through channels and media.

If information is considered public knowledge, staff may share it. However, if there is any uncertainty as to whether the information is public knowledge, it should be treated as confidential. Staff and Council representatives should never publish an embargoed statement before the approved date and time.

BREACHES OF THE POLICY

The Communications and Engagement team manages and coordinates media for Council and protects our organisational reputation. Where necessary, the team will monitor and discuss in-house media processes, and will advise Council on best practice.

The Communications and Engagement team will elevate inappropriate behaviour that breaches this policy or the Code of Conduct to the Communications and Engagement Manager, and if necessary, the General Manager for further investigation.

MORE INFORMATION

If you have further questions or need more information about our media policy, please get in touch with our Communications and Engagement Manager.

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