STRATHFIELD COUNCIL

DRAFT MEDIA POLICY

25 MARCH 2022

STRATHFIELD
COUNCIL

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RESPONSIBILITY	Communications and Events Section		
AUTHOR	Naomi Searle, Executive Manager Communications, Events and Engagement. Ext 292		
DATE ADOPTED	XX	**MINUTE**	
REVISED	NA - New	**REVIEW**	2023
CM10 NO			
ASSOCIATED LEGISLATION	• *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW)* • *Privacy Act 1988 (Cth)* • *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (*GIPA Act*); • *Local Government Act 1993;* • *Independent Commission Against Corruption Act;* • *Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 NSW;* • *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 2009 NSW;* • *State Records Act 1998;* • *Workplace Health and Safety Act 2011;* • *Model Code of Conduct for Local Councils in NSW 2015*; • *Copyright Act 1968 Cth;* and • *Copyright Amendment (Digital Agenda) Act 2000 Cth.*		
ASSOCIATED POLICIES	• Strathfield Council Privacy Management Plan • Strathfield Council Community Consultation Policy • Strathfield Council Style Guide • Strathfield Council Customer Charter • Strathfield Council Service Standards • Strathfield Council Access to Information Policy • Strathfield Council Code of Meeting Practice • Strathfield Council Complaint Handling policy • Local Government Guidelines on Investigations • Strathfield Council Code of Conduct		

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Strathfield Council strives to maintain a positive image in the community. Our public image is influenced by the way we communicate and all media relations should support Council in achieving our strategic objectives.

Strathfield Council welcomes enquiries from the media, and works proactively with media outlets to inform the public about Council's activities and advocacy. A mutually beneficial and trusting relationship between Council and the media is essential in maintaining and protecting Council's reputation. All media representatives are to be treated in the same manner as any other customer of Council, with promptness, transparency and respect.

Any media comment made by Council staff and contractors must abide by Council's Code of Conduct.

1.2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure all communication with the media is consistent, timely, accurate and appropriate;
- Protect and enhance the reputation of Council;
- Maintain and maximise positive relations with media;
- Establish consistent protocols, guidelines and an approvals process for managing communication to the media;
- Clearly indicate Council's authorised spokespeople; and
- Minimise miscommunication and potential adverse consequences.

1.3. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all Strathfield Council staff, contractors and Councillors in relation to communication with the media. This Policy applies to all media comment and activity on behalf of Council.

2. Processes and approvals

Responding to media enquiries

The Executive Manager, Communications, Events and Engagement is responsible for the coordination of responses to all enquiries and will inform and liaise with the General Manager, the Mayor and relevant Council staff as required.

Council staff are required to promptly assist the Executive Manager, Communications, Events and Engagement with any media enquiries to ensure media deadlines are met.

Media Releases

The Executive Manager, Communications, Events and Engagement is responsible for preparing and issuing media releases about Council's activities, decisions and plans. All staff are required to proactively pass on information to the Executive Manager, Communications, Events and Engagement which could be used as the basis for a media release, such as public Council events and positive initiatives.

Event Notifications

All notifications in relation to Council events will come from the Office of the Mayor.

3. Council's authorised spokespeople

The Mayor is the official spokesperson for Strathfield Council. If the Mayor is not available, the Deputy Mayor will substitute or another Councillor nominated by the Mayor.

The General Manager who is responsible for the day-to-day management of Council is the spokesperson on operational matters. No Council staff or contractors are permitted to speak to media without the express written authorisation of the General Manager.

Comments to the media should only be made through authorised spokespeople.

4. Guidelines for Staff

All media requests should be directed to the Executive Manager, Communications, Events and Engagement in the Communications and Events team. If staff are approached by journalists, photographers or camera operators, they should politely direct all enquiries to the Executive Manager Communications, Events and Engagement.

Council staff and contractors may access media outlets in their personal capacity as residents or ratepayers but they should be mindful of their obligations under Council's Code of Conduct.

When acting in a personal capacity, Council staff and contractors should be aware of their association with Strathfield Council and ensure that their actions are consistent with our values of integrity, accountability, teamwork and wellbeing and safety. They must not imply that they are speaking on behalf of Strathfield Council or discuss their work or any matter relating to Council.

Staff are not to provide background information, discuss Council matters, Council staff or Councillors, make a comment as a Council representative or issue official statements without prior approval from the General Manager.

The General Manager or the Executive Manager Communications, Events and Engagement must approve requests for interviews or media permission to film Council owned assets or Council staff.

5. Role of Councillors

It is common practice for the media to ask Councillors to comment on Council policy or decisions. Only the Mayor, Executive Manager of Communications, Events and Engagement or in the absence of the Mayor, the Deputy Mayor or the Mayor's nominee, are permitted to speak on behalf of Council.

Individual Councillors remain free to provide personal comments to the media, but not to speak on Council's behalf. Individual Councillors speaking to the media on their own behalf must clearly convey this to the media and avoid any perception that their views are necessarily those of Council.

The Mayor and Councillors may inform the Executive Manager, Communications, Events and Engagement of any media contact relating to Council business and may copy them on any personal media releases.

Defamation law extends to Councillors and Council Officers. It could be considered defamatory to harm another person's reputation verbally or through written word.

Councillors are reminded of this policy at their Councillor Induction Program shortly after they are elected and this is included in the Councillors' Manual for ongoing reference.

6. Social Media

Strathfield Council staff, contractors and Councillors must not use social media to speak against a Council staff member, the Mayor, a Councillor or Strathfield Council.

7. Breaches of this policy

Breaches of this policy by Council staff, contractors and Councillors may result in an investigation of the alleged breach in line with Council's complaint handling policy and the Local Government Guidelines on Investigations, which may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Any alleged criminal offence or allegation of corrupt conduct will be referred to the relevant external agency.

8. Version Control

Date	Type	Minute
June 2021	Draft V1.0	
5 April 2022	Presented to Council Meeting for endorsement for public exhibition.	

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