

Media Contact Policy and Procedure for Staff and Councillors

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Scope

All staff and Councillors who may be approached by the media.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set standard procedures for the way Council interacts with all forms of media. This will ensure that consistent and high quality messaging is issued to media, assist with the generation of positive media coverage and protect and enhance the organisation's reputation.

Definitions

<i>Media</i>	All forms of published content such as newspapers, radio, television, and online (including social media).
<i>Spokesperson</i>	Person delegated by the Lord Mayor to speak on behalf of Council
<i>Contact</i>	Journalist or student journalists may attempt to contact staff by phone, email, through social media or in person
<i>Community language</i>	Non-English language

Policy

Only the Lord Mayor, CEO, their delegate or employees specifically designated to do so, may make media or public comment on behalf of Council. This policy outlines why media inquiries and public comments are coordinated by Council's Communications and Marketing unit, and the procedure to follow if the media contacts a member of staff.

Its objectives include:

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- a) To ensure media and public comments on behalf of Parramatta City Council are consistent, accurate, timely, high quality and designed to best position Council in the media.
- b) To promote the activities, services, programs, events, policies and initiatives of Council by providing information to the media with a whole-of-Council perspective.
- c) To centralise and coordinate Council's messaging across a variety of platforms including direct media liaison, social media and active public relations to ensure messages are not duplicated.
- d) To ensure the Lord Mayor and CEO are advised of probable media stories or possible issues prior to publication.
- e) To provide news media with a single point of contact with Council, enhancing the provision of Council information through all news media, and enabling the building of positive relationships with news media.
- f) To ensure Council is communicating with its whole community through variety of media channels, including its culturally and linguistically diverse communities/media.
- g) To clarify the role and responsibilities of Councillors and media in relation to Council activities and ensure policy is clear.

Procedure

Media contact must only be initiated through Council's Communications and Marketing unit, with the primary point of contact being the Media and Communications Advisor (ph 9806 5083 or 0414 190 221), who is responsible for **all** contact with the media, and in his/her absence the Communications and Marketing Manager, approved Communications Officers, CEO or Lord Mayor.

Staff members are responsible for reporting all contact with the media to Communications and Marketing unit.

The following people may speak to the media:

Lord Mayor	on behalf of him/herself or Council
Deputy Lord Mayor	on behalf of him/herself or on behalf of Council with the Lord Mayor's approval
Councillors	personal views only
CEO	on behalf of Council
Group Managers	Only with the permission of the CEO, in consultation with Communications and Marketing
Special interest staff	Only with the permission of the CEO, in consultation with Communications and Marketing

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1 Process

1.1 Staff member is contacted by the media.

1.2 Staff member takes the caller's name, contact phone number and name of media agency, and the general nature of the enquiry (eg Fred Smith, 9900 0000 from Channel 10 regarding illegal dumping). Staff member does not attempt to answer any questions put by the caller.

1.3 Caller's name and contact details are forwarded to Media and Communications Adviser immediately (9806 5083 or 0414 190 221) and the Manager Communications and Marketing for information.

1.4 Media and Communications Adviser calls the journalist to gain further details on the enquiry. The Media and Communications Adviser will determine whether a written response to the enquiry will suffice or if an interview needs to be arranged.

1.5 Written responses are advised in the first instance so Council can control its messaging and record accurately what information it has provided to media. For written responses, the Media and Communications Adviser will seek information and advice from sources appropriate to the enquiry (eg. Lord Mayor, CEO, Group Manager, Unit/Service Manager or specialist Officer). A response will then be prepared and approved by the senior staff member who provided the information for accuracy. Minor requests for information should not need CEO/Lord Mayor approval. However, depending on the scale and significance of the issue, the response may need to be discussed with the CEO and/or Lord Mayor first. Once relevant approvals are granted the Media and Communications Adviser or delegated Communications Officers may release the response to the media.

1.6 If an interview is required, the Lord Mayor is the spokesperson for Council. If the Lord Mayor is not available, then the Lord Mayor may delegate to the Deputy Lord Mayor. The CEO may also speak on behalf of Council.

The Media and Communications Adviser will seek information and advice from sources appropriate to the enquiry and provide speaking points for the Lord Mayor, CEO or delegated spokesperson. The information will be double-checked with the relevant internal sources before it is provided to the spokesperson. The Media and Communications Advisor should make him/herself available to be present during the interview.

1.7 Under no circumstances may staff speak to the media on Council or related business without the permission of the CEO.

1.8 What to do at meetings where a journalist is present.

There are times when a journalist at a meeting may approach staff to clarify remarks made or about reports that have been written. Unless the meeting is specified as a closed one, the journalist is entitled to publish any remarks or reports tabled. Staff may be able to answer technical and factual questions about what was said in the meeting, but opinions must never be given. Report the contact to the Media and Communications Adviser at the next opportunity with a brief summary of the context. Do not be drawn into further comment or elaboration without seeking advice from the Communications and Marketing. Take any further questions on notice, ask for the journalist's contact details, and contact the Communications and Marketing unit.

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1.9 If the Lord Mayor, CEO or spokesperson wishes to contact media

As spokespeople, the Lord Mayor and CEO may directly contact media to provide information on Council plans, policies and programs.

The Media and Communications Adviser or Communications and Marketing Manager should be advised before any contact is made to ensure messages are inline with Council's position and to provide any support.

2 Exemptions

Media will make specific requests to speak to special interest staff and will specifically ask not to speak to the Lord Mayor or CEO.

The Lord Mayor should always be promoted as Council's primary spokesperson to give authority and a consistent voice to Council issues, policies and events.

Only the CEO can grant permission for staff to speak to media. In cases where permission is granted, the Lord Mayor's office will be informed.

2.1 Special interest areas

Media requests to speak to specialist interest staff will come when they specifically want the person responsible for a program or initiative to provide greater detail on a specialist area - for example, talking to the curator of the Artists Studios about the exhibition season.

In the first instance the Lord Mayor should always be given the opportunity to promote the initiative.

If a staff member is approached by media and feels it is essential they should be interviewed they must first contact the Communications and Marketing unit. Communications and Marketing will liaise with the CEO to gain permission if appropriate.

This can only be permitted for low risk topics that speak about Council programs and services, not about policy and planning. Interviews can only provide information and not opinion.

If the CEO agrees, the office of the Lord Mayor and relevant senior staff will be informed.

Staff must not speak to media without basic media training and advice, which will be provided by Communications and Marketing. A member of the Communications and Marketing team will be present if required to provide support and advice.

Formal media training will be provided to identified staff.

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2.2 Community language media

Council is committed to communicating with its culturally and linguistically diverse community through the appropriate non-English language media, as outlined in its Ethnic Communications Plan and focused Media Relations Strategy.

To gain media coverage in CALD media, community language staff may be identified and permitted to speak about Council events and programs only (not policy or opinion) in their own language.

Staff identified by Human Resources will be trained in media presentation by Communications and Marketing and will be approached on an as needed basis, with the permission of the CEO and/or relevant senior staff.

Speaking points will be provided by Communications and Marketing and Communications and Marketing staff should be present during all interviews.

3. Councillors and the media

Councillors will be approached by the media for comment on Council plans, policies and issues.

In line with Council's Code of Conduct, Councillors are entitled to speak to media to express their views on plans and policies. To ensure that clear, accurate and consistent messaging is delivered to media, Councillors should not actively seek to promote Council activities and programs themselves as these communications are coordinated through Communications and Marketing with the Lord Mayor as official spokesperson. The Lord Mayor may grant permission for Councillors to speak on Council's behalf or on special projects.

Councillors contacted by media for information or an opinion should treat the request exclusively and not share their response with other media outlets.

REFERENCES	
POLICIES	
ATTACHMENTS	

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