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MEDIA POLICY

P3.0141.2

MEDIA POLICY

DIVISION: CUSTOMER & CORPORATE SERVICES

BRANCH: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

PART 1 - INTRODUCTION

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Camden Council is committed to effective and efficient communication processes and recognises the importance of the role of the media in communicating with the community and stakeholders.
- 1.2 Council is committed to building positive relationships with the media and providing accurate, consistent, relevant and timely information to the media.
- 1.3 The purpose of this policy is to provide a policy position on the expectations of Council's representatives when engaging with the media in both an official and personal capacity, management of Council's media processes and to clarify Council media spokespersons.
- 1.4 This policy is guided by Council's Communications and Community Engagement Strategy, which aims to provide clear direction and guidance for Council's communication and engagement processes.

2. OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 Ensure that information provided to media outlets is accurate, consistent, relevant and timely.
- 2.2 Build on Council's partnership with the community through positive media messages and dissemination of information.
- 2.3 Promote positive relationships between Council and the media through regular consultation.
- 2.4 Promote and maintain a positive image of Council and minimise risks to reputation.
- 2.5 Ensure media issues are addressed promptly.
- 2.6 Clarify Council's media management processes.
- 2.7 Clearly identify spokespersons for Council.

- 2.8 Ensure appropriate authorisation of, and responsibility for, information provided to the media.

3. SCOPE

- 3.1 This policy applies to all representatives of Camden Council (whether full-time, part-time or casual) and all persons performing work at the direction of, or on behalf of Camden Council including volunteers, contractors, subcontractors, agents, consultants and temporary staff.
- 3.2 It also applies to all of Camden Council's workplaces and other places where Camden Council is being represented.

4. DEFINITIONS

- 4.1 **Media Statement** - A written statement issued by Camden Council that states Council's official position on Council business, policies or matters of public interest.
- 4.2 **Media Comment** - A verbal statement issued by Camden Council that communicates Council's official position on Council business, policies or matters of public interest (can be written as a quote from a spokesperson).
- 4.3 **Council Spokesperson** - The Mayor and General Manager are the official spokespersons for Camden Council and have the authority to delegate to another spokesperson. The Mayor is given the first opportunity to speak on any Council matter and may delegate to another spokesperson.
- 4.4 **Media** - Includes all media outlets including, but not limited to, local, national and international newspapers, magazines, newsletters, brochures, radio and television broadcasters, internet publishers and social media.

PART 2 - POLICY STATEMENT

5. PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNICATING WITH THE MEDIA

- 5.1 Council will:
- Encourage open and transparent communication with the media and aims to ensure that all media communication is accurate, timely and consistent.
 - Communicate with the media to enhance its reputation and inform the public of issues, initiatives, decisions, plans, projects, events, services and facilities.
 - Ensure Council's media comments and statements are accurate, reliable, and in the best interests of Council, by using only spokespersons delegated in this policy to communicate with the media on behalf of Council.

6. COUNCIL SPOKESPERSON ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 6.1 **Mayor** - Council's official spokesperson on all policy matters and matters of public interest.
- 6.2 **Councillors** - have a right to express their own opinions on issues, whether or not that opinion reflects Council's official position, however they must carefully identify the role in which they are making comment. When Councillors are publicly expressing their opinion, they must ensure they make it clear that they are speaking for themselves, unless delegated by the Mayor. When speaking on behalf of Council, if delegated by the Mayor, Councillors must express and support Council's policy position on the particular issue/s.
- 6.3 **General Manager** - Council's official spokesperson on policy, operational and administration matters when delegated by the Mayor.
- 6.4 **Directors** - when delegated, can speak to the media on areas under their jurisdiction.
- 6.5 **Team Leader Community Engagement** - responsible for coordinating and distributing responses, and providing information to the media on behalf of Council. In the absence of the Team Leader Community Engagement, delegation falls to the Public Relations Officer or a delegated Council Officer.
- 6.6 **Council Staff** - are not to provide comment to the media unless delegated by the General Manager and are required to direct any media enquiries to the Team Leader Community Engagement.
- 6.7 **Council Volunteers** - have a right to express their own opinions on issues, whether or not that opinion reflects Council's official position, however they must carefully identify that this is their own personal comment/opinion. Volunteers must not represent the official position of Council unless delegated by the Mayor or General Manager.

7. MEDIA MANAGEMENT

Media Enquiry Management

- 7.1 All media enquiries must be referred to the Team Leader Community Engagement in the first instance. In the absence of the Team Leader Community Engagement, media enquiries should be referred to the Public Relations Officer or a delegated Council Officer.
- 7.2 **Staff must not communicate with the media unless approval is obtained from the General Manager.** Staff should advise that they are not authorised to speak with the media and forward their enquiry to the Team Leader, Community Engagement.

- 7.3 Following approval by the General Manager, staff are only to provide the media with factual information on Council business or policy matters. Any responses should be forwarded to the Team Leader Community Engagement for approval and distribution.
- 7.4 Requests to film or photograph Council staff, properties or events for broadcast or print purposes must be referred to the Team Leader Community Engagement for prior approval.

Media Liaison

- 7.5 All media enquiries are to be dealt with promptly and should be directed to the Team Leader Community Engagement in the first instance to ensure accurate, consistent and relevant information is provided.
- 7.6 Delegated Council spokespersons will interact with the media under the following principles:
- Relations with the media are to be conducted in a respectful, cooperative, courteous and trusting manner.
 - Demonstrate honesty, good faith, openness and integrity in all interactions.
 - Demonstrate sensitivity, responsibility and appreciation for the public's right to information, subject to respect for the right to privacy of individuals and any relevant legislation.
 - Provision of factual and objective information - misleading or incorrect information will not knowingly be provided and will be corrected as soon as possible if this does occur.
 - Staff will not provide information of a political nature or express personal opinions about Council matters.
 - Staff will seek to assist the media in meeting reasonable deadlines by providing prompt information and other appropriate forms of assistance as required.
 - Designated staff must be mindful of Council's duty of care and Council's overriding duty to act in the public interest.
 - When quoting any Council spokesperson, approval of the quote from the person being quoted must be sought.
- 7.7 Council expects that the media will interact with Council under the following principles:
- Relations with the Council are to be conducted in a respectful, cooperative, courteous, honest and fair manner.
 - Reasonable timeframes for responses are to be provided, including the consideration of weekends and public holidays in the timeframes provided.

Access to Information

- 7.8 All Council documents on public record are available to the media.
- 7.9 Requests for access to Council information that is not in the public arena are governed by the provisions of the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* ('the PPIP Act'), the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* ('the GIPA Act'), the *Copyright Act 1968* (Cth), other related legislation and Council policies. Media personnel may be required to complete an application for access to information pursuant to the provisions of the GIPA Act.
- 7.9 Council will at all times endeavour to respond to media enquiries, however there may be occasions that Council feels it is inappropriate to do so.

Confidentiality

- 7.10 Council may be restricted to providing information to the media and public at times due to confidentiality agreements. If this occurs, Council will, to the best of its ability and within the confinements of the confidentiality agreement, provide as much information as possible.

Emergency Information

- 7.11 Emergency communication will be carried out in accordance with Council's Crisis Management Plan. The Mayor and General Manager must be advised immediately of any emergency or crisis that may affect the Local Government Area.

Media Releases/Responses

- 7.12 Council staff may prepare media releases/responses. However they must be forwarded to the Team Leader Community Engagement for editing, relevant approvals and distribution.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION: *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*
Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009
Copyright Act 1968 (Cth)

RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES: Communications & Community Engagement Strategy
Community Engagement Policy
Crisis Management Plan

RESPONSIBLE DIRECTOR: Director Customer & Corporate Services

APPROVALS ELG, Council

NEXT REVIEW DATE: March 2016

RECORD KEEPING NOTES

PRIVACY REQUIREMENTS: Publicly available via Council's website.

Issue	Approved by	Changes made	Date
1	Approved by Council	Original policy called Dealing with Media	14/11/1994
2	Approved by Council	Titled changed to Media Policy	12/05/2015