



WAVERLEY  
COUNCIL

# Media Policy

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Relevant legislation/codes	
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Related forms	

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## 1. Background

Waverley is a high-profile local government area, with many newsworthy projects and activities, Council strives to maintain a positive image in the community. Council's public image is influenced by the way we communicate, and all media relations should support Council in achieving its strategic objectives.

A mutually beneficial and trusting relationship between Council and the media is essential in maintaining and protecting Council's reputation. All media representatives should be treated in the same manner as any other customer of Council, with timeliness, transparency and respect.

## 2. Purpose

The media is one channel of communication Council uses to inform the public of its activities, policies and events. The Media Policy provides a framework for staff and Councillors to promote positive media coverage of Council affairs that is fair, accurate and reliable.

This Media Policy aims to:

- To promote open exchange of information between Council and the media
- To limit the publication of inaccurate information, miscommunication and reputation risk
- To promote positive media relationships
- To clearly indicate Council's authorised spokespersons
- To ensure appropriate authorisation and responsibility for information provided.
- To ensure consistency by staff and Councillors in dealing with the media.

## 3. Scope

This policy applies to Councillor and all Waverley Council staff (including temporary staff and contractors).

Any act that breaches this policy can result in action under Council's relevant Code of Conduct.

## 4. Policy Content

### 4.1 Statements to the media

The Mayor shall at all times be the primary official spokesperson for the Council. The General Manager, Communications and Engagement Manager and Media and PR Officer may also act as official spokespersons on matters of Council operations or policy detail, or where agreed by the Mayor and General Manager. This policy does not prevent the right of individual Councillors to express their own views to the media at any time, however Councillors should be clear when making comment that they do not represent the views of Council. Councillors have an obligation to present factual information to the media.

Other Council staff, including Directors, may comment or provide information on matters of fact and other matters not involving opinion, if approved to do so by the Mayor and General Manager. That approval process is to be undertaken via the Media and PR Officer or the Communications and Engagement Manager. Interpretation of Council policy or speculating on future Council actions is to be made only with the prior approval of the Mayor and General Manager.

## 4.2 Council and the media

All media inquiries should be directed to the Media and Public Relations Officer via [media@waverley.nsw.gov.au](mailto:media@waverley.nsw.gov.au) or the 24-hour on-call number 0416 075 532.

Council staff must not speak to the media about matters related to Council or provide information, footage, photos, etc unless authorised to do so by the General Manager or Communications and Engagement Manager.

Staff should advise the Communications and Engagement Manager or the Media and Public Relations Officer via [media@waverley.nsw.gov.au](mailto:media@waverley.nsw.gov.au) or 0416 075 532 immediately if there is an incident or situation which could attract media or public interest.

Council employees, either with or without approval to speak to the media, may not provide any comment or information to the media with the intention of contesting or undermining Council policy or decisions, or casting Council, Councillors or Council staff in a negative light.

Council employees may speak to the media or write Letters to the Editor as private individuals with the following restrictions:

- a) They do not comment on Council business or policy
- b) They are not identified as Council employees
- c) Their comments are not perceived as representing official Council position or policy.

From time to time it may be necessary for a Letter to the Editor to be written as an official Council communication to inform the community about a particular matter. Such letters must be issued through the Media and Public Relations Officer subject to the approval of the Mayor and/or General Manager.

When appropriate, a member of Council staff may become the sole spokesperson on a specific issue, event or initiative within their operational portfolio, to ensure consistency of message. Approval should be given in advance via the Mayor and General Manager, in liaison with the Media and Public Relations Officer.

Any acts which breach this Policy can result in action under Council's relevant Code of Conduct.

### 4.3 Councillors and the media

Every Councillor has a right to express a private opinion on any issue, whether or not that opinion reflects Council's official position, but Councillors must carefully identify the role in which they speak or write. Councillors must, at all times, provide factual information.

Whenever Councillors publicly express their own opinions, they must make it clear they are speaking for themselves, unless delegated by the Mayor, and not for Council, unless they are supporting a Council position.

When Councillors speak "on behalf of the Council" when delegated by the Mayor, they must express and support Council's entire position on the issue at hand.

To ensure information provided to the media is accurate and up to date, Councillors should seek information from the appropriate Council officer before making comment.