



Hawkesbury City Council

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Draft Media Policy

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Hawkesbury City Council
Policy

DRAFT
Media Policy

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Hawkesbury City Council

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1.0 TITLE

Media Policy.

2.0 PURPOSE

Council is committed to open and clear communication with the local community. Similarly, it is committed to actively engaging with media to maximise reach and facilitate the efficient dissemination of relevant, accurate and timely information in accordance with Council's Hawkesbury Community Strategic Plan 2017-2036.

The overall purpose of this Media Policy is to provide a framework for Council's communication with the media in order to keep the Hawkesbury community informed of its activities and to ensure that Council is transparent and well connected with its community.

This Policy is therefore designed to strengthen and build on Council's existing relationship with the media and the community. It also aims to ensure consistency by Council representatives/spokespersons and Councillors dealing with the media on a day-to-day basis.

Council will openly discuss matters of interest with the media unless disclosure of certain information compromises other activities, contravenes Council's duty of care or could infringe laws or regulations which govern its operations. Council will treat all media without bias and distribute information to the media concurrently.

Council also recognises that without appropriate preparation and planning, exchanges with the media can lead to the communication of misinformation, conflict and/or embarrassment for the Council representatives/spokespersons, Councillors as well as for Council.

Council's ability to reach and inform a wide range of stakeholders is supported by a proactive media program and designated in-house media services to support both Council and its staff.

3.0 SCOPE

The Policy establishes Council's approach to responding to and initiating media contact. It applies to both Council's representatives/spokespersons as well as Councillors, Council staff, Council Committee members, volunteers, contractors and delegates of Council.

For the purpose of this Policy, media comprises all print, broadcast and online media as well as the management of media enquires coming into council, public speaking engagements, social media posts and other forms of communication where it could be expected that the comments might be recorded or circulated to the wider community.

4.0 OBJECTIVE

1. To maintain relations and ensure all communication with the media and wider community is coordinated, consistent, well informed, timely and appropriate.
2. To clearly identify Council's authorised representative/spokesperson and ensure appropriate authorisation and responsibility for comments supplied.
3. To establish protocols and consistent methods for managing and co-ordinating communication from Council to the media and wider community.
4. To identify media opportunities, to inform the community, to promote and celebrate the achievements of Council and the local community and provide a platform for community engagement.



5. To mitigate risk and limit the possibility of miscommunication and the distribution of inaccurate information, or any other impacts on Council's reputation.
6. To provide relevant background and historical information.

5.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITY

Authorised Officer	Roles & Responsibilities
Mayor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Council's Official Spokesperson on all policy and external matters. Authorised signatory for Letters to the Editor on these issues.
Deputy Mayor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Act as the Mayor's delegated spokesperson if the Mayor is not available.
General Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Council's Official Spokesperson on all policy, operational and administration issues. Authorised signatory for Letters to the Editor on these issues.
Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Should act in order to be compliant with this Media Policy. They must not comment on behalf of Council. Any comments or posts they make should not compromise Council's desire to ensure that all projects, programs and activities are promoted in a timely and consistent manner. Any comment to the media must be identified as their own opinion and not representing the official position of Council. The Corporate Communications Manager should be advised of comments to the media.
Directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Directors are delegated to provide comment to the media on areas under their jurisdiction. They are required to advise the General Manager and the Corporate Communication Manager of any contact made by the media. They are required to provide information to the Corporate Communications department when requested for inclusion in media comments.
Corporate Communications Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Responsible for coordinating responses and providing information to the media on behalf of Council. Distributing all written media comment to media organisations. The Corporate Communication Manager is delegated to provide comment to the media. All information provided to the media must have prior approval from the General Manager.
Public Relations Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Responsible for coordinating responses and providing information to the media on behalf of Council. Distributing all written media comment to media organisations.



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Authorised Officer	Roles & Responsibilities
Digital Communication and Engagement Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Responsible for coordinating scheduled posts on Hawkesbury City Council Corporate Facebook Page, Hawkesbury Events Facebook Page and other digital and social media on behalf of Council. Responding to online queries and requests generated from Facebook and other online forums. Responsible for boosting any Posts through Facebook advertising. Responsible for removing inappropriate material.
Event Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Responsible for coordinating scheduled posts on Hawkesbury Events Facebook, Instagram Pages and other digital and social media on behalf of Council. Responding to online queries and requests generated from this page. Responsible for boosting any events through Facebook advertising. Responsible for removing inappropriate material.
Council Officers - Council Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Council staff should take all reasonable actions and ensure they are not identified as a council representative. Council staff are not to comment on behalf of Council. They must not comment on any sensitive issues, including confidential matters and any matters related to staff, personal information, legal advice and commercial-in confidence activities.
Selected Managers and designated staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">With prior permission from their Director, selected Managers and designated staff have the ability to provide written comment regarding their area of expertise for distribution by the Corporate Communications department. This may include technical or in-depth knowledge of the particular subject in question. All comments need to be approved by the General Manager prior to distribution. Published comments will however only be assigned to Managers and Directors only.
Council Officer - Council Volunteers, Contractors, Service Providers and Committee Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Are not permitted to speak on behalf of Council or comment on any Council activity they are involved in.



6.0 DEFINITIONS

Digital Media

Websites, social media and applications that enable Council to create and share content or participate in social networking.

Media

Newspapers, magazines, journals, radio, television, journalists, digital media and all forms of communication distributed to a wider audience.

Media Enquiry

A request for information received by way of Council's various communication channels and details of Council's position on a matter of Council business, Council policy or public interest that states its position on a matter of Council business. A written statement is issued by Council in response to the media enquiry.

Media Statement

Written statement issued by Council that states its position on a matter of Council business, Council policy or public interest. In response to a media enquiry that comes into Council.

Media Release

A written, pre-approved statement issued by Council to the media to inform and or promote about an issue, project, service or activity of Council.

Councillor

A Councillor is an elected person who represents the interests of the residents and ratepayers and provides leadership and guidance to the community.

Council Officer

All Council staff members including temporary and casual employees, volunteers, contractors, service providers and committee members employed by Council.

7.0 GUIDELINES

PROCESS FOR INFORMATION TO BE PROVIDED TO MEDIA ENQUIRIES

In the first instance, all media enquiries should be directed to the Corporate Communications department. All media enquiries are to be forwarded by the media to the Corporate Communications department in writing via email to media@hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au. The Corporate Communications Manager or Public Relations Coordinator will then liaise with either relevant staff, Managers, Directors, General Manager and/or Mayor to prepare a written response to the enquiry. More complex issues may require research and discussion with other Council Officers before being reported back to the media.

Under special circumstances and with prior discussion and approval with the Corporate Communication department and General Manager, Directors and the Corporate Communications Manager may liaise directly with the media, providing verbal statements, clarifications and comments.

All information given to the media, especially enquiries of a potentially controversial, legal or ethical nature, require the approval of the General Manager.

COUNCIL DECISIONS

All decisions adopted by Council are public property and can readily be quoted, or made available to the media by the authorised spokespersons.



As a matter of policy, the General Manager should remain the ultimate authority in question of doubt on handling any media issue.

RECORD KEEPING

The Corporate Communication department will maintain a record of media inquiries and responses. All media releases will be posted to Council's website. All records are stored Council's Electronic Records Management system.

ISSUES OF CONCERN

Councillors and Council Officers who become aware of any issues that could have adverse media outcomes for Council should contact the Corporate Communications department to brief them on the issue.

MEDIA INITIATING CONTACT

Journalists may on occasion contact Council Officers directly. No Council Officers, other than those authorised above are to handle any enquiry for the media.

All Council Officers who are contacted by media representatives (via any medium, i.e. print, radio, electronic, social or TV) without it being initiated by the Corporate Communication department, are required to advise the Corporate Communication Manager (or in his/her absence, the Public Relations Coordinator) of the details immediately. Appropriate procedures need to be followed when providing comment by authorised individuals.

DIGITAL MEDIA

Council aims to keep the community informed through websites and social media which includes Facebook, Instagram, You Tube and other social media accounts. Council is an Administrator on all of the sites listed below:

Websites include –

Hawkesbury City Council www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au
Hawkesbury Library Service www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/library
Hawkesbury Regional Museum www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/museum
Hawkesbury Regional Gallery www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/gallery
Discover the Hawkesbury www.discoverthehawkesbury.com.au

Facebook sites include –

Hawkesbury City Council Facebook www.facebook.com/hawkesburycitycouncil
Mayor of Hawkesbury Facebook www.facebook.com/mayorofhawkesbury
Hawkesbury Events Facebook www.facebook.com/hawkesburyevents
Hawkesbury Regional Museum Facebook www.facebook.com/hawkesburyregionalmuseum
Hawkesbury Regional Art Gallery Facebook www.facebook.com/hawkesburyregionalgallery
Hawkesbury Library Service www.facebook.com/hawkesburylibraryservice
Hawkesbury Family History Group www.facebook.com/hawkesburyfamilyhistorygroup
Various Councillor Facebook pages as nominated by the Councillor

Instagram sites include –

Hawkesbury Events Instagram www.instagram.com/hawkesburyevents/
Hawkesbury Library Instagram www.instagram.com/hawkesburylibrary/
Hawkesbury Regional Gallery www.instagram.com/hawkesburyregionalgallery/
Hawkesbury Regional Museum. www.instagram.com/hawkesburyregionalmuseum/
Hawkesbury Visitor Information Centre www.instagram.com/discoverthehawkesbury/

Council welcomes community participation on our social media accounts for genuine online engagement.

The act of Hawkesbury City Council 'liking' or 'following' or 'sharing information' from an organisation, business, group, individual person, location, app or event through social media platforms does not indicate



that Hawkesbury City Council endorses the products, views, activities or services relating to the 'liked' or 'followed' or 'shared' entity, business or group.

Information published or shared on social media accounts should not be disrespectful or threatening and should not disclose confidential information. Comments considered to be offensive or defamatory if they contain violent, obscene, profane, hateful, derogatory, racist or sexist language, links or images will be removed by the Administrator. Repeat offenders will be blocked.

Council will be the sole responder to comments on the Facebook sites managed by Council including the Hawkesbury City Council and Hawkesbury Events Facebook pages.

Council limits the information shared on the pages managed by Council to that which is provided by Government organisations, emergency services, community service organisations and Council sponsored events.

If the information to be shared relates to the activities of a political party then approval of the General Manager is required.

Staff within the Corporate Communications, Information Technology and Cultural Services departments are permitted to hold Administrator rights over the various digital media sites. Only Council staff members and Councillors are permitted to be Administrators on the Mayor of Hawkesbury and Council created Councillor pages.

BRANDING AND USE OF COUNCIL LOGO

Council's Branding Style Guide provides guidance on the logos, colours and fonts which form Council's visual identity, comprising Council's corporate brand. It is important that these elements are applied correctly and consistently to ensure that Council related material is readily available. The Guide provide directions on how to use Council's visual identity.

The logo is the most important part of Council's visual identity. The Council logo may only be used in Council's official media releases, digital media posts, advertising, promotion and letterheads. The Council logo may not be used by staff, Councillors, volunteers, contractors or other related entities for promotion, media or otherwise unless written permission is granted by the General Manager or the Corporate Communications Manager.

Requests to use the official Council logo must be in writing to Corporate Communications department. If permission is granted, a high resolution image will be provided for the specified use only.

DISTRIBUTION OF MEDIA INFORMATION

Proactive media releases, media alerts, Facebook posts, photo opportunities and media articles will be developed on a regular basis to complement Council's image and promotion of services for residents.

Media releases and media comment are distributed to the Councillors at the same time they are distributed to media outlets to ensure all parties are informed in a timely manner. Posts on Facebook will be scheduled to be published in a similar timeframe. Councillors will then have the opportunity to circulate their statements and social media posts.

Separate procedures outline the process involved in the taking of media calls, compiling media releases and comments and distributing media releases. Distribution of all media material is to be done through the Corporate Communications department.

AUTHORISED SPOKESPEOPLE - MAYOR

The Mayor is the official spokesperson on all matters of policy and external relations for Hawkesbury City Council. The Deputy Mayor is authorised to speak to the media in an official capacity when the Mayor is not available.



COUNCILLORS

The media independently contacts Hawkesbury City Councillors from time to time.

Councillors should make themselves fully aware of all issues before commenting to the media on any Council matter. To this end, Councillors should contact the Mayor, General Manager or the relevant Director to be fully briefed on the issue to enable them to provide informed and accurate comments to the media.

If the topic of a media enquiry is relevant to an individual Councillor's area of interest and they offer a comment they must identify that the response is their personal opinion and not necessarily that of Hawkesbury City Council. Councillors:

- Must not comment on behalf of Council
- Should ensure that any comments or posts they make does not compromise Council's desire to ensure that all projects, programs and activities are promoted in a timely and consistent manner.
- Should ensure their comments are respectful to Council and Council staff and should ensure their comments do not bring the reputation of Council staff into disrepute.
- Must not discuss confidential information
- Should inform the Corporate Communications Manager of any comments to the media

STAFF

The General Manager or his/her authorised delegate is the official spokesperson on all matters of Council policy, organisational operations and administration including matters relating to employees.

The Directors are authorised and delegated to provide comment to the media on areas within their jurisdiction (following the appropriate protocols). The Corporate Communications Manager is delegated to speak with the media. All information shared with the media must have prior approval from the General Manager. Selected Managers and other authorised personnel are only authorised to communicate with the media on specific issues which rely on their technical ability or appropriate knowledge with prior permission granted by their Director.

Under no circumstances should any unauthorised staff provide comment, or make contact with the media about any issues relating to Council business or their personal opinions of matters affecting Hawkesbury City Council without express permission from the General Manager.

ROLE OF CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

The Corporate Communications department acts as a liaison point between Council staff and the media. All enquiries should be directed to them at media@hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au in the first instance (unless handled by the General Manager) and all written responses will be distributed through them.

This will ensure consistent, well informed, timely and appropriate information is provided and that the relevant procedures are abided by.

MEDIA RELATIONS

The Corporate Communication Manager, and in the case of routine enquiries, the Public Relations Coordinator, shall be the primary contact for journalists and media personnel who cover Council issues on a regular or adhoc basis.

- receive invitations and be included on guest lists to all official public Council functions and any relevant functions where their presence could have a supportive or relationship building effect
- have access to relevant spokespeople in a timely manner as appropriate to resource time pressures of Council staff
- receive access to appropriate information, including Council business papers and agendas via the Council's website, hardcopy or email depending on their preference



- receive an invitation to photograph/video events, openings, gatherings, projects even if an invitation is not issued it is anticipated that the media may attend. Councillors, volunteers, committee members and relevant staff may be invited to be a part of a photo/video
- have follow-up information from Council meetings provided by Corporate Communication department, with consideration to media deadlines.

Council media activity will support and follow Council's Community Strategic Plan.

The Corporate Communications department will undertake to have regular contact and/or meetings with local media representatives to ensure that the relationships are maintained to the best of Council's ability.

BREACHES OF MEDIA POLICY

If there is a breach of the Media Policy, the individuals, group, Councillor or Council Officer breaching the Policy will be contacted and requested to take action that will rectify the breach, which may include removing a logo/letterhead, removing a social media comment or post or reissuing a more appropriate media statement.

CRISIS COMMUNICATION

Crisis Communication to be carried out in accordance with the Crisis Communication Strategy in the Hawkesbury City Council Business Continuity Plan.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All confidential information must remain confidential and not be provided to the media, or any other member of the public. This includes information provided during closed Council meetings or other official meetings.

Under no circumstances can Council Officers, including Councillors, contractors or volunteers discuss, confidential legal advice or commercial-in-confidence matters with the media.

Improper release of personal and/or confidential information is a breach of Council's Code of Conduct.

8.0 RELATED DOCUMENTS

8.1 Legislation

- Local Government Act NSW 1993

8.2 Policies

- Council's Code of Conduct
- Council's Branding Style Guide

8.3 Operational Management Standards

- Social Media Operational Standard - Council Officers

