

Ku-ring-gai Council

# Media and Communications Policy

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# Media and Communications Policy

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## Controlled Document Information

### Authorisation Details

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### Related Document Information, Standards & References

<b>Related Legislation:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Local Government Act 1993</i></li> <li>• <i>Copyright Act 1968</i></li> <li>• <i>Defamation Act 2005</i></li> <li>• <i>Government Information and Privacy Act 2009</i></li> <li>• <i>Privacy and Personal Information Act 1998</i></li> </ul>	
<b>Related Policies (Council &amp; Internal)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Ku-ring-gai Council's internal Social Media Guidelines</i></li> <li>• <i>Ku-ring-gai Council's Draft Consultation Policy</i></li> <li>• <i>Ku-ring-gai Council's Code of Conduct for Staff &amp; Councillors</i></li> <li>• <i>Ku-ring-gai Council's Councillor Access to Information and Interaction with Staff Policy</i></li> </ul>	
<b>Related Documents - Procedures, Guidelines, Forms, WHS Modules/PCD's, Risk Assessments, Work Method Statements, etc</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Corporate Style Guide</i></li> <li>• <i>Disability and Discrimination Action Plan</i></li> <li>• <i>Event Submission Criteria</i></li> <li>• <i>Public Notice Policy</i></li> <li>• <i>Rules for Approving Web Pages</i></li> <li>• <i>Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0</i></li> <li>• <i>Social Media Guidelines</i></li> </ul>	

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**Version History**

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1	07/12/2016	N/A	Sally Williams Media Adviser Neha Malhotra Digital & Online Communications Officer	First version

## Policy

### Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this policy is to ensure Ku-ring-gai Council is transparent, fair, consistent and timely in the way it communicates with the media, community and other stakeholders.

The objectives of this policy are:

- To ensure the Council's position on key issues is clearly communicated to all relevant stakeholders
- To work effectively and proactively with the media to promote Council initiatives and enhance the organisation's reputation
- To respond appropriately to media requests for information and set clear guidelines on how staff interact with the media and on Council's corporate social media accounts
- To keep stakeholders well-informed of key Council decisions, services, programs and initiatives by providing accurate and timely information
- To ensure information is widely accessible to all stakeholders by producing information in plain English and alternative formats
- To encourage two-way communication where the stakeholders have opportunities to provide feedback to the Council.
- To outline the processes Council will use in administering its official social media channels
- To outline how breaches of this policy will be addressed.

### Scope

The policy ensures equal access to Council information for the public and the media. Stakeholders include but are not limited to:

- The Ku-ring-gai community. *Community* means all people who live, work or study in the Ku-ring-gai local government area.
- Local, regional and national media. *Media* means mediums of communication including newspapers, television, radio, magazines, social media and websites accessed by a large number of people. It also means people who work in the media.
- Councillors
- Council staff. *Staff* means all employees of Ku-ring-gai Council (full time, part time, casual, contractors and temporary)
- Community and government organisations.

### Responsibilities

- The Mayor and General Manager are the spokespeople for Council.
- The Corporate Communications Manager and Media Advisor may also act as spokespeople for the organisation.
- Other staff can speak to the media in accordance with Section 1 (Media Relations) of this policy
- Councillors may communicate with the media in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct.
- The Corporate Communications team manages all aspects of communication on behalf of the Council, including the website, corporate advertising and social media.

## Policy Statement

### 1. Media Relations

Ku-ring-gai Council is committed to maintaining a positive working relationship with the media. The Council will proactively issue media releases to local and/or metropolitan media on a regular basis as a method of keeping the community informed about key Council decisions, programs, services and initiatives. It will also proactively use other forms of media such as social networking to keep the community informed and aware, and invite feedback when appropriate.

#### 1.1 Media procedures

- The Mayor and General Manager are the spokespeople for Council. The Corporate Communications Manager and Media Advisor act as spokespeople for the organisation under delegated authority.
- Councillors may communicate with the media in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct.
- All media enquiries to staff should be directed to the Corporate Communications Manager or the Media Advisor in the first instance. If appropriate, approval for staff to speak directly with the media will be determined by the Corporate Communications Manager or the Media Advisor.
- In the event of a media outlet requesting to interview a staff member, and following approval to do so, the staff member will be briefed by the Communications team prior to the interview.
- If approved to speak to the media, a staff member must not discuss sensitive, political or confidential matters or give opinions, make predictions on future actions Council might take or provide off the record comment. Staff may only speak on the subject for which they have approval.
- A staff member may speak to the media or comment on social media as a private citizen, however if staff discuss subjects relating to their employment with Council, they should comply with Council's Code of Conduct and, in the case of Social Media, the Staff Personal Use of Social Media Policy.
- All media enquiries will be acknowledged within one working day and where possible responded to within the stated deadline.
- Media releases may only be issued by members of Council's Corporate Communications team and will be issued on the Ku-ring-gai Council media release template and posted on the Council website within one working day of issue.
- Copies of all information provided to the media are to be retained in Council's document management system. This includes written responses to media enquiries and media releases.
- The Media Advisor will undertake daily media monitoring to ensure the Council is aware of all relevant coverage. Media monitoring alerts will be provided to the Mayor, Councillors and relevant staff.

## 2. Social media

Ku-ring-gai Council embraces social media as an important way to communicate and engage with the public and administers a number of social media sites. Council will use its social media channels to encourage interaction, build community spirit and trust, and provide responsive customer service and inform the public about its activities.

Due to the public and viral nature of social media, Council recognises that it may impact both positively and negatively on the organisation's reputation.

### 2.1 Administration of official channels

The Corporate Communications team has overall responsibility for administering the Council's social media sites. Staff have responsibility for administering other sites related to specific operations of Council e.g. Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden and Ku-ring-gai Library.

#### 2.1.2 Being authorised to comment

- Before engaging in social media as a representative of Council, staff must be authorised to do so by the Corporate Communications Manager.
- To become authorised to comment, staff must first be trained and endorsed by the Digital and Online Communications Officer.

#### 2.1.3 Guidelines for rules of engagement

Once staff have authority to comment as a Council representative, it is their responsibility to ensure all their posts/comments:

- Are factually accurate and free of spelling and grammatical errors.
- Contain public information and do not disclose confidential information.
- Do not express personal opinions.
- Always relate to Council activities, ideally linking back to a page on Council's website.
- Do not make predictions on future actions Council might take.
- Adhere to the Terms of Use of the social media channel being used
- Adhere to copyright, privacy, defamation, discrimination, harassment and other laws.
- Do not cause damage to Council's reputation.

To keep Council's social media channels active, responsive and well-maintained, it is the responsibility of employees to:

- Post regularly (minimum once per week) but not 'spam' audiences by repeating posts or posting too often.
- Monitor channels frequently (minimum twice per day).
- Respond to comments and enquiries in a timely, professional and appropriate manner – refer to Council's internal Social Media Guidelines to determine the correct response and seek advice from the Corporate Communications team if unsure.
- Notify the Corporate Communications team of any viral posts or spiralling negative reaction that may impact Council's reputation (either positively or negatively) and seek advice for an appropriate response.

- Capture posts, comments and responses made by Council and other parties in Council's document management system as identified in the Social Media guidelines.

## 2.2 Personal use of social media

- The guidelines for personal use of social media are prescribed in the following policies:
  - Staff Personal Use of Social Media Policy
  - Code of Conduct

## 2.3 Using social media during working hours

- Staff may access social media during ordinary working hours for limited and reasonable personal use.
- Use of social media must not impact on the employee's work performance.

## 2.4 Use of social media during emergency situations

Council recognises that in the event of emergency situations such as extreme weather or bushfire, the Ku-ring-gai community will turn to Council's social media sites among others for guidance and information.

The following guidelines apply to the use of Council sites in emergency situations:

- Emergency communication management is a multi-agency role. The Corporate Communications team will provide emergency information as required on an as-needs basis. Generally this will involve re-posting information already supplied by authorised emergency services such as NSW Police, RMS, SES, RFS and NSW Fire & Rescue.
- If posting on their own social media sites regarding an emergency situation in Ku-ring-gai, Council staff should only provide information from authorised emergency services. Speculative or third party information that is unauthorised must not be posted or shared on Council's social media sites or employees' social media sites.
- In the event of a serious regional emergency, the use of Council's social media sites will fall under the Council's Disaster Management Plan and the direction of the Local Emergency Management Officer.

## 3. Community newsletters

Newsletters are distributed:

- Annually in the July rates notice mail out
- Via email under an opt-in system. Email addresses of subscribers will only be used for the purpose of distributing the e-news in accordance with the Privacy and Personal Information Act 1998.
- In Council's libraries and administration building
- Via the Council website
- Via the Council's social media sites



## 4. Community information

Information relevant to the community may also be distributed via a number of other communication channels, including but not limited to:

- Council noticeboards in the community
- Council facilities such as childcare centres, libraries, community centres etc
- Third party organisations and facilities eg. community volunteer organisations, Rotary, SES etc
- Third party websites
- Third party social media sites.

## 5. Advertising

Council will regularly advertise in local or metropolitan newspapers. This includes but is not limited to items on public exhibition, road closures, leases and licences, recruitment, public meetings, proposals to sell land, alcohol-free zones and development applications and consents.

Council will also regularly advertise key decisions, services, events, consultation opportunities, programs and initiatives as a method of keeping the community well informed. The medium of such advertisements will be determined by the content and target audience but could include local/metropolitan newspapers, trade publications, magazines, websites, buses, billboards, radio, TV and social media.

### 5.1 Advertising procedures:

- All advertisements are approved and designed by the Corporate Communications team

## 6. Website

The Ku-ring-gai Council website contains a wealth of detailed information about Council services, policies, events, programs and initiatives. Ku-ring-gai Council has a policy of continuous improvement in relation to the website to meet the expectations of stakeholders and legislative requirements for accessibility.

### 6.1 Website procedures

- The Corporate Communications Manager and Digital & Online Communications Officer will manage the website, though due to the large volume of web pages a network of key website contributors are responsible for keeping the content up to date.
- Staff members must obtain approval from Corporate Communications Manager to be a website contributor.
- Each page will be sent to Corporate Communications for final approval before it is published.
- Members of the public may request to list events on the website event calendar. The Corporate Communications team will assess each event before determining whether it should be published
- Ku-ring-gai Council is committed to providing an accessible website that is easy to use for everyone, including people with disabilities. These include those who use assistive web technologies and users with Level A Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. The Council is working towards achieving Level AA standard for its website.
- Any personal information collected online by the Council will only be held and used for the purpose for which it was provided in accordance with the Privacy and Personal Information Act 1998.

## 7. Consultation

Council promotes two-way communication and will provide opportunities for stakeholders to have input and provide feedback on Council communications in line with its consultation policy. Refer to the Consultation Policy for more information.

## 8. Corporate Identity

Ku-ring-gai Council's logo and corporate identity are defined in Council's corporate style guide. The guide sets out rules for the use of the logo, as well as supplementary logos.

All external use of Council's logo must be approved by the Corporate Communications team.

## 9. Graphic Design

All Council marketing collateral including but not limited to brochures, posters, flyers, banners, invitations and advertisements are to be prepared by the Council's graphic designers. In cases where external design assistance is required, final approval for any artwork or design must be through Corporate Communications prior to printing or publication.

All publications intended for the community must be approved by the Corporate Communications team, adhere to the corporate style guide, and display the Council logo and Council contact details.

## 10. Copyright

Ku-ring-gai Council retains all intellectual property including copyright of its published documents and images including newsletters, brochures, flyers, reports, photographs and website.

Requests for permission to use intellectual property may be granted for the purposes of private study, research and review. However it will generally not be allowed for commercial purposes.

Use of Council images should occur only in accordance with rights under the *Copyright Act 1968* and where images of persons are used, the *Privacy and Personal Information Act 1998*.

## 11. Defamation

In the case of two-way communication tools such as social networking, care must be taken not to host defamatory or discriminatory material. In this event, posts by third parties on the Council's social networking sites may be removed without notice by the Corporate Communications team. Advice from the Council's Corporate Lawyer should be sought by staff in cases of doubt.

## 12. Internal Communication

Ku-ring-gai Council recognises that communicating with staff is a critical success factor in any organisation. It not only leads to increased morale and staff engagement but also improves employee performance.

Council will:

- Maintain a staff intranet where relevant internal documents and resources are accessible.
- Produce a regular e-news to keep staff informed of policy changes, services available to them, media coverage, staff movements, team profiles, organisational issues and achievements. Alternative formats will be produced for outdoor staff.
- Hold regular team meetings.
- Hold organisation-wide briefings with the General Manager and Directors when addressing major organisational issues.
- Monitor staff compliance with this communications policy and procedures.

### **Implementation**

The Corporate Communications Manager, Media Advisor and Digital & Online Communications Officer are responsible for the implementation and review of this policy.

All staff will be made aware of this policy through the intranet and/or briefings and it is the responsibility of all managers and supervisors to ensure compliance.

## Definitions

Term / Abbreviation	Definition
Media	Any commercial, community or citizen publishing entity or property. This includes all online and offline, print or digital publications, sites or applications.
Council's online properties	Any page published on the internet and located on a Council server or any page published on the internet and located on a third-party server on behalf of Council. The content is moderated and controlled by Council staff or Council contractors.
Social media	User-driven online tools and forms of publishing based on interaction or conversation, including, but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, Periscope, Instagram and LinkedIn.
Online content	Any comments posted on Council's online properties, website or other online properties including, but not restricted to; blogs, online forums, YouTube, and social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook.
Media release	A written statement issued by the Council that states its position on a matter of Council business, Council policy or the public interest.
Media comment	A verbal or written statement issued by the Council that states its position on a matter of Council business, Council policy or the public interest.
Council spokesperson	The designated official spokesperson for the Council.
Community	Includes all the people who live, work, study, own property, conduct private or government business, visit or use the services, facilities and public spaces and places of the Ku-ring-gai area. The community can be referred to as stakeholders or comprise of stakeholders.
Corporate identity	A corporate identity is the manner which a corporation, firm or business presents themselves to the public, such as customers and investors as well as employees.