

Policy P624 Media Communications

Strategic Direction	Leadership
Responsible Business Unit/s	Customer, Communications and Engagement
Responsible Officer	Manager Customer, Communications and Engagement
Affected Business Unit/s	All Business Units

Policy Objectives

The City of South Perth (the City) is committed to open and transparent communication and to being accountable. We will communicate with our community and stakeholders and provide the media with City information in a timely manner.

This policy is in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1995*, the City's Elected Members Code of Conduct, the Employee Code of Conduct and all relevant City policies.

The objective of this policy is to:

- Detail legislative obligations and establish protocols applicable to the City's official communications with our community, to ensure the City is professionally and accurately represented.
- Provide guidance to Council and the City's administration for a coordinated approach to communicating with the media either in their role at the City or in a personal capacity about matters relevant to the City.
- Help keep the community informed about the City through appropriate communication channels.
- Ensure that communication is inclusive, consistent, accurate and in the best interests of the City.
- Provide guidance with responding to the media.

Policy Scope

This policy applies to Elected Members, City employees and consultants.

Policy Statement

Responding to media enquiries fosters open and transparent relations

This policy sets out a clear and consistent protocol for media communications. It aims to:

- Provide clear guidance on the role of the Mayor, Councillors, Chief Executive Officer and employees in communicating with the media.
- Ensure that communications with the media are to a professional standard.
- Ensure that media communication is in accordance with relevant statutory provisions and the *Local Government Act 1995*, the City's Councillor and Employee Codes of Conduct, this Policy and other relevant City policies.

SPEAKING TO THE MEDIA

All media enquiries seeking an official comment on behalf of the City, whether received by an Elected Member or an employee, must be referred to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or a person authorised by the CEO. The CEO will coordinate the information to support the Mayor, or an authorised alternative spokesperson, in providing an official response.

In accordance with section 2.8(1)(b) of the *Local Government Act 1995*, the Mayor is the official spokesperson for the City, representing the local government in official communications, including speeches, statements, and comments across print, electronic, broadcast, and social media.

In accordance with section 5.41(4)(b) of the *Local Government Act 1995*, the CEO may be authorised by the Mayor to speak on behalf of the City. Such authorisations must be provided in writing. The CEO may appoint a City employee with relevant expertise to act as a spokesperson on a specific topic.

If the Mayor has not authorised the CEO to speak on behalf of the City and is unavailable to perform this function, the Deputy Mayor may, in accordance with sections 2.9 and 5.34 of the *Local Government Act 1995*, speak on behalf of the City. Confirmation of the Mayor's unavailability should be obtained in writing, unless impracticable.

The Mayor, or an authorised alternative spokesperson, may invite relevant Elected Members (such as the Ward Councillors) to contribute quotes for inclusion in the City's media response.

CITY EMPLOYEES

In cases where it is appropriate for an employee to be interviewed for a news story, this is at the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer. The employee must first seek approval from their Business Unit Manager and following approval by the Chief Executive Officer, the employee must liaise with the Communications team to prepare for the interview.

Employees cannot make public comment unless specifically directed to do so and only in consultation with the Communications team. Comments should be confined to factual information and employees must not express their personal opinion.

MEDIA LIAISON

The Communications team is responsible for coordinating media liaison, issuing media releases and responding to media enquiries on behalf of the City.

The Manager, Customer, Communications and Engagement, the Communications and Marketing Coordinator, Communications Officer and, if required, the Marketing Officer, are the only City employees approved to respond to a media enquiry with approval from the CEO and/or Mayor. No other employees can provide comment to the media, either 'on' or 'off' the record on any matter pertaining to the City and its Council.

MEDIA RELEASES

Media releases should present a professional image of the City.

The City will not promote a community group or business or State or Federal Government either via the media or any other of the City's communications channels unless the City is involved in a partnered activity or event.

The Communications team will manage all media statements and releases.

Employees who become aware of issues or potential issues that could lead to adverse media outcomes for the City must contact the Communications team immediately so that an appropriate response or statement can be developed.

Where a media release relating to a City project or in which the City is involved is to be prepared by another organisation, a copy must be provided to the Communications team to enable input from the City and to seek approval from the Chief Executive Officer or Mayor prior to the information being released.

Media releases will be made available by publishing on the City's website.

Media releases will not include information of an electioneering or personal promotional nature.

MEDIA EVENTS AND INCLUSIVITY

Where a media event or announcement is related to a particular ward or subject matter, and where the Mayor is unavailable or the event is localised in nature, the Deputy Mayor or relevant ward Councillor or Councillor with demonstrated involvement in the matter may be invited and/or authorised to attend and speak on behalf of the City.

CITY SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

The City's social media platforms are used to inform, engage and celebrate the activities of the City, Council and the wider community.

While the Mayor is the principal spokesperson under the *Local Government Act 1995*, the City recognises the important representational role of all Elected Members.

Where relevant and appropriate, other Elected Members should be included in social media contact, particularly in relation to:

- Ward-based community events, opening or initiatives
- Endorsed Council decisions or projects where Councillors have played a leading or representative role.
- Civic, cultural or ceremonial functions were attended on behalf of the City.

RECORD KEEPING AND FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Official communications undertaken on behalf of the City including on the City's Social Media accounts and third- party social media accounts must be created and retained as local government records in accordance with the City's Record Keeping Plan and the *State Records Act 2000*. These records are also subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1992*.

Elected Member communications that relate to their role as an Elected Member are subject to the requirements of the City's Record Keeping Plan and the *State Records Act 2000*. Elected Members are responsible for transferring these records to the City's administration. Elected Member records are also subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 1992*.

PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS

Personal communications and statements made privately; in conversation, written, recorded, emailed, texted or posted in personal social media, have the potential to be made public, whether intended or not.

On the basis that personal or private communications may be shared or become public at some point in the future, Elected Members should ensure that their personal or private communications do not break the requirements of this policy, the Councillor Code of Conduct and the Local Government (Model Code of Conduct) Regulations 2021.

ELECTED MEMBERS' STATEMENTS ON CITY MATTERS

An Elected Member may choose to make a personal statement publicly on a matter related to the business of the City.

Any public statements made by an Elected Member, whether made in a personal capacity or in their Local Government representative capacity, must:

- Clearly state that the comment or content is a personal view only, which does not necessarily represent the views of City;
- Be made with reasonable care and diligence;
- Be lawful, including avoiding contravention of; copyright, defamation, discrimination or harassment laws;
- Be factually correct;
- Avoid damage to the reputation of the local government;
- Not reflect adversely on a decision of the Council;

- Not reflect adversely on the character or actions of another Council Member or Employee; and
- Maintain a respectful and positive tone and not use offensive or objectionable expressions in reference to any Elected Member, Employee or community member.

An Elected Member who is approached by the media for a personal statement may request the assistance of the CEO.

Comments which become public and which breach this policy, the Councillor Code of Conduct or the Local Government (Model Code of Conduct) Regulations 2021, may constitute a minor breach.

Legislation / Local Law Requirements

Section 1.3 (2) of the *Local Government Act 1995*

Section 2.8 of the *Local Government Act 1995* (Mayor's role)

Section 2.10 of the *Local Government Act 1995* (Councillor's role)

Section 2.9 of the *Local Government Act 1995*

Section 5.41 of the *Local Government Act 1995* (CEO responsibilities)

Section 5.43 of the *Local Government Act 1995*

Local Government (Model Code of Conduct) Regulations 2021

Freedom of Information Act 1992

State Records Act 2000

Other Relevant Policies / Key Documents

City of South Perth Employee Code of Conduct

City of South Perth Councillor Code of Conduct