

1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide a position and guidance to Elected Members and Council staff in the conduct of Council business in a way that protects Council's reputation by mitigating risk and ensuring consistency and accuracy in the information Council places in the public realm.

2 SCOPE

This policy applies to Elected Members and Council staff of City of Darwin.

3 POLICY STATEMENT

In various forms of communication, including verbal, print and digital, Elected Members and Council staff are expected to adhere to the highest standards of ethical practice and professional competency.

Council recognises that the key to building positive and lasting partnerships with our community requires effective two-way communication that is open and transparent and based on productive relationships with media agencies. City of Darwin is committed to open and transparent communications that maximise our community's understanding and knowledge of our decisions, services, programs and initiatives.

City of Darwin is committed to communication practices that:

- Inform the community of key Council decisions, services, programs and initiatives.
- Promote community access to Elected Members and Council staff.
- Promote transparency and accountability of Council's decision-making processes.
- Promote opportunities for the community to participate in Council activities.
- Build civic pride and community inclusiveness through a positive image of the City of Darwin.

Elected Members and Council staff of City of Darwin are expected to demonstrate standards of conduct and behaviour that are consistent with their respective Codes of Conduct, the Customer FIRST Strategy, legislation, policies and procedures.

To ensure City of Darwin is delivering services that are aligned with our community's expectations, Council communicates with stakeholders through a variety of channels to appreciate their needs, concerns, ideas and aspirations.

Council accepts the important role of the media to report on issues of interest to the community and its right to scrutinise Council activities. Council works to maintain positive and respectful relationships with media agencies.

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4 DEFINITIONS

Council means City of Darwin Council, a body corporate constituted as a municipal Council under the Local Government Act 2019.

Elected Members means the individuals holding the office of a member of Council in accordance with the Local Government Act 2019, also referred to as Aldermen.

Government Relations and External Affairs (GREA) Department includes the services and functions of Marketing and Communications; Public Relations and External Affairs (Media); Engagement and Events; and Governance.

5 POLICY

5.1 MEDIA RELATIONS AND SPOKESPERSON(S)

5.1.1 Media Relations

Media relations is a key part of Council operations and an important source of information for our community. A significant part of Council's role as a community leader and advocate is to be the Government for Darwin. Media relations is the way we promote City of Darwin, by letting the media tell our stories through our active engagement with media agencies.

Media agencies and journalists are engaged regularly on a proactive basis to ensure their stories and messaging about City of Darwin's activities is accurate and positive.

In the interests of openness and transparency, City of Darwin is committed to providing comment and responses to all media enquiries, City of Darwin has a no 'no comment' approach to media relations.

Engagement with media agencies and journalists occurs exclusively between the Chief Executive Officer, General Manager Government Relations and External Affairs and the Public Relations and External Affairs Advisor.

5.1.2 Spokesperson(s)

Council staff are not permitted to be interviewed or provide a response to the media unless authorised for that specific purpose and instance. All media enquiries must be directed to pr@darwin.nt.gov.au or phone 0466 207 090.

The Chief Executive Officer is the official spokesperson on high level operational matters but can delegate this responsibility as necessary.

The Chief Executive Officer's delegation extends to responses to media enquiries of a day-to-day operational level or enquiries of a technical nature being referred to the relevant General Manager, or a member of staff in consultation with that General Manager, to act as spokesperson. These enquiries will be referred by the Public Relations and External Affairs Advisor.

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The Lord Mayor is the official spokesperson on decisions and policy positions of Council. If the Lord Mayor is unavailable, the Deputy Lord Mayor or another Elected Member can act as Council's official spokesperson to convey Council's resolved position or policy.

Elected Members are able to engage with media in their capacity as elected individuals. It is recommended that Elected Members advise the Chief Executive Officer of any media interactions so that an accurate position of Council can be conveyed, and key messaging furnished to support that interaction.

When speaking to media Elected Members are encouraged to make it clear whether they are representing Council in accordance with a resolved position of adopted Council or whether they are presenting a personal viewpoint. Council staff responsible for media will not provide support to Elected Members when presenting a personal viewpoint.

5.1.3 Local Government General Elections Caretaker Period

In Local Government General Elections, during the caretaker period from the close of nominations until the declaration of the poll, all media statements on behalf of the City of Darwin are required to be issued in the name of the Chief Executive Officer.

Example: Authorised by Scott Waters, Chief Executive Officer, City of Darwin

5.2 COMMUNICATIONS TOOLS

City of Darwin uses a variety of communication tools to provide the media and community with timely information. The dissemination of information through digital communication channels is the preferred method, supported by additional channels as needed to reach relevant stakeholders.

Communication tools are for the use of City of Darwin events, projects and strategic priorities only. Excepting this, there may be occasions where a partnership with the Australian or Northern Territory Government requires joint communication, and this will be done in accordance with the relevant terms of that partnership or funding agreement.

5.2.1 Media Releases

A key communication tool is the issuing of media releases. A protocol for quoting in media releases is outlined as follows:

- Municipality-wide or policy-oriented stories are to quote the Lord Mayor.
- Stories connected to a specific Municipal Ward or geographic location quote the Lord Mayor and may also quote relevant Ward Aldermen.
- Stories arising from the work of a committee are quoted on by an Elected Member as Committee Chair, as well as the Lord Mayor.
- Contentious Council matters are quoted on by the Lord Mayor.
- Operational issues are quoted on by the Chief Executive Officer or as delegated.

Media releases are distributed to media outlets, posted on Council's website and distributed to Elected Members, staff and a subscribed distribution list.

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Joint media releases involving the Australian or Northern Territory Governments, or other local government bodies may only be issued with appropriate approvals.

Joint media releases with third parties are discouraged and are only approved in certain circumstances and where the media release is on a City of Darwin template, with a quote from a third party.

5.2.2 Media Alerts

Media alerts are issued by City of Darwin to media outlets prior to a media event to ensure their attendance, outlining key opportunities, spokesperson(s), Workplace Health and Safety requirements, locational information, photographic or footage opportunities or entry conditions as relevant.

Media alerts are distributed to media outlets and are distributed to Elected Members, staff and a subscribed distribution list.

5.2.3 Websites

Council's websites are key communication tools and host a range of content specific to the services, events and programs offered by the City of Darwin. Council's websites also provide an avenue to distribute information to the community and display information required by legislation and are designed from a user-experience or customer needs perspective.

Content published on Council's websites aims to conform to the standard of Level AA of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines Version 2 (WCAG 2.0).

In addition to City of Darwin's website (darwin.nt.gov.au) Council manages other websites and subdomains that provide more additional targeted service to the community.

Requests for website subdomains must be approved by the General Manager Government Relations and External Affairs

5.2.4 Social Media Platforms

City of Darwin recognises that digital communication through social media platforms is an effective way to engage with the community.

Elected Members and Council staff are encouraged to share Council's content on their personal (or Alderman) social media accounts.

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5.2.5 Personal Use of Social Media Platforms

City of Darwin encourages Elected Members and Council staff to participate in social media communications positively. When doing so, Elected Members and Council staff are participating and expressing views in an individual capacity and should consider the values and behaviours outlined in their respective Codes of Conduct.

Any breach of a Code of Conduct via digital communication or social media platforms will be dealt with in accordance with relevant procedures.

5.2.6 Publications

City of Darwin issues various print form and digital publications, as well as other editorial and advertising content on a regular basis.

5.2.7 SMS Messaging

Authorised SMS messaging can be used by City of Darwin to contact members of the community who have consented to this service and whose details are contained within Council's databases for a specific purpose.

Mass SMS messages (to multiple recipients) must be approved by the General Manager Government Relations and External Affairs.

5.2.8 Mass Correspondence (including fliers)

City of Darwin issues correspondence (including fliers and postcards) to signal to community about works, services or programs Council may be undertaking that may affect certain community members. All mass correspondence must be approved by the General Manager Government Relations and External Affairs.

5.2.9 E-Newsletters

City of Darwin issues e-newsletters about specific programs or services to community members who have subscribed to this service on a regular basis.

E-newsletters are considered mass external communications and must be approved by the General Manager Government Relations and External.

5.2.10 Email Signature Banners

Email signature banners are used to promote strategic initiatives, events and/or advocacy priorities, like major projects and must be approved by the General Manager Government Relations and External Affairs.

Elected Members and Council staff are encouraged to update email signature banners to promote Council events, projects and initiatives for official City of Darwin emails.

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5.3 BRANDING REQUIREMENTS

City of Darwin's brand is centrally managed in accordance with the City of Darwin Brand Guidelines. All material must include Council's brand and be approved by the General Manager Government Relations and External Affairs.

Council may develop additional and specific brands as required for key initiatives. Requests for new branding must be submitted to Marketing and Communications Team who will coordinate the brief and develop guidelines for its use.

Council's brand associated with the *Darwin 2030: City for People. City of Colour.* strategic plan and strategy framework must be accessed via the Marketing and Communications Team. Design of documents associated with this brand is coordinated via this team and authorised by the General Manager Government Relations and External Affairs.

Third parties wishing to use City of Darwin branding in any form of promotional or advertising material must seek written approval via the Chief Executive Officer.

5.3.1 Logo Usage

City of Darwin logos appear on all Council communications including correspondence, publications, forms, advertisements, displays, signage, uniforms, fleet vehicles and other plant, electronic communications and other relevant communication methods.

Co-branded media releases displaying two or more logos are discouraged, unless required as a result of a partnership or funding agreement with the Australian or Northern Territory Governments or another local government agency and may only be issued where there is a significant non-commercial partnership, alliance or sector-leading innovation.

City of Darwin logos are to be used in line with Branding Guidelines. Written approval must be sought prior to using a City of Darwin logo. Use of a logo without permission is a breach of Council's copyright and intellectual property requirements.

5.3.2 City of Darwin Images & Audio Recordings

Council maintains an image library that contributes to brand recognition and reputation. Images may be subject to copyright. Images from Council's website, publications or community platforms must not be reproduced without written permission from City of Darwin.

City of Darwin complies with industry practice in the taking of, and use of, photographic images and audio recordings of all persons for the purpose of Council related projects, promotion and/or publicity.

The taking of and use of photographic images/recordings of persons for this purpose will be done in accordance with the Information Privacy Principles (as part of the Information Act 2002) and Council's [Privacy Management Framework](#), with the consent of the subject/person, unless the photographic image is deemed to be so general in scope that individuals cannot be identified, for example, crowd scenes.

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5.3.3 Representations

Council staff must obtain approval before presenting at a conference or seminar. Approval in-principle to present the paper must be obtained from a General Manager or, if a General Manager, from the Chief Executive Officer at the time of the invitation.

The content of a presentation must be approved by a General Manager, with the format consistent with Council's Brand Guidelines and approved by the General Manager Government Relations and External Affairs.

Where an Elected Member is invited to present on behalf of Council on a particular matter, Government Relations and External Affairs are able to assist with the development of material and content for this purpose.

5.3.4 Advertising

Council undertakes advertising to communicate information and promote events, activities and services to the community. Council is required to advertise certain matters in accordance with legislation such as road closures, tenders and adoption of budgets.

Advertising is placed with the most appropriate media outlet or platform to satisfy a specific target audience or legislative requirement.

Advertising must be approved and meet City of Darwin's Brand Guidelines.

5.3.5 Signage

City of Darwin place signs (including digital signs) are to adhere to the standards outlined in the Brand Guidelines and, where necessary Council's Signs Code.

5.3.6 Public Displays

City of Darwin displays and exhibits must include the appropriate City of Darwin branding and logo placement and be of a professional standard.

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6 LEGISLATIVE REFERENCES

6.1 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT

The Local Government Act 2019 provides the legal basis for City of Darwin to have a role in promoting the social, economic, environmental, and cultural wellbeing of its community and for community participation in such activities.

7 PROCEDURES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

Policy - Code of Conduct for Elected Members
 Policy - Elected Members Access to Council Information
 Policy - Elected Member Protocols and Interactions
 Policy - City of Darwin Code of Conduct for Council staff
 Policy - Code of Meeting Practice
 Policy - Caretaker
 Policy - Advertising Signs Code
 Procedure – Communications and Media
 Procedure – Brand Guidelines

8 RESPONSIBILITY AND APPLICATION

Council is responsible for approving this policy.

This policy applies to Elected Members and Council Staff.

Elected Members are responsible for adhering to this policy insofar as it applies to their role as outlined in the Local Government Act 2019. The Lord Mayor has the additional role to speak on behalf of the Council as Council's principal representative.

The General Manager Government Relations and External Affairs is responsible for the strategic oversight of the Government Relations and External Affairs Department and therefore managing Council's reputation and facilitating communications and public relations functions of Council.

The General Manager Government Relations and External Affairs is responsible for the implementation of this policy, related procedures and training requirements for Elected Members and Council staff.

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