

1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to outline City of Darwin’s approach to official communications and media engagement.

2 SCOPE

This policy applies to all City of Darwin workplace participants and Elected Members.

3 POLICY STATEMENT

City of Darwin 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.

3.1 COMMUNICATIONS

3.1.1 Official Communications

The purposes of the City of Darwin’s official communications include:

- sharing information required by law to be publicly available
- sharing information that is of interest and benefit to the community
- promoting City of Darwin events and services
- promoting Public Notices and community consultation/engagement opportunities
- answering questions and responding to requests for information relevant to the role of the City of Darwin
- receiving and responding to community feedback, ideas, comments, compliments and complaints

The City of Darwin’s official communications will be consistent with relevant legislation, policies, standards and the positions adopted by the Council. Our communications will always be simple to understand, respectful and professional.

The City of Darwin will use a combination of different communication methods to suit the type of information being communicated and the requirements of the community or specific audience, including:

- websites
- advertising and promotional materials

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- media releases prepared for the Lord Mayor, to promote specific City of Darwin positions
- speeches
- social media
- community newsletters including email newsletters, and
- letter drops and other modes of communications undertaken by workplace participants at the discretion of the Chief Executive Officer

3.1.2 Personal Communications

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

Elected Members and workplace participants must abide by the relevant Codes of Conduct in all personal communications.

3.1.3 Website

The City of Darwin will maintain an official website, as our community’s online resource to access to the City of Darwin’s official communications.

3.2 MEDIA RELATIONS

3.2.1 Speaking on behalf of the City of Darwin

The Lord Mayor is the official spokesperson for the City of Darwin, representing the Local Government in official communications, including speeches, comment, print, electronic and social media.

Where the Lord Mayor is unavailable, the Deputy Mayor may act as the spokesperson.

The Chief Executive Officer may speak on behalf of the City of Darwin, where authorised to do so by the Lord Mayor.

It is respectful and courteous to the office of the Lord Mayor to refrain from commenting publicly, particularly on recent decisions or contemporary issues, until such time as the Lord Mayor has had opportunity to speak on behalf of the City of Darwin.

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.

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Communications by Elected Members and workplace participants, whether undertaken in an authorised official capacity or as a personal communication, must not:

- bring the City of Darwin into disrepute
- compromise the person's effectiveness in their role with the City of Darwin
- breach the Code of Conduct
- imply the City of Darwin's endorsement of personal views
- imply the Elected Member or workplace participants is speaking on behalf of the City of Darwin, unless authorised to do so, or
- disclose, without authorisation, confidential information

3.2.2 Elected member statements on City of Darwin matters

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

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

- when personal views differ to a Council decision or City of Darwin policy, clearly state that the comment or content is a personal view only, which does not necessarily represent the views of City of Darwin
- be made with reasonable care and diligence
- be lawful, including avoiding contravention of copyright, defamation, discrimination or harassment laws
- to the best of knowledge, be factually correct
- avoid damage to the reputation of the local government
- not reflect adversely on the character or actions of another Elected Member or workplace participant
- maintain a respectful and positive tone and not use offensive or objectionable expressions in reference to any Elected Member, workplace participant or community member

3.2.3 Responding to media enquiries

In the interests of openness and transparency, City of Darwin is committed to providing comment and responses to all media enquiries where appropriate.

All enquiries from the media for an official City of Darwin comment, whether made to an individual Elected Member or workplace participant, must be directed to the Chief Executive Officer or a person authorised by the Chief Executive Officer.

Information will be coordinated to support the Lord Mayor or Chief Executive Officer (where authorised) to make an official response on behalf of the City of Darwin.

3.2.4 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.

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4 DEFINITIONS

Council means City of Darwin, 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 Councillors.

Marketing, Communications and Engagement department includes the services and functions of Marketing, Communications, Engagement, Public Relations, Media and Relations.

Media means a media or news organisation including print, broadcast or online.

Official communications mean communication that has been prepared to share information via broad communications channels, which may include websites, speeches, social media, newsletters, advertising or media releases, statements and responses.

Social media means a social networking channel that enables users to create and share information.

Website means a website or intranet site managed by City of Darwin including sites to promote a particular service or function, such as community consultation.

Workplace participant means employees, volunteers, work experience placements, contractors, consultants, and labour-hire staff of City of Darwin.

5 LEGISLATIVE REFERENCES

- *Information Act NT 2002*
- *Local Government Act NT 2019*
- City of Darwin By-Laws 1994

6 PROCEDURES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

0015.100.E.R	Elected Member Protocols and Interactions Policy
0036.100.E.R	Caretaker Policy
0094.100.E.R	Breach of Code of Conduct – Elected Members
1040.010.I.N	Register of Delegations and Sub-Delegations
1310.010.I.R	Communications and Media Procedure
1310.100.E.R	Communications and Media Policy
1330.010.I.R	Social Media Procedure
1370.001.E.R	Image Management Form
1370.100.E.R	Image Management and Consent Policy
1380.001.E.R	Brand Guidelines
4000.010.I.R	Code of Conduct – Employees

7 RESPONSIBILITY AND APPLICATION

The implementation, maintenance and compliance with this policy is the responsibility of the Executive Manager Marketing, Communications and Engagement.

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