

<b>Title:</b>	<b>Media</b>
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## 1 Policy Summary

This Policy deals with procedures and protocols governing interaction with the media by Elected Members and staff, the issuing of media releases, pre-election protocols and the appropriate use of social media.

## 2 Policy Objectives

The objective of this Policy is to establish a framework governing aspects of interaction with traditional and social media

## 3 Background

City of Darwin, its Elected Members and appropriate officers will often be asked to respond to the media. City of Darwin's Media and Public Relations Officer will also prepare media releases to inform and educate the public about the City of Darwin's position or programs and forthcoming events.

All comments made via the media (traditional and social) are in the public domain and available for publishing or discussion in all forms of media. Sound judgement and common sense should be exercised when engaging with media, and comments must comply with all relevant City of Darwin policies and values.

Views expressed by Elected Members should be clearly identified as either personal or professional, and must not at any time bring the reputation of Council into disrepute.

## 4 Policy Statement

The Media and Public Relations Officer is the first contact point to liaise with the media, provide information and arrange for the preparation of media releases and briefings prior to interviews. In their absence the Chief Executive Officer or their designated officer should be the first point of contact.

Pursuant to Section 43 of the Local Government Act, the role of the Lord Mayor is to speak on behalf of Council as Council's principal representative.

The Lord Mayor is the principal spokesperson for the City of Darwin. The Deputy Lord Mayor, Chairs of Standing Committees, and members of the City of Darwin Executive Leadership Team may also be spokespersons as appropriate.

In general, the Lord Mayor and Elected Members are the spokespersons on policy matters, and the members of the Executive Leadership Team are spokespersons on operational matters.

The Chief Executive Officer or their designated officer may decide on a case by case basis, that another spokesperson is appropriate.

Authority for individuals to make ongoing comments in social media on behalf of City of Darwin must be approved by the Chief Executive Officer or their designated officer.

### 4.1 General Media

#### *Employees*

City of Darwin employees are not authorised to speak to the media on any Council issue without the prior approval of the Chief Executive Officer or their designated officer.

The Chief Executive Officer or their designated officer will have the authority to designate City of Darwin staff to talk to the media when a matter is:

- Operational
- Relevant to their particular responsibilities
- Requested by individual media.

A general priority guide for staff selection will be:

- 1) Chief Executive Officer
- 2) General Managers
- 3) Managers
- 4) Specific key staff

In all cases the decision on who will speak to the media rests with the Chief Executive Officer or their designated officer.

It may be appropriate, for reasons of expediency, or gravity of subject matter, for Chief Executive Officer or their designated officer to officially speak direct to the media to ensure the overall reputation of Council is protected and/or enhanced.

### ***Protocol for Elected Members - Media Issues***

Elected Members are under no obligation to seek permission from, or to advise Chief Executive Officer or their designated officer of any attempt to gain media attention for themselves. However Elected Members are encouraged to inform the Chief Executive Officer or their designated officer out of professional courtesy.

City of Darwin employees shall not engage in any media activity which is deemed by the Chief Executive Officer to be specifically for the personal advantage of any Elected Member.

Elected Members and City of Darwin staff are not to use or disclose information gained in the ordinary course of business of Council, in a way that may cause significant damage or distress to a person; damage to the interests of the Council or a person; or confer an unfair commercial or financial advantage on a person or business when dealing with the media.

When speaking to the media Elected Members are required to make it clear whether or not they are representing Council in accordance with an adopted Council position or policy, or if they are presenting a personal viewpoint as an individual.

All aspects of communication by staff (including verbal, written or personal), involving City of Darwin's activities should reflect the status and objectives of City of Darwin. Communications should be accurate and professional.

As a representative of the community, Elected Members need to be not only responsive to community views, but to adequately communicate the attitudes and decisions of the Council. Elected Members should acknowledge that:

- i). as a member of the Council there is respect for the decision making processes, based on a decision of the majority of the Council;
- ii). information of a confidential nature must not be communicated until it is no longer treated as confidential;
- iii). information relating to decisions of the Council on approvals or permits should only be communicated in an official capacity by a designated officer of the Council;
- iv). information concerning adopted policies, procedures and decisions of the Council is conveyed accurately;
- v). when expressing personal views care is taken not to show disrespect for the Council, its decisions, decision making process or other elected members and staff.

## ***Media Releases***

Under no circumstances should media releases, other than those issued by Elected Members, be dispatched to the media from any other section or department other than the Communications and Marketing Section or Chief Executive Officer's office. Copies of the media releases issued by City of Darwin must be forwarded to the Elected Members by the Media and Public Relations Officer.

## ***Tasking of Staff***

No individual other than the Chief Executive Officer and the Executive Manager are authorised to direct employees in the Communications and Marketing Section.

## **4.2 Social Media**

### ***Background***

This policy sets out specific guidelines for professional and personal use of social media. The guidelines for professional use must be adhered to in circumstances where the user can be easily identified as a City of Darwin employee, contractor or Elected Member.

City of Darwin employees are not authorised to make comments via social media on any City of Darwin issue without the prior approval of the Chief Executive Officer or their designated officer.

The City of Darwin website remains City of Darwin's primary and predominant internet presence. Social media use should fall generally into three categories:

1. As a marketing channel to increase Council's ability to broadcast its messages to the widest possible audience
2. As a channel for disseminating time-sensitive information as quickly as possible (e.g. during a cyclone or other emergency situation)
3. As a mechanism to engage with the community

Wherever practicable, content posted to social media sites should be available on City of Darwin's website.

Within the context of this policy, the use of social media may be authorised by General Managers and the Executive Manager for the dissemination of information that is operational in nature and is consistent with Council's policies and decisions. For example, the libraries may advise of upcoming activities and alterations to opening hours. Sister Cities, Youth Services and Recreation may engage with community representatives. Advice about maintenance works may be issued.

### ***Definition of social media***

Social media is a group of web-based applications that enable the creation and exchange of user-generated content.

Social media may include (although is not limited to):

- social networking sites (eg Facebook, Myspace, LinkedIn, Bebo, Yammer)
- chatrooms
- video and photo sharing websites (eg Flickr, Youtube)
- podcasts
- blogs, including corporate blogs, personal blogs and blogs hosted by media outlets
- micro-blogging (eg Twitter)
- wikis and online collaborations (eg Wikipedia)
- forums, discussion boards and groups (eg Google groups, Whirlpool)
- vod and podcasting
- online multiplayer gaming platforms (eg World of Warcraft, Second life)
- instant messaging (including SMS)
- geo-spatial tagging (Foursquare)

### ***Professional use of social media***

Before engaging in social media as a representative of City of Darwin, the individual must become authorised to comment with approval from the Chief Executive Officer or their designated officer.

If authorised to comment as a City of Darwin representative, the user must:

- disclose they are an Elected Member, employee or contractor of City of Darwin, and use only their own identity or an approved official account
- disclose and comment only on information in the public domain
- ensure that all content published is accurate and not misleading and complies with all relevant Council policies
- ensure they are not the first to make an announcement (unless specifically given permission to do so)
- comment only on their area of expertise and authority
- maintain proper records of all postings and comments in accordance with Council policies
- adhere to the Terms of Use of the relevant social media platform/website, as well as copyright, privacy, defamation, contempt of court, discrimination, harassment and other applicable laws and policies

The authorised user must not:

- post or respond to material that is offensive, obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, bullying, discriminatory, hateful, racist, sexist, infringes copyright, constitutes a contempt of court, breaches a Court suppression order, or is otherwise unlawful
- use or disclose any confidential or secure information
- make any comment or post any material that might otherwise cause damage to City of Darwin's reputation or bring it into disrepute

## ***Personal use of social media***

The City of Darwin recognises that you may wish to use social media in your personal life. This policy does not intend to discourage or unduly limit your personal expression or online activities.

The potential for damage to be caused (either directly or indirectly) to City of Darwin when using social media should be recognised, especially where the user can be identified as an Elected Member, City of Darwin employee or contractor. Compliance with this policy will ensure that the risk of such damage is minimised.

When using social media, it is vital that:

- only publicly available information is posted, disclosed or discussed
- all content published is accurate and not misleading and complies with all relevant City of Darwin policies
- should the activity in any way identify the user as an Elected Member or City of Darwin employee, it must be stated that the views expressed are personal and are not those of City of Darwin

When using social media, the user must ensure that the following does not occur:

- imply that the user is authorised to speak as a representative of City of Darwin, nor give the impression that the views expressed are those of City of Darwin
- make any comment or post any material that might otherwise cause damage to City of Darwin's reputation or bring it into disrepute
- use a City of Darwin email address or any City of Darwin logos or insignia
- use the identity or likeness of another Elected Member or employee of the City of Darwin
- use or disclose any information that is confidential to City of Darwin
- post material that is offensive, obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, bullying, discriminatory, hateful, racist, sexist, infringes copyright, constitutes a contempt of court, breaches a Court suppression order, or is otherwise unlawful

## ***Reasonable use of social media***

Accessing social media via the City of Darwin internet systems must be in accordance with Council's Computer Usage policy.

If the use of social media forms part of their professional duties, employees may use social media during normal business hours.

## **4.3 Pre-Election Protocols**

That from the close of nominations until the declaration of the poll in municipal elections, all media statements on behalf of the City of Darwin will be issued in the name of the Chief Executive Officer.

## **5 Legislation, terminology and references**

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

## **6 Implementation and delegation**

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for managing implementation of this policy

## **7 Evaluation and review**

This policy should be reviewed once in the term of each Council or more often as required.