

THE CITY OF
GREATER GEELONG

MAYOR AND COUNCILLORS' MEDIA ENGAGEMENT COUNCIL POLICY

VERSION: 6

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Support

Authorising Officer: Director Governance, Strategy &
Performance

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Introduction

PURPOSE

To ensure the Council and City officers abide by the requirements of the *Local Government Act (Vic) 1989* by specifying the roles of the mayor, deputy mayor and other councillors whenever they engage with media on behalf of the City of Greater Geelong (the City) and its Council.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all internal and external engagement with Media involving the mayor, deputy mayor, and other councillors, such as: photo or video shoots, and other similar Media opportunities; attendances at public events, launches, etc; and the City's internal and external corporate communication run via City-operated Communication Channels (namely: print, radio and TV, online/web and social media).

Definitions

This section defines the key terms used in this policy.

ACT

The *Local Government Act (Vic) 1989*.

CEO

Is the Chief Executive Officer of the City.

CITY

The City of Greater Geelong organisation, led by the CEO.

CLEVER AND CREATIVE VISION

The local community's 30-year strategic vision for the Geelong city-region.

COMMUNICATION CHANNEL(S)

The channels the City uses to convey information to (and receive information from) its various audiences and stakeholders, such as in print (paid and earned), radio, TV, online/web and social media – but not email or mail.

COMMITTEE(S)

Council Committees, or external committees, boards, associations and forums, to which Council appoints councillors to represent its interests.

COUNCIL

The City of Greater Geelong Council comprised of elected councillors and led by the mayor.

COUNCIL PLAN

The four-year plan that outlines the Council's strategic direction and priorities during its term of office.

CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING SERVICES

Means the Manager, Corporate Communications and Marketing Services or their delegate or team members.

ELT

The Executive Leadership Team of the City, as constituted from time to time.

ISSUE

Means activities, policies or decisions the City or Council generate that could create significant public interest – and affect the City's or Council's reputation.

MAYOR & COUNCILLOR SUPPORT UNIT

Means the Coordinator, Mayor & Councillor Support or their delegate or team members.

MAYORAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Mayoral Media Engagement Responsibilities are determined by the Mayor and Councillors' Support Unit, and generally meet at least one of these criteria:

- key City announcements regarding:
 - Clever and Creative Vision;
 - Council Plan and Council Plan updates;
 - the City's annual budget and rate notices, and

- the City's Annual Report;
- announcements or commentary relating to premier events, major projects or key community infrastructure the City is planning or undertaking;
- any matter involving the City (or one of its committees) that could generate state, national or international level dialogue;
- controversial matters that could impact the reputation of the municipality, its Council, or the City as an organisation;
- the outcomes of any Council decisions (made at Council Meetings or Special Meetings);
- civic and ceremonial duties involving the City or Council, as determined by custom, history or practice (ANZAC Day, Christmas program, or citizenship awards);
- a City or Council event or activity involving the prime minister, premier or other senior leaders or dignitaries – including interstate and overseas guests or visitors;
- a significant natural or human-induced emergency – local, state or international; and
- any issue where the community would reasonably expect to hear from the City's primary Council spokesperson.

MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

Means how the City, mayor, deputy mayor and councillors engage with the community via the Media, to disseminate news, views, ideas and information regarding their responsibility to develop, implement and deliver the City's strategic vision, policies, programs and services.

MEDIA

Means any accredited organisation whose primary activities focus on the dissemination of news and information to the public using various Communication Channels.

MEDIA RELEASE

Means any information the City or Council proactively provides to Media, including via the City's Communications Channels.

MEDIA/RESPONSE STATEMENT

Means any information the City or Council provides to Media in response to a specific opportunity, request or inquiry.

PORTFOLIO

Means any of the suite of Portfolios Council has introduced to allow councillors to maintain effective oversight of key strategic focus areas for the Council.

STAKEHOLDER

Means any individual, group or organisation who could be affected by a City or Council decision, or who might have an interest in or influence over a pending City or Council decision.

WARD

The four representative areas (or wards) that together comprise the City of Greater Geelong municipality, as set by the Victorian Electoral Commission: Bellarine, Brownbill, Kardinia, and Windermere.

Policy

THE MAYOR'S ROLE AS THE PRINCIPAL COUNCIL SPOKESPERSON

Pursuant to the Act, the functions of the mayor are to:

- a) chair all meetings of Council at which he or she is present, to lead its decision-making process;
- b) act as the principal spokesperson for Council – to represent its views, and those of the community; and
- c) carry out the civic and ceremonial duties of the mayor and councillors.

This policy recognises the mayor as the principal Council spokesperson to be quoted in all reactive or proactive engagement with Media, relating to the Mayoral Media Engagement Responsibilities.

DEPUTY MAYOR'S ROLE AS SPOKESPERSON

When serving as acting mayor, the deputy mayor becomes Council's principal spokesperson.

DELEGATION TO OTHER COUNCILLORS

The mayor, or in his or her absence, the deputy mayor, can delegate the Mayoral Media Engagement Responsibilities to any other councillor. Without this delegation, no other councillor can engage with Media on behalf of Council.

BRIEFING OTHER COUNCILLORS AND THE CITY'S CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER ON MAYORAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

The Mayor and Councillors' Support Unit will inform all councillors and the City's CEO in a timely manner of any Media Engagement the mayor performs on Council's behalf.

ATTENDANCE OF ALL COUNCILLORS AT MEDIA ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

All councillors are welcome to attend any official City or Council Media Engagement opportunity or event involving the mayor.

INVOLVEMENT OF OTHER COUNCILLORS AT MEDIA ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

The mayor can invite other councillors to participate in any Media Engagement opportunity, especially if it relates to that councillors' Ward, Portfolio or Committee appointment.

Such Media Engagement may be conducted jointly with the mayor and other eligible councillors, and could typically involve:

- a public, Media or event spokesperson role (as an MC, or to deliver a speech);
- participation in a staged Media opportunity or event (a photo shoot, radio or TV interview);
- being quoted in a proactive City Media Release or Media Response (approved by the mayor);
- and being included in any other relevant proactive City Media Engagement – including all social media, print and online.

ASSIGNING ORDER OF REPRESENTATION FOR COUNCILLORS

If the mayor invites a councillor (or councillors) to participate in a City-organised Media Engagement, the mayor will generally:

- speak first on behalf of Council
- be the focus of any City-organised Media Engagement
- and be first quoted in any City Media Release or other content (including *Community Update* and the City's social media, if appropriate).

If several councillors attend a Media Engagement event then the mayor will determine which order these councillors might speak and/or appear, if at all (including on the City's social media).

MEDIA ENGAGEMENT DECISION MATRIX

The Mayor and Councillors' Support Unit will advise the mayor, councillors and CEO of potential Media Engagement opportunities by referring to the Media Engagement decision matrix (see **Attachment 1**):

- As a general guide the Mayor and Councillors' Support Unit will propose Media Engagement opportunities to relevant councillor(s).
- Where a Media Engagement opportunity clearly focuses on a ward-based matter, the mayor and Councillors' Support Unit will offer all councillors from that ward the opportunity to participate.
- If multiple councillors from that ward accept the offer, then they will collaboratively determine who speaks first; if they cannot, the mayor will decide.
- Where a Media Engagement opportunity clearly focuses on a portfolio-based matter, the mayor and Councillors' Support Unit will offer the relevant portfolio chair (or, in their absence, the deputy chair) the opportunity to participate.
- Where a Media Engagement opportunity clearly focuses on a Committee-based matter, the mayor and Councillors' Support Unit will offer the relevant Committee-member councillor the opportunity to participate.

COMMUNICATION SUPPORT FOR MAYORAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

The Mayor and Councillors' Support Unit will offer the mayor support to perform the Mayoral Media Engagement Responsibilities.

Any councillor invited by the mayor to officially represent the City or Council in a Media Engagement opportunity (for their Ward, Portfolio or Committee) will receive similar support.

All support requests should be made to the Mayor and Councillors' Support Unit as early as practicable to ensure quality delivery by deadline.

LIMITS OF MAYORAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for managing any Media Engagement regarding the City's day-to-day operations (under Section 94A of *The Act*).

The CEO will involve the mayor and councillors in accordance with the Media Engagement decision matrix in relation to operational Media Engagement matters.

The mayor and councillors must promptly refer on any Media inquiries they receive directly to the Mayor & Councillor Support Unit.

RESPECTING THE MEDIA'S EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE

Media representatives attending a City-organised Media Engagement will make their own editorial decisions as to which councillors they invite (or do not invite) to appear in any staged presentation, event, photo, video or similar activity.

It is inappropriate for any councillor – including the mayor – to influence or determine the Media's editorial needs or decisions.

KEY PRACTICE GUIDELINES

Official City statements issued by the mayor or other councillors – including those prepared and/or issued on their behalf by the Mayor and Councillors' Support Unit – must:

- be consistent with the City's current policy and position;
- support the reputation of the City, its staff, its Council, and its councillors;
- be respectful of the mayor, other councillors, the City's Chief Executive Officer, City officers, and all members of the public;
- not commit the City or its resources to a course of action without prior Council discussion and/or resolution
- not be in breach of any laws (such as privacy, defamation, racial vilification, or equal opportunity), or the Councillor Code of Conduct; and
- avoid any admission of legal liability.

If a councillor chooses to express a personal opinion or view that differs from the Council's agreed position, the councillor must clearly identify their opinion or view as their own. In that case, the City's resources will not be available for their communication or engagement requirements.

All councillors quoted in City-generated Media content will have an opportunity to approve their comments in a timely manner, prior to an advised deadline.

Staff from the Mayor and Councillors' Support Unit will use their professional judgement to determine what constitutes a Mayoral Media Engagement Responsibility.

The City's CEO will ultimately determine the interpretation and/or application of this policy.

Under the City's Publication Policy, the City's CEO delegates to the Manager, Corporate Communications and Marketing Services the editorial control for the content and publication of all City-organised Communication Channels.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Corporate Communications and Marketing Services oversees the management of all City-owned social media accounts and holds all passwords.

The Mayor & Councillor Support Unit oversees the management of the mayoral social media accounts and holds all passwords.

At the mayor's request, and with approval of the City's CEO, authorised City officers will use the mayoral social media accounts to promote activities and opportunities listed in this policy under Mayoral Media Engagement Responsibilities.

The City will not solicit or pay for any followers (or similar) on any City-owned social media accounts.

The mayor and councillors are wholly responsible for maintaining any private social media accounts they might hold, create or operate under their own name, and accept all legal responsibilities for such accounts.

All councillors should inform the Mayor and Councillors' Support Unit of any existing private social media accounts they operate, or any they create, during their term of office.

City officers shall not assist any councillor with the creation or operation of any private social media account – unless approved by the CEO.

All councillors should operate any private social media accounts in strict accord with this policy, and the Councillor Code of Conduct.

Implementation of this Policy

Media Engagement opportunity	Spokesperson: order of delegation						
	Mayor	Deputy Mayor	Ward Cr(s)	Portfolio Chair	Portfolio Deputy Chair	Committee, board, assoc. or forum Cr	CEO or snr delegate
Media has asked for an interview or comment on an issue that meets the criteria of a Mayoral Media Engagement Responsibility	Primary speaker	N/A	N/A	If delegated by the mayor	N/A	N/A	At the CEO's discretion – in consultation with the mayor
Media has asked for an interview or comment on an issue that does <i>not</i> meet the criteria of a Mayoral Media Engagement Responsibility – but clearly relates to a specific ward .	Secondary speaker	If delegated by the mayor.	Primary speaker	N/A	N/A	N/A	At the CEO's discretion – in consultation with the mayor
Media has asked for an interview or comment on an issue that does <i>not</i> meet the criteria of a Mayoral Media Engagement Responsibility – but clearly relates to a specific portfolio	Tertiary speaker	If delegated by the mayor.	N/A	Primary speaker	Standby speaker – if delegated by the Portfolio chair.	N/A	At the CEO's discretion – in consultation with the mayor
Media has asked for an interview or comment on an issue that does <i>not</i> meet the criteria of a Mayoral Media Engagement Responsibility – but clearly relates to both a specific portfolio , and a specific ward .	Tertiary speaker	If delegated by the mayor.	Secondary speaker	Primary speaker	Standby speaker – if delegated by the Portfolio chair.	N/A	At the CEO's discretion – in consultation with the mayor
Media has asked for an interview or comment on an issue that does <i>not</i> meet the criteria of a Mayoral Media Engagement Responsibility – but clearly relates to a Committee .	Secondary speaker	If delegated by the mayor.	N/A	N/A	N/A	Primary speaker	At the CEO's discretion – in consultation with the mayor
Media has inquired about a City operational matter.	Primary speaker – in consultation with the CEO	N/A	N/A	If delegated by the mayor	N/A	N/A	Secondary speaker in consultation with Mayor - courtesy

								advice to all councillors
Media has inquired about a City administrative, or regulatory matter.	Secondary speaker – in consultation with the CEO	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Primary speaker – in consultation with the Mayor

MONITORING AND REPORTING

The Responsible Officer monitors compliance with the Policy and is responsible for reporting to Council when required.

ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE

The Responsible Officer for this policy manages the provision of advice to the organisation regarding this policy.

A person who is uncertain how to comply with this policy should seek advice from this person or from their Manager.

RECORDS

The City must retain records associated with this policy and its implementation for at least the period shown below.

Record	Retention / Disposal Authority	Retention Period	Location
Council Report	Director, Governance, Strategy & Performance	As per PProV	EDMS – Council Meetings

REVIEW

The City should review and, if necessary, amend this policy within six months of the appointment of the new Council in 2020.

References

- *Local Government Act (1989)*
- *City of Greater Geelong Act (1993)*
- *City of Greater Geelong Amendment Act (2017)*
- Councillor Code of Conduct
- Councillors' Expenses and Facilities Policy
- Community Engagement Policy
- Media Liaison Procedure
- Media Issues Management Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Plaques and Memorials Procedure