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## Section 2.3 – Office of the Chief Executive

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### **POLICY 2.3.2 - COMMUNICATIONS**

#### **OBJECTIVE**

To indicate the City's high level of commitment to public consultation and to provide good, open and accountable government.

#### **STATEMENT**

The City of Joondalup is committed to ensuring that the community is kept informed on matters before Council, fairness and equity; friendly, helpful, respectful and professional service. Effective communication is a key to ensuring that these principles of operation are met.

The City will strive to meet and where possible exceed the objectives laid down within its Customer Service Charter.

#### **Correspondence Received**

All communication regarding council business from a member of staff or an elected member shall be at all times courteous, clear and professional.

All external written correspondence will receive a response within 7 working days of receipt, however an acknowledgment will be provided if, in the view of the appropriate Business Unit Manager, a full and detailed reply is not possible within that time frame.

External correspondence that is received marked as a copy and addressed to a third party will not be acknowledged unless, in the opinion of the relevant Director or Business Unit Manager, a response is appropriate.

Facsimiles and electronic mail will be treated as written correspondence.

Directors and the Chief Executive Officer shall determine which items of correspondence will be presented to the Council, through the appropriate committee or direct to full Council.

#### **Mayoral correspondence**

Mayoral correspondence and invitations to civic functions will be issued on mayoral letterhead. Council letterhead is reserved for use by the administration. A file copy of mayoral correspondence shall be maintained in the appropriate file/s, together with the originating correspondence. In instances where the mayor is providing technical information to correspondents, the appropriate officer will draft the correspondence or that section of the correspondence.

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### **Councillor Correspondence**

The use of individual councillor letterhead is at the discretion of the individual councillor, however, it is not to be construed as official correspondence of the City.

### **Council Stationery**

No Council stationery is to be used for election purposes.

### **Communication between Elected Members and Staff**

In order to facilitate effective use of staff resources, all inquiries and requests from Elected Members shall be directed to the Chief Executive Officer or relevant Director for action. Where the request entails the use of City resources (human or physical) to an extent which the Director believes may impact on the smooth administration of the directorate, the request is to be referred to the Chief Executive Officer for determination.

Communication between Elected Members and staff will in general be governed by the 'Civic and Corporate Protocols and Procedures Manual' and the 'Code of Conduct'.

### **Media Contact**

In accordance with the Local Government Act 1995, the spokespersons for Council are the Mayor and Chief Executive Officer, either of whom may delegate authority to the appropriate Director to make a statement on behalf of the City. Directors may determine if a Business Unit Manager is the most appropriate person to provide a statement. All Business Unit Managers will receive some internal training on dealing with the media through the Marketing Unit. Written media statements are to be approved by the Chief Executive Officer prior to their release.

### **Publications**

Publications produced by the City will be available for loan through all libraries within the local government area and available for reading at the Council office and customer service centre(s). Publications distributed to households will also be available through the library system. The following publications will be advertised as available in the weekly section of a newspaper circulating in the district and will also be available, on request, in alternative formats:

- Annual Report;
- Community Services Directory;
- Principal Activities Plan;
- Strategic Plan

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**Advertising**

All statutory advertisements shall be placed in either the 'West Australian', or a newspaper circulating in the district, as specified by the relevant legislative requirement.

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Previous Policy No:	See B3-13/CS-11; EM9/EM-09; EM11/EM-15; B3-04/MKT-03; B3-01/CS-02; B1-04/CS-04
Amendments:	CJ213-06/99, CJ148-06/00, C212-09/03
Issued:	November 2003
Related Documentation:	Customer Service Charter Local Government Act 1995 Delegated Authority Manual

## Australian Press Council

### Statement of Principles

To help the public and the press, the Australian Press Council has laid down the broad principles to which it is committed.

First, the freedom of the press to publish is the freedom of the people to be informed. This is the justification for upholding press freedom as an essential feature of a democratic society. This freedom, won in centuries of struggle against political and commercial interests, includes the right of a newspaper to publish what it reasonably considers to be news, without fear or favour, and the right to comment fairly upon it.

Second, the freedom of the press is important more because of the obligation it entails towards the people than because of the rights it gives to the press. Freedom of the press carries with it an equivalent responsibility to the public. Liberty does not mean licence. Thus, in dealing with complaints, the Council will give first and dominant consideration to what it perceives to be in the public interest.

The Council does not lay down rules by which publications should govern themselves. However, in considering complaints, the Council will have regard for these general principles.

1. Newspapers and magazines ("publications") should not publish what they know or could reasonably be expected to know is false, or fail to take reasonable steps to check the accuracy of what they report.
2. A publication should make amends for publishing information that is found to be harmfully inaccurate by printing, promptly and with appropriate prominence, such retraction, correction, explanation or apology as will neutralise the damage so far as possible.
3. Readers of publications are entitled to have news and comment presented to them honestly and fairly, and with respect for the privacy and sensibilities of individuals. However, the right to privacy should not prevent publication of matters of public record or obvious or significant public interest. Rumour and unconfirmed reports, if published at all, should be identified as such.
4. News obtained by dishonest or unfair means, or the publication of which would involve a breach of confidence, should not be published unless there is an over-riding public interest.
5. A publication is justified in strongly advocating its own views on controversial topics provided that it treats its readers fairly by
  - making fact and opinion clearly distinguishable;
  - not misrepresenting or suppressing relevant facts;
  - not distorting the facts in text, headlines, pictures, billboards or posters;
  - disclosing any commercial or other interest which might be construed as influencing the publication's presentation of news or opinion.
6. Publications have a wide discretion in publishing material, but they should have regard for the sensibilities of their readers, particularly when the material, such as photographs, could reasonably be expected to cause offence. Public interest should be the criterion and, on occasion, explained editorially.
7. Publications should not place any gratuitous emphasis on the race, religion, nationality, colour, country of origin, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, illness, or age of an individual or group. Nevertheless, where it is relevant and in the public interest, publications may report and express opinions in these areas.
8. Where individuals or groups are singled out for criticism, the publication should ensure fairness and balance in the original article. Failing that, it should provide a reasonable and swift opportunity for a balancing response in the appropriate section of the publication.

9. Where the Council issues an adjudication, the publication concerned should prominently print the adjudication.

The Council strives to ensure that its adjudications on complaints reflect both the conscience of the press and the legitimate expectations of the public.

**Note:** For the purposes of these principles, 'public interest' is defined as involving a matter capable of affecting the people at large so they might be legitimately interested in, or concerned about, what is going on, or what may happen to them or to others.

Provided by:

Jack Herman  
Australian Press Council  
24 November 2003

## Australian Journalist Association

### Code of Ethics

*Respect for truth and the public's right to information are fundamental principles of journalism. Journalists describe society to itself. They convey information, ideas and opinions, a privileged role. They search, disclose, record, question, entertain, suggest and remember. They inform citizens and animate democracy. They give a practical form to freedom of expression. Many journalists work in private enterprise, but all have these public responsibilities. They scrutinise power, but also exercise it, and should be accountable. Accountability engenders trust. Without trust, journalists do not fulfil their public responsibilities. MEAA members engaged in journalism commit themselves to*

- **Honesty**
  - **Fairness**
  - **Independence**
  - **Respect for the rights of others**
1. Report and interpret honestly, striving for accuracy, fairness and disclosure of all essential facts. Do not suppress relevant available facts, or give distorting emphasis. Do your utmost to give a fair opportunity for reply.
  2. Do not place unnecessary emphasis on personal characteristics, including race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, sexual orientation, family relationships, religious belief, or physical or intellectual disability.
  3. Aim to attribute information to its source. Where a source seeks anonymity, do not agree without first considering the source's motives and any alternative attributable source. Where confidences are accepted, respect them in all circumstances.
  4. Do not allow personal interest, or any belief, commitment, payment, gift or benefit, to undermine your accuracy, fairness or independence.
  5. Disclose conflicts of interest that affect, or could be seen to affect, the accuracy, fairness or independence of your journalism. Do not improperly use a journalistic position for personal gain.
  6. Do not allow advertising or other commercial considerations to undermine accuracy, fairness or independence.
  7. Do your utmost to ensure disclosure of any direct or indirect payment made for interviews, pictures, information or stories.
  8. Use fair, responsible and honest means to obtain material. Identify yourself and your employer before obtaining any interview for publication or broadcast. Never exploit a person's vulnerability or ignorance of media practice.
  9. Present pictures and sound which are true and accurate. Any manipulation likely to mislead should be disclosed.

10. Do not plagiarise.
11. Respect private grief and personal privacy. Journalists have the right to resist compulsion to intrude.
12. Do your utmost to achieve fair correction of errors.

**Guidance Clause**

*Basic values often need interpretation and sometimes come into conflict. Ethical journalism requires conscientious decision-making in context. Only substantial advancement of the public interest or risk of substantial harm to people allows any standard to be overridden.*

Obtained from:

Internet

25 November 2003