



**Policy Owner:** Director Corporate Services

**Category:** 5. Our Civic Leadership

## 1. STATEMENT OF INTENT

- 1.1 North Sydney Council believes local citizenship is enriched through complete commitment to open and responsive government.
- 1.2 Through its philosophy of open government and its support for the North Sydney Community Precinct System (independent of Council), Council is committed to open information and participative, non-secretive decision making.

## 2. ELIGIBILITY

- 2.1 This Policy applies to all Council staff and Councillors.

## 3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 The principle of open government is that the business of government should be open at all levels to effective public scrutiny and oversight by broadening participation through inclusive policy and engagement processes.

## 4. PROVISIONS

- 4.1 Guiding Principles
  - 4.1.1 Integrity - Council will implement sound governance mechanisms and provide strong, effective leadership in the delivery of its services and facilities.
  - 4.1.2 Accountability - Council will strengthen its decision-making processes through greater use and empowerment of its committees and reference groups and engagement opportunities.
  - 4.1.3 Transparency - Council supports open and transparent decision-making.
  - 4.1.4 Community Participation - Council will work with its local community to develop innovative responses to problems, issues and concerns. Community engagement, in some form, is essential at all stages and all levels of the decision-making process and allows Council to maximise effectiveness in the provision of its services and facilities.

#### 4.2 Council, Committee and Reference/Working Group Meetings

- 4.2.1 Meetings will be conducted according to Council's *Code of Meeting Principles and Practices*, the *Local Government Act 1993* and associated Regulations.
- 4.2.2 All meetings of Council and its Committees and Reference/Working Groups will be open to the public and the media (see 5.1.4).
- 4.2.3 Members of the public may request to address a Council, Committee or Reference/Working Group meeting.
- 4.2.4 Closed meetings (which exclude the public and the media) will only be conducted when a clear explanatory resolution is carried by Council or a Committee or Reference/Working Groups.
- 4.2.5 Business Papers for Council, Committee and Reference/Working Group meetings will be available on Council's website by close of business two working days before the meeting (normally Thursday for the Monday meeting). Hard copies of reports may be viewed at the Customer Service Centre and in Stanton Library.
- 4.2.6 Minutes of Council meetings will be available on Council's website after midday on the second business day following the meeting. Minutes of committees will appear on the website after they have been adopted by Council.

#### 4.3 Community Engagement

- 4.3.1 Direct democracy and community empowerment will be promoted through referenda, surveys and questionnaires and through community consultation and engagement practices.
- 4.3.2 Current information on Council business, community groups and Precinct Committees will be displayed on notice boards throughout the Council area and on Council's website.

#### 4.4 North Sydney Community Precinct System

- 4.4.1 Council will provide appropriate resources and support to the North Sydney Community Precinct System through which local residents, workers, property owners and students may be involved in Council's decision making processes.

#### 4.5 Access to Information

4.4.2 Council will provide access to information as governed by:

- a) *Local Government Act 1993;*
- b) *Council's Access to Council Information Policy;*
- c) *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009;*
- d) *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998;*
- e) *Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002;*
- f) *State Records Act 1998;*
- g) *Environmental Planning and Assessment (EPA) Act 1979 and*
- h) *Companion Animals Act 1998.*

## **5. RESPONSIBILITY/ACCOUNTABILITY**

5.1 All Councillors, staff and contractors of Council are responsible for ensuring that the principles of Open Government are observed.

## **6. RELATED POLICIES/DOCUMENTS/LEGISLATION**

The Policy should be read in conjunction with the following Council policies and documents:

- Access to Information and Interaction with Staff Policy
- Code of Meeting Principles and Practices
- Collection and Recording of Information Policy
- Complaints Handling Policy
- Confidentiality of Employee Information Policy (staff policy)
- Fees and Charges Schedule
- Precinct System Policy
- Privacy Management Plan

The Policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents/legislation:

- Local Government Act 1993
- Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009
- Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998
- Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002
- State Records Act 1998
- Environmental Planning and Assessment (EPA) Act 1979
- Companion Animals Act 1998

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<b>Version</b>	<b>Date Approved</b>	<b>Approved by</b>	<b>Resolution No.</b>	<b>Review Date</b>
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