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## COUNCILS

# Copyright made right

LOCAL councils are moving to support the future of quality grassroots journalism in their communities by supporting the enforcement of copyright.

At present, community news stories written by local reporters are regularly “cut and pasted” into council websites, newsletters and reports.

The copying is against the law and usually done with little or no attribution or licensing.

A national survey of councils by the Copyright Agency has uncovered at least 70 councils infringing copyright to the value of \$600,000 by illegally reproducing the work of journalists.

In one of the worst cases, a large council in Sydney published more than 440 articles on its website without permission.

The breaches have triggered a response by a bloc of

## MOVE TO KEEP INFO FLOWING

councils seeking to support their local newspapers on whom they rely for quality journalism in their communities.

Willoughby Council is one council that pays a modest licensing fee each year and the mayor urges other councils to do the same.

“The free exchange of ideas and flow of information to our ratepayers is very important,” said mayor Gail Giles-Gidney.

“Not only do we want to share the good news about our programs with our community but we also want to demonstrate our position as a leading council when it comes to good governance.”

By paying an annual licence fee to the Copyright Agency, she said councils could share material without the risk of infringement.

Chief executive of the Copyright Agency, Adam Suckling, said the solution for councils was to take out an annual copyright licence.

“Not only does it facilitate transparency and the circulation of ideas which is fundamental to a healthy democracy, it is also good governance and will reduce the risk of legal action,” he said.

A licence, whose cost depends on the number of users, provides blanket coverage, enabling councils to share information internally and externally without exposing it to the risk of being sued.

The not-for-profit Copyright Agency represents more than 41,000 content creators including journalists, artists, authors and illustrators.