

New rules see councils webcast meetings

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The City of Sydney will start broadcasting their general meetings online within a year, under a NSW government mandate intended to boost transparency and efficiency.

A spokeswoman for Lord mayor Clover Moore said the council would meet the mandatory requirements for webcasting, despite longstanding concerns the webcasts might deter some community members from attending meetings and questions about copyright and archiving of the records.

“There is no big demand in the City of Sydney for webcasting – in the past 12 months, the City

has only received two requests from the public about livestreaming Council meetings,” the spokeswoman said.

The new council model code of meeting practice, released on Friday, provides the first uniform set of meeting rules for local government in NSW. It includes a requirement for councils to broadcast their general meetings online within 12 months.

“If it’s good enough for federal and state MPs to go live to the nation, then there is no reason why local councillors should be exempt,” Local Government Minister Gabrielle Upton said. “The reality is that resid-

ents and ratepayers who want to know what is going on at their council can get online and be informed.”

Many councils in NSW already webcast their general meetings. However, the prospect has proved contentious at one of the state’s biggest councils, the City of Sydney.

Cr Moore and her team of independents have resisted moves to record or livestream meetings, even as other councils across the state increasingly embraced the technology.

Liberal councillor Craig Chung said he had moved eight motions in the council to introduce live streaming of the general meetings since 2016. “Clover Moore has been dragged kicking and screaming to introduce webcasting of

council meetings,” he said. “This model code brings a new level of transparency and openness to the way council meetings are conducted, which is exactly what residents expect and deserve.”

The code also includes optional time limits on meetings, a five-minute limit on councillor speeches, uniform rules of debate and limits on mayoral minutes.

