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# City of Sydney 'dragged kicking and screaming' to webcasting council meetings

By [Lisa Visentin](#)

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The City of Sydney will be dragged into the 21st century and forced to webcast its council meetings under new meeting requirements proposed by the state government.

Lord mayor Clover Moore and her independent team of four councillors have fiercely resisted calls to record or livestream council meetings, even as other councils across the state have increasingly embraced the technology.



The City of Sydney will be forced to webcast its council meetings after the state government made it a mandatory requirement in the new draft meeting code. Lord mayor Clover Moore has, until now, refused calls to adopt the practice. LOUISE KENNERLEY

However, ratepayers may be able to watch council meetings online as early as next year, after webcasting was made a mandatory requirement in a new draft model code of meeting practice, which will apply to all NSW councils.

Announcing the new code on Wednesday, local government minister Gabrielle Upton said webcasting would improve transparency and public involvement in council processes.



City of Sydney Liberal councillor Craig Chung has welcomed the state government's draft new meeting code that proposes to make webcasting of council meetings mandatory.

"The reality is that many of us are time-poor and with our work and family responsibilities it is simply not practical to expect all ratepayers who wish to attend council meetings to be able to attend," Ms Upton said.

The move was welcomed by Liberal councillor Craig Chung, who has campaigned for the council to introduce live-streaming of meetings.

"The City of Sydney are going to be dragged kicking and screaming to the modern age of technology to livestream council meetings," Cr Chung said.

The City of Sydney's is the state's most wealthy council and has annual budget of more than \$500 million. But it has retained the outdated practice of recording proceedings solely through note-takers equipped with pens and paper.

"There's no audio, there's no permanent record except from the shorthand notes of the secretariat," Cr Chung said.

"They do their best, but there are occasions when they've wrongly recorded how individual councillors voted and incorrectly recorded what was said at the council meeting."

Residents and ratepayers who want to observe the decision-making process must physically attend Town Hall and watch from the public gallery.

But the early scheduling of council meetings - held monthly at 5pm on Mondays - was a difficult time for many workers to attend, Mr Chung said.

Rather than allow ratepayers to observe the meetings in real time, Cr Moore and her team members frequently upload videos to social media in which they summarise the happenings in the chamber.

While the City of Sydney has maintained its intransigence, other councils have leapt ahead and many now provide audio recordings at a minimum, and have adopted other measures such as electronic voting.

Since being elected to council last year, Cr Chung has repeatedly put forward motions to record council meetings, but was blocked on each occasion by the lord mayor's team.

"Clover Moore has kicked it back every single time," Cr Chung said. "Finally the government is going to take action and make it mandatory."

The lord mayor, via a spokeswoman, remained sceptical of the value of recording council meetings.

"Despite considerable media coverage of bids to webcast council or committee meetings, we haven't seen evidence of community demand to justify the expense," the spokeswoman said on Wednesday.

She said the draft code had many issues that needed to be "thoroughly worked through" but confirmed that the council "will of course comply" with the finalised code, including the webcasting requirement.



**Lisa Visentin**



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