

## Code of Conduct and Ethics

### 1. Policy

North Shore Community Housing will adopt the highest ethical standards and abide by all applicable legislation.

### 2. Principles behind the Code of Conduct and Ethics

The Code of Conduct and Ethics is based on the following principles which require that all staff members, board members and volunteers should:

- Operate with the highest level of probity
- Have a commitment to social justice
- Strive for best practice
- Avoid conflicts of interest
- Be accountable
- Be professional in their work and in their dealings with others
- Demonstrate a commitment to service quality
- Be mindful of confidentiality issues
- Report corrupt or unethical behaviour

### 3. Applicability

This policy applies to all staff, board members and volunteers working for North Shore Community Housing.

### 4. Code of Conduct

#### Conflicts of interest

Staff, board members and volunteers will avoid any actual or perceived conflicts of interest. See *Conflict of Interest policy*.

#### Gifts, bribes or favors

Staff, board members and volunteers will not solicit or accept gifts, bribes, hospitality, benefits, service or favors. See *Gifts policy*.

In certain circumstances declining a gift of nominal value may cause unnecessary offence. Gifts of nominal value may be accepted but only if declared and approved by the CEO or Board.

#### Decision making

North Shore Community Housing will always make decisions within an agreed and documented framework. These processes and any decisions are open to scrutiny.

## Complaints and appeals

North Shore Community Housing will ensure that all clients are able to make a complaint or appeal a decision without retribution. See *Complaints and Appeals policies*.

## Use of public resources

Staff, board members and volunteers will always be mindful that the organisation's resources are funded by tenants and government and should be used efficiently and appropriately.

## Political and personal activities

Staff, board members and volunteers will be mindful that their involvement with external activities is not perceived to reflect badly on their ability to contribute to the organisation. Staff, board members and volunteers will bring to the attention of the CEO or Chair of any association that may impact on their work or that may impact on the organisation's reputation.

## Secondary employment

Secondary employment could potentially or be perceived to compromise the staff members duties. Staff members must request permission from the CEO prior to taking up secondary employment. Permission will not be unreasonably withheld.

## Respect

Staff, board members and volunteers will treat everyone with courtesy and respect and in a manner which is appropriate to their role as a professional and in accordance with relevant legislation.

## Alcohol and drugs

Staff, board members and volunteers will not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs during working hours or when representing the organisation at public forums or venues. See *Alcohol and Drugs Policy*.

## Public comment

Staff, board members or volunteers will not publicly comment on behalf of the organisation unless authorised by the Board to do so.

## Confidentiality

North Shore Community Housing will ensure that information is shared on a need to know basis only. At the same time Board, staff members and volunteers will be mindful that their activities may expose them to information, particularly personal information about individuals or contracts that is confidential.

Information will not be released to external parties unless with permission or because of legislative requirements. *See Confidentiality Policy for more detail.*

### **Fraud and/or maladministration**

Staff, board members and volunteers will under no circumstances participate in any activities that are fraudulent or give the perception of being fraudulent whether within the organisation or not and will notify the CEO or Board if any fraudulent activities come to their attention. *See Minimizing the Risk of Fraud policy.*

## **5. Disclosing breaches of the code of conduct and ethics**

Every individual has a responsibility for ensuring that the organisation maintains the highest level of probity and that the organisation is not brought into disrepute. As such each person has an individual responsibility to report possible breaches of the code of ethics and conduct to the appropriate persons so that it can be fully investigated.

The appropriate person will vary depending on the nature of the conduct and the persons believed to be involved.

If the suspected fraud or corrupt conduct involves:

- one or more staff members then it can be reported to the CEO or the Chairperson
- the CEO then it can be reported to the Chairperson

Where neither option is practical contact:

- the CEO of the NSW Federation of Housing Associations ( the peak body charged with handling breaches of code of conduct)
- The Registrar

## **6. Investigating breaches of the Code of conduct and ethics**

Investigations will be handled discreetly. Information will be shared on a 'need to know' basis only and all people questioned should be reminded of their responsibilities to maintain confidentiality.

Any investigation should be handled with a view that a person who is alleged to have breached the code of conduct:

- will be presumed innocent till proven guilty
- Should have a right to respond to allegations made against them

## **7. Outcome**

Depending on the nature of the breach the outcome may be as follows:

- Counseling or training
- Additional supervision or mentoring
- Formal warning (staff or board member)
- Dismissal (staff or board member)

If the breach is serious it may also lead to police prosecution.

## 8. Notifying the Office of the Registrar of Community Housing

North Shore Community Housing Ltd will notify the Registrar in a timely manner of any incidents relating to its operations that in its opinion seriously damages or may damage the reputation of the community housing sector.

## 9. Quality assurance

- Signed Code of Conduct forms on personnel and directors files.
- Possible breaches of code of conduct investigated appropriately and in a timely manner.
- Registrar notified of relevant incidents in accordance with this policy.

## 10. Approval

This policy and procedure was amended at the Board meeting held on the 28<sup>th</sup> May 2009. This policy and procedure is effective as from 29<sup>th</sup> May 2009.