

Code of Conduct

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1 INTRODUCTION

Mental Health Council of Australia (MHCA) is the peak, national non-government organisation representing and promoting the interests of the Australian Mental Health Sector, committed to achieving better mental health for all Australians. Our mission is to ensure all Australians have accessible, affordable, quality mental health services and to provide national leadership on mental health reform and policy implementation.

High standards of integrity and ethical behaviour are required of any person who is carrying out duties for or on behalf of MHCA.

This *Code of Conduct* provides a framework of ethical principles, obligations and standards that guide work performance, professional standards, and the conduct of relationships with others. Given the diverse range of activities in which Officers are involved on a day-to-day basis, the Code does not attempt to provide a detailed and exhaustive list of what should be done in every work situation. Instead, the Code represents a broad framework for ethical conduct.

This Code of Conduct applies to the Board, Managers, Employees, Contractors, Consultants, and any other persons who undertake duties for, or who otherwise represent the MHCA.

2 KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

MHCA-IN-CONFIDENCE: this is a general sensitivity label that is applied to information that is not to be released outside of the organisation, but is freely available to all employees and other persons working directly for MHCA. An example of the use of this label is its application to corporate policies and procedures applied across the organisation.

Gifts and benefits: include the transfer of money, or other property or benefits, without payment or for a payment less than the normal market value. The term may also include a loan of money made on a permanent or indefinite basis.

Interest: includes pecuniary interest, political ties, family relationships or involvement with commercial, political, religious, or other organisations.

Pecuniary interest: is an interest that a person has in a matter because of a reasonable likelihood or expectation of appreciable financial gain or loss to the person. Pecuniary interest may include real estate, shares, debts, business interests and investments.

Authorised Person: means, for the purposes of this Code:

- for Employees – their Manager
- for Contractors, Consultants and other persons – their engagement Manager
- for Managers – the Deputy CEO or CEO
- for Board – the Chairperson

3 PRINCIPLES OF APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR

Officers of MHCA are required to adhere to the following principles.

3.1 BEHAVE FAIRLY AND EQUITABLY

3.1.1 Observe fairness, transparency and integrity in all dealings with employees, members, stakeholders, and the public.

3.1.2 Strive to earn and sustain trust.

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3.2 ACT IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

- 3.2.1 Promote confidence in the integrity of MHCA by always acting in the public interest and not private interest.
- 3.2.2 Protect the reputation of MHCA in all circumstances both at work and outside work.

3.3 REFUSE IMPROPER REWARDS OR GIFTS

- 3.3.1 Not accept a gift, reward or benefit that is intended to, or appears to be aimed at influencing decisions or behaviour.
- 3.3.2 If a gift is offered, the gift must be declared so that a decision can be made as to retain, dispose or return the gift.

3.4 AVOID CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

- 3.4.1 Take reasonable steps to avoid any conflict of interest (real or apparent).
- 3.4.2 If such situations cannot be avoided, notify an Authorised Person of the conflict of interest. Authorised Persons must take appropriate action to separate the Officer from the matter giving rise to the conflict of interest and ensure no actual benefits accrue to the Officer.

Examples that may give rise to a conflict of interest include:

- Personal financial interest in a matter involving MHCA;
- Personal beliefs or attitudes that influence the impartiality of advice given;
- Personal relationships with the people MHCA is dealing with that go beyond the level of a professional working relationship;
- Outside employment that compromises the integrity of the Officer and MHCA.

3.5 OBSERVE THE LAW

- 3.5.1 Comply with applicable Australian laws.

3.6 ACT RESPONSIVELY AND RESPONSIBLY

- 3.6.1 Work in a prompt and responsive manner.
- 3.6.2 Accept responsibility for own decisions and actions and for any reasonably foreseeable outcome of those decisions and actions.
- 3.6.3 Endeavour to always promote the organisation's values and objectives.

3.7 TREAT PEOPLE WITH RESPECT AND PROPER COURTESY

- 3.7.1 All people are to be treated with respect.
- 3.7.2 All dealings are to be fair, consistent, and non-discriminatory.
- 3.7.3 Must not harass or bully any person.
- 3.7.4 Managers have a responsibility to ensure that the workplace is free from all forms of harassment and bullying.

3.8 OBSERVE THE PRINCIPLES OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

- 3.8.1 Treat all people equally regardless of race, gender, marital status, pregnancy, age, physical impairment, intellectual impairment, sexual preference or transgender, political stance or religious conviction, or carer's responsibility.

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3.8.2 Managers have a responsibility to ensure that the workplace is free from all forms of discrimination.

3.9 EXERCISE CAUTION WHEN MAKING PUBLIC COMMENT

3.9.1 Only make public comments when authorised to do so by the CEO (the Board may also comment on behalf of the MHCA). It is important to ensure that casual comments and conversation are not interpreted as being authorised comments. MHCA should always be portrayed in a positive light and comments should only be based on facts gained from reliable sources.

3.10 PROTECT CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

3.10.1 Not disclose or divulge any confidential information without proper authority. Confidential information includes stakeholder data, personnel data, commercial performance data, corporate strategies and business plans, marketing and pricing strategies, intellectual property, and the like.

3.10.2 Take precautions to ensure confidential information cannot be disclosed by accident or negligence, or through the deliberate action of others.

3.10.3 Any unauthorised disclosure of confidential information must be immediately reported to an Authorised Person.

3.10.4 The collection of personal, sensitive and health information must only be done in accordance with the National Privacy Principles as described in the Privacy Act 1988, and such information must only be used for the intended work-related purpose.

3.11 WORK DILIGENTLY AND EFFICIENTLY

3.11.1 Comply with the prescribed terms and conditions of the position and act within the powers pertaining to the role.

3.11.2 Display skill, care and diligence required of the role.

3.11.3 Keep up to date with advances and changes and always look for ways to improve performance and achieve higher standards.

3.11.4 Ensure work is centred on the needs of the organisation and within constraints of time, funding and availability.

3.11.5 Be fit and able to perform assigned duties.

3.11.6 No alcohol is allowed on worksites unless prior approval has been given by the CEO. The use, sale, possession, manufacture, dispensing or distribution of illicit drugs is strictly prohibited.

3.11.7 Use authority, resources, information, plant and equipment, only for the intended work-related purpose.

3.11.8 Not use MHCA equipment or facilities to make, receive, or send fraudulent, unlawful, discriminatory, defamatory, obscene or abusive information, calls or messages. Report any threatening, intimidating or harassing information and communications to an Authorised Person.