

# Conflict of Interest Policy

**INTRODUCTION** The Executive Committee of Murrumbidgee Landcare is committed to high standards of ethical conduct and accordingly places great importance on making clear any existing or potential conflict of interest.

**DEFINITION** 'Conflict of interest' is defined as applying:

- In accordance with the statute, where a committee member, staff or volunteer stands to gain financially from any business dealings, programs or services of the organisation, other than where:
  - The individual falls into the class of people benefited by the organisation and the financial gain is of a nature common to other beneficiaries
  - The person is an employee of the organisation, and the financial gain is of a nature common to other employees.
- Under the constitution of the organisation:
  - Where the immediate family or business connections of a committee member stands to gain financially from any business dealings, programs or services of the organisation
  - Where the person is an employee of the organisation
  - Where a committee member or the ex-officio member of the committee has a role on the governing body of another organisation, where the activities of that other body may be in direct conflict or competition with the activities of Murrumbidgee Landcare.

**PURPOSE** The purpose of this Policy is to help Committee Members of Murrumbidgee Landcare to effectively identify, disclose and manage any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest in order to protect the integrity of Murrumbidgee Landcare and manage risk.

This policy has been developed to provide a framework for:

- All committee members in declaring conflicts of interest, and
- The committee, when determining how to deal with situations of conflict.

**SCOPE OF POLICY** This policy applies to the committee members, staff and volunteers of Murrumbidgee Landcare.

**POLICY** This policy has been developed because conflicts of interest commonly arise, and do not need to present a problem to Murrumbidgee Landcare if they are openly and effectively managed. It is the policy of Murrumbidgee Landcare as well as a responsibility of the committee, that ethical, legal, financial or other conflicts of interest be avoided and that any such conflicts (where they do arise) do not conflict with the obligations to Murrumbidgee Landcare.

Murrumbidgee Landcare will manage conflicts of interest by requiring committee members to:

- Avoid conflicts of interest where possible
- Identify and disclose any conflicts of interest
- Carefully manage any conflicts of interest
- Follow this policy and respond to any breaches.

**RESPONSIBILITY OF THE COMMITTEE** The committee is responsible for:

- Establishing a system for identifying, disclosing and managing conflicts of interest across the organisation
- Monitoring compliance with this policy
- Reviewing this policy on a two-yearly basis to ensure that the policy is operating effectively.

The organisation must ensure that its committee members are aware of the ACNC governance standards ([http://www.acnc.gov.au/ACNC/Manage/Governance/ACNC/Edu/GovStds\\_overview.aspx](http://www.acnc.gov.au/ACNC/Manage/Governance/ACNC/Edu/GovStds_overview.aspx) ), particularly governance standard 5, and that they disclose any actual or perceived material conflicts of interests as required by governance standard 5.

**PROCEDURES** Before a committee member begins his or her service with the organisation, he or she shall file with Murrumbidgee Landcare a list of his or her principal business activities, as well as involvement with other charitable and business organisations, vendors or business interests, or with any other associations that might produce a conflict of interest. This information should be documented in the Conflict of Interest Register.

Further, committee members shall declare any conflicts of interest of which they become aware of either at the start of the committee meeting concerned or when a relevant issue arises. The nature of this conflict of interest should be entered into the meeting minutes. The interest should also be documented in

the Conflict of Interest Register.

Once the conflict of interest has been appropriately disclosed, the committee (excluding the committee member disclosing and any other conflicted committee member) must decide whether or not those conflicted committee members should:

- Vote on the matter (this is a minimum)
- Participate in any debate, or
- Be present in the room during the debate and the voting.

In exceptional circumstances, such as where a conflict is very significant or likely to prevent a committee member from regularly participating in discussions, it may be worth the committee considering whether it is appropriate for the person conflicted to resign from the committee.

When deciding what action to take, the Committee should consider the following:

- Whether the conflict needs to be avoided or simply documented
- Whether the conflict will realistically impair the disclosing person's capacity to impartially participate in decision-making
- Alternative options to avoid the conflict
- The organisation's objects and resources
- The possibility of creating an appearance of improper conduct that might impair confidence in, or the reputation of, the organisation.

The approval of any action requires the agreement of at least a majority of the committee (excluding any conflicted committee member/s) who are present and voting at the meeting. The action and result of the voting will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting and in the Conflict of Interest Register.

**BREACH OF POLICY** If the committee has reason to believe that a person subject to the policy has failed to comply with it, it will investigate the circumstances.

If it is found that this person has failed to disclose a conflict of interest, the committee may take action against them. This may include seeking to terminate their relationship with the organisation.

If a person suspects that a committee member has failed to disclose a conflict of interest, they must discuss it with the relevant person and notify the Chair.

**RESPONSIBILITIES** It shall be the responsibility of the Executive Committee to ensure that the requirements of this policy are complied with.

These policy and procedures shall be reviewed every two years by the Executive Committee.

**AUTHORISATION:**

This version was approved on:

This version takes effect on:

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