

VOLUNTEERS AND COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES CODE OF CONDUCT

POLICY NAME: Volunteers and Community Representatives Code of Conduct

COUNCIL ADOPTION: 6 February 2007

REF: Minute 20/07. File 735. SMC 128390.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION:

- Local Government Act 1993
- Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998
- Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988

RELATED POLICIES/DOCUMENTS:

- Strathfield Council Code of Conduct
- Strathfield Council Media Policy
- Strathfield Council Privacy Management Plan

INTRODUCTION

1. Title and Commencement

This policy is titled Code of Conduct for Volunteers and Community Representatives. Council adopted this policy on 6 February 2007.

2. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of the policy is to provide guidance for members of the community who volunteer and/or participate in Council programs and committees in regard to their roles and responsibilities.

Key responsibilities outlined in this Code are:

- Conduct and obligations as a public official
- Managing private information
- Conflicts of interest
- Gifts and benefits
- Use of Council resources
- Public comment and media
- Alcohol and drugs
- Reporting corruption maladministration and waste
- Security and Safety

3. Objectives and Coverage of the Policy

Strathfield Council encourages the participation of members of the community in Council programs and decision making processes. Community members volunteer their time and expertise, for which Council is most appreciative.

Strathfield Council is committed to high ethical standards for everyone who works with Council in a paid, voluntary or elected capacity. Volunteers and community representatives represent Council to the public and are required to commit to Council's ethical standards and to perform duties with integrity, honesty and fairness.

Members of the community participate in many ways including:

- representation on Council advisory committees, community panels or working groups.
- participation on community based programs
- working with community organisations, which supporting council programs and objectives

To assist community representatives and volunteers, this policy provides guidance to avoiding difficulties and conflicts by understanding the responsibilities of community representation with Strathfield Council.

4. Strathfield Council Values And Key Principles

Volunteers and community representatives, contractors or consultants, are required to be committed to Strathfield Council's values and the key principles upon which the Council Code of Conduct is based.

Our values

- Professionalism – delivering helpful and effective services to the community with honest and consistent decision making
- Teamwork – working together with respect, co-operation, trust and support
- Leadership – promoting leadership, clear direction, encouragement and open communication
- Ethics - ethical, honest, responsible and accountable for our actions
- Pride – taking pride and have satisfaction in our work
- Recognition – a sense of belonging through appreciation and acknowledgment of our achievements

POLICY GUIDELINES

5. Volunteers And Community Committee Members Responsibilities

In accordance with the Local Government Act 1993, all NSW Councils are obliged to adopt a Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct sets the minimum requirements of behaviour for council officials in carrying out their functions. The Code applies to Councillors, Council staff and contractors, consultants and/or their employees. The Code also applies to persons working in a voluntary capacity such as committee members.

A full copy of the Strathfield Council Code of Conduct is available from Strathfield Council or Council's website. Committee members or volunteers can request a full copy without charge from Council.

These are the main responsibilities outlined in the Code relating to community representatives and volunteers.

- Volunteers and community committee members provide valuable assistance to Council and the community. In providing service, they are responsible for their own conduct.

- All persons representing or providing services to the Council should at all times be courteous towards the public, Councillors and employees, other volunteers and community committee members and not bring the Council into disrepute. All relevant laws must be obeyed.
- Council is committed to providing an environment free of harassment or discrimination. All volunteers and community representatives are expected to contribute to this environment.
- Strathfield Council has community and environmental responsibilities and volunteers and community representatives are expected to respect them when doing work with or on behalf of Council.
- Council is responsible for providing a safe work environment and for putting first, the health, safety and welfare of Council officials, volunteers and community committee members. Therefore, all persons doing work with or for our Council should protect their own safety and the safety of others in the work environment and public areas.
- All persons participating in council activities or committees are expected to consider issues consistently, promptly and fairly.

Community representatives on Council committees can be considered to be a public official for the purposes of *the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) Act 1998* and subject to the ICAC's jurisdiction.

6. Conflict Of Interests

Community representatives are often invited to participate in Council committees because of their specific knowledge, experience and expertise. This personal interest is generally well understood and would not need to be disclosed.

However, committee members and volunteers will need to consider the issue of potential conflicts of interest. Conflict of interest can arise when your own interests, or those of people close to you such as family members or your employer, conflict with your obligations to the Council. For example, a conflict would exist if you had a personal interest that influenced the way you carried out your duties for Council.

If you have a conflict of interest in any area of your voluntary work or as a representative with Council, it is expected that you make it known to Council. A conflict of interest does not mean that you would be barred from participating in a meeting or activity. Instead, it allows others to understand your position and prevents criticism of Council activities or decisions at a later date.

Most committees of Strathfield Council involving participation of members of the public act in an advisory capacity. However, the Council can delegate powers to committees to make decisions. Therefore, if the committee you are on makes decisions, rather than acting in an advisory capacity, then pecuniary conflicts of interest have to be dealt with in accordance with the Local Government Act. A 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 or another person with whom the person is associated (Sections 442 and 443 *Local Government Act 1993*).

7. Gifts Or Benefits

Volunteers or committee representatives should not offer to a Councillor or Council staff member a gift or benefit that is:

- designed to gain advantage for yourself or a group you represent
- may be perceived by the public to give advantage to you or a group you represent.

Volunteer or committee representatives should not accept gifts or benefits that could appear to gain someone an advantage.

Token gifts may be given or accepted. Token gifts include small items such as a bunch of flowers or box of chocolates. Cash incentives should not be offered to, or accepted by, a Councillor, staff member, volunteer or committee member under any circumstances.

Offers of gifts or benefits that are not considered token should be reported it to the Governance Manager.

8. Confidential And Personal Information

Strathfield Council is responsible for managing personal and private information collected in accordance with relevant legislation such as the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection (PPIP) Act 1998*. Strathfield Council's Privacy Management Plan outlines how Council manages privacy.

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Privacy legislation governs the collection, holding, use, correction, disclosure and transfer of personal information. Personal information is any information or opinion about an individual whose identity is apparent or can be readily identified from the information or opinion (Section 4 of the PPIP Act).

As a volunteer or committee member you may have contact with confidential or personal information retained by Council. If so, we ask that you maintain the security of any confidential or personal information and not access, use or remove any information, unless you are authorised to do so.

If you become aware of any breach of the security, or misuse, of Council's confidential or personal information, you should contact Council's Manager Governance.

9. Council Resources

Council resources should only be used for Council purposes unless approval has been given. Council resources include material, equipment, vehicles, documents, records, data and information.

10. Public Comment And Media

All public comments and media statements representing Strathfield Council must be approved by Council. Strathfield Council's Media Policy outlines the procedures for contacting or issuing statements to the media from Council.

On occasion, volunteers and committee representatives may be contacted by the media for information or comment on an issue or decision taken by Council. Individuals are free to make personal comments to the media, however you should not be identified as representing Council or expressing views on behalf of a committee or working group.

11. Security And Safety

Most meetings of committees and working groups are held in public meeting areas such as Strathfield Council Chambers, Strathfield Community Centre and Strathfield Library.

If members of the public attends meetings or works within the staff or areas of Council closed to the public, they must sign for a security pass at Council reception. A record must be kept at all times of staff and members of the public who are present within these areas for purposes of security and fire safety.

Organisations, which provide regular volunteer work with Council such as Friends of Strathfield Library (FOSL) and Bushcare have existing procedures for recording attendance, which must be adhered to.

12. Alcohol And Drugs

No one should participate in activities or attend meetings for Council while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs that could impair your ability or cause danger to the safety of yourself or others.

13. Reporting Corruption, Maladministration & Waste

Volunteers and community representatives have a responsibility to report any suspected incidences of corruption, maladministration or serious and substantial waste.

You may report these to the General Manager or the Public Officer. Alternatively, you can report any suspected instances of corruption to the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) and any instances of maladministration to the Ombudsman.

14. Breaches Of The Code

Strathfield Council is committed to the standards in this Code of Conduct. They reflect the high standards expected by the community and volunteers and community representatives are expected to maintain these standards and principles when providing services to the Council. Volunteers or committee members who breach these standards could face imposition of penalties including removal from committees or other work on behalf of Council.

15. For Assistance/Information About This Code

If you have any questions, or are unsure about any matter relating to this Code of Conduct, you can contact the Council's Governance Manager on 9748 9976.

SMC128390

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