



## Committee of Management Conflict of Interest Policy

*Wonthaggi Neighbourhood Centre at Mitchell House Inc. (WNC) is a non-profit, charitable organisation, based on community development principles, whose purpose it is to:*

- *Provide a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment where people can meet to learn and share ideas, friendship, skills and information and improve social health and well-being.*

*This central and fundamental purpose informs policy development and is reflected in all WNC policy documentation.*

### Introduction

The Committee of Management (COM) of Wonthaggi Neighbourhood Centre at Mitchell House (WNC) is committed to high standards of ethical conduct and accordingly places great importance on making clear any existing or potential conflict of interest.

### Purpose

This policy has been developed to provide a framework for:

- all COM Members in declaring conflicts of interest; and
- the COM, when determining how to deal with situations of conflict.

### Policy

A conflict of interest may occur if a financial interest or a relationship influences or appears to influence the ability of a COM Member to exercise objectivity and make decisions in the best interest of WNC.

COM members may have private interests that from time to time conflict, or appear to conflict with WNC. They should aim to avoid being put in a situation where there may be a conflict between the interests of WNC and their own personal or professional interests, or those of relatives or friends. Where such a conflict occurs (or is perceived to occur), the interests of WNC will be balanced against the interests of the COM member and, unless exceptional circumstances exist, resolved in favour of WNC.

The COM places great importance on making clear any existing or potential conflicts of interest. All such conflicts of interest shall be declared by the member concerned.

It is impossible to define all potential areas of conflict of interest. If an COM member is in doubt if a conflict exists, they should raise the matter during a COM meeting.

Where a COM member has an actual or perceived financial conflict of interest, as defined by statute, that COM member shall not:

- initiate or take part in any COM discussion on that topic (either in the meeting or with other COM members before or after the COM meetings), unless expressly invited to do so by unanimous agreement by all other members present.
- vote on that matter

Where a COM member has an actual or perceived conflict of interest related to their relationship with an employee or volunteer of the organisation, or any other person having dealings with the organisation, that COM member shall not:

- initiate or take part in any COM discussion on that topic (either in the meeting or with other COM members before or after the COM meetings), unless expressly authorised to do so by the COM.
- vote on that matter, unless expressly authorised to do so by the COM.

The COM may further supplement the definition of conflict of interest from time to time if it so wishes, and may specify the procedures to apply in such cases.

COM members are not barred from engaging in business dealings with the organisation, provided that these are negotiated at arm's length without the participation of the COM member concerned.

A COM member who believes another COM member has an undeclared conflict of interest should specify in writing to the Secretary the basis of this potential conflict.

## **Definitions**

Conflict of interest is defined as applying in accordance with the statute, where a COM member stands to gain financially from any business dealings, programs or services of the organisation, other than where:

- the COM member falls into the class of people benefited by the organisation and the financial gain is of a nature common to other beneficiaries, or
- the person is an employee of the organisation, and the financial gain is of a nature common to other employees.

'Close relationship' is defined as any relationship that might reasonably give rise to an apprehension that the COM member might place the interests of the other party above the interests of the organisation.

## **Responsibilities**

The Chair is responsible for bringing this policy to the attention of prospective Committee of Management (COM) members.

All COM members are responsible for respecting this policy.

## **Processes**

Before a COM Member begins his or her service with the organisation, they shall file with the Secretary a list of their 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 WNC Conflict of Interest Register.

COM members shall also file with the Secretary notification of any relationships between themselves and any employee or volunteer of the organisation, or any other person having dealings with the organisation that might reasonably give rise to the perception of a conflict of interest.

COM members shall declare any conflicts of interest of which they become aware either at the start of the COM meeting concerned or when a relevant issue arises. The nature of this conflict of interest should be entered in the meeting minutes. The nature of the conflict of interest should also be documented in the WNC Conflict of Interest Register.

Where a conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest, as defined below, is identified and/or registered, the COM member concerned shall leave the room as soon as that item comes up for discussion. The concerned COM member shall not vote on that issue, nor initiate or take part in any COM discussion on that topic (either in the meeting or with other COM members before or after the COM meetings), unless expressly invited to do so by unanimous agreement by all other members present. The COM Member's abstinence should be recorded in the meeting minutes.

If a person declares themselves to have an existing or potential conflict of interest, confidentiality will be respected. If a person alleges that another person has a conflict of interest, whether existing or potential, and that person does not agree, the COM will seek to resolve the matter through respectful discussion. If the matter cannot be resolved in this manner, the President will have the final say after seeking external advice from NHV or other appropriate source if required.