



Australasian Housing Institute

Supporting housing professionals

Personal Commitment to the Institute

The AHI, as a professional association requires its members to commit themselves to the ideals of professionalism in the social housing sector. While the word 'professional' evokes mixed feelings amongst those working in the social housing sector, it is the core reason why the Institute was created.

Professionalism is an attitude. It comes from how you deal with your clients and peers on a daily basis.

- Indeed, professionalism in modern terms is characterised by people:
- being highly skilled in a particular area of expertise
- committed to continually improve their technical and professional knowledge, and
- place the community's interest before all other interests.

The first of these two dot points relate to personal knowledge and development, and can be easily measured and/or monitored. The third dot point however, while being a core part of being a professional, is more difficult to quantify. To that end the AHI has adopted a Code of Conduct, which is part of its Rules. The Code is intended to give Institute members clear guidance about how to conduct themselves as social housing professionals and we require that you agree to accept and abide by the Code as a condition of Institute membership.

The following pages detail the Institute's Code of Conduct. The last page outlines the Institute's actions should a complaint be lodged regarding a member's conduct or actions which appear to be in contravention with the Code of Conduct. This process is not a punitive one, and protects the member by following due process and offering natural justice.

However, if the complaint is upheld, the Institute would act in accordance with the Code. Being a social housing professional is a serious business, and the Institute will protect the reputation of its members through demonstrating it will act against any unprofessional conduct as evidenced by a breach of its Code of Conduct.

Purpose of the Code of Conduct

- The Institute requires its members to accept and abide by its Code of Conduct as a condition of membership. The Code sets out in detail the standards of personal and professional conduct required and includes a number of specific rules for self-employed members.
- The standards concern personal integrity, honesty, self-discipline, diligence and professional competence. The Code is intended to give Institute members clear guidance about how to conduct themselves.
- It is also of value to employers, customers and the community by demonstrating the standard of behaviour they can expect of Institute members.
- The code applies to members of the Institute in all membership categories
- Every member has a duty to accept and abide by this Code as a condition of Institute membership.

The Code applies to members regardless of their employment status.

Code of Conduct

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1. Introduction

The Institute is the professional organisation for people who work in social housing in Australia and New Zealand. Its objectives are:

- to promote professional standards and good practice in the social housing industry
- to promote debate of and to advocate on issues relevant to the social housing profession
- to recognise and promote access to the skills of the social housing profession
- to foster opportunities for professional advancement

In carrying out these objectives, the Institute aims to make sure that its members subscribe to the Institute's values and achieve high standards of personal and professional conduct.

2. Purpose of the Code

The Institute requires its members to accept and abide by its Code of Conduct as a condition of membership. The Code sets out in detail the standards of personal and professional conduct required and includes a number of specific rules for self-employed members.

The standards concern personal integrity, honesty, self-discipline, diligence and professional competence. The Code is intended to give Institute members clear guidance about how to conduct themselves.

It is also of value to employers, customers and the community by demonstrating the standard of behaviour they can expect of Institute members.

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Every member has a duty to accept and abide by this Code as a condition of Institute membership.

The Code applies to members regardless of their employment status.

3. Terms of the Code of Conduct

3.1 Responsibilities to the Profession

- Members must at all times conduct themselves in a manner which upholds the reputation of the Institute.
- Members must conduct themselves with regard to the reputation, purpose, objectives and interests of the Institute as set out in the Institute's Constitution and Rules.
- Members must not do, say, or omit to do anything which might bring the profession into disrepute, be inconsistent with or detrimental to the objectives and interests of the Institute or cast doubt on the member's own professional integrity.
- Members must not be associated with any occupation or business which is likely to prejudice their professional status or the reputation of the Institute.

- Members who make public their personal views on any subject must not claim or give the impression that they are representing the official views of the Institute, unless they have been expressly authorised in writing to do so on behalf of the Board of the Institute.
- Members must not claim or give the impression that any view expressed by that member in relation to any of their business activities or during the carrying on of any of their business activities (including the running of training courses, production of literature, etc) represent the official views of the Institute or have the approval of the Institute unless that member has been expressly so authorised in writing by or on behalf of the Board of the Institute.
- Members must not make or subscribe to any statements or reports which are contrary to their own bona fide professional opinions.
- Members must maintain the highest level of knowledge and skills throughout their careers and must comply with any Institute guidelines or regulations on education and continuing professional development that may be issued from time to time.
- Members must have regard to any Institute guidance on professional practice that may be issued from time to time.
- Members must report to the Institute any breach of the Code that comes to their attention.
- Members must assist the Institute in its enquiries into any breach of the Code.

3.2 Personal Conduct

- Members must perform their duties diligently, conscientiously, without favour and with regard to the interests of their employers, professional colleagues, their customers and business associates.
- Advertising by members must be legal, decent, honest and truthful and must not mislead or cause public offence.
- Members must not recommend, or allow their name to be used in advertisements for any housing related service or product, unless they have the express permission of their employer to do so and it is not to their personal advantage. Self-employed members may advertise their own services.
- Members must not allow their professional judgement or conduct to be influenced or compromised by commercial considerations.
- Members must not accept any hospitality or inducement that could influence their professional judgement in favour of the donor.
- Members must not directly or indirectly exert undue pressure or undue influence on any person, for the purpose of securing work or a contract.
- Members must not accept instructions from any person whom they have reason to believe has been subjected to undue pressure or undue influence in the expectation that the introducer will receive a reward for the introduction.

3.3 Terms for Self employed members

- 'Self-employed' - members who are sole principals, partners or directors of a company, practice or firm.
- Members must have, where appropriate, adequate professional indemnity insurance to enable them to meet any claims for breach of their professional duty.
- Members must not act for a client if there is any conflict between their own professional duty or professional interests and the interests of the client.
- Before accepting a commission members must check whether there is likely to be a conflict between the interests of the potential client and any existing client and should inform both parties to this effect. The commission should only be accepted if both parties agree to this.
- Members must ensure that all services provided by their organisation are carried out in accordance with the Code even when undertaken by staff who are not Institute members.

- Members must ensure that, if Institute membership details are shown on any lists of the partners, directors and/or staff of their organisation, these membership details are correctly stated and not used in such a way as to suggest that staff who are not members, or the organisation itself, are entitled to use the designation.

4. Non-compliance with Code

The Institute can suspend or disqualify members found guilty of dishonourable or unprofessional conduct or of conduct prejudicially affecting the welfare of the Institute.

A complaint or report of misconduct about an individual member of the Institute is received by the CEO.

If after preliminary examination by any Board member appointed by the CEO, there appears to be some substance to the complaint, the CEO shall cause the complaint to be investigated by another Institute member (the Investigator) as soon as practicable.

The Investigator shall provide a written report to the CEO and in preparing the report shall give the person complained of, an opportunity to make such submissions, whether orally or in writing. In particular, the Investigator shall write to the member concerned setting out the nature of the allegation or the potential breach of the Code with a request for his or her observations in relation to the allegations made and potential breach of the Code to be investigated. The member is to be informed that the investigation is now being carried out on a formal basis.

As an alternative to a written reply, the member may request an oral hearing at which he or she may be accompanied or represented by any person of his or her choice other than a legally qualified person.

The Investigator's report to the Board should include an appropriate recommendation for decision with respect to the member complained of.

The investigation shall at all times remain confidential until it has been concluded, subject of course to the need for the investigation which may involve contact with third parties.

The Board must consider the Investigator's report.

The Board may also invite the complainant or such other persons as it wishes to discuss the matter with the Board.

If the Board concludes that a member's conduct, whilst not constituting a breach of the Code, nevertheless falls short of accepted standards of professional practice the Board shall be empowered to advise the member both orally and/or in writing as to the propriety of his or her actions. This advice shall not in any way be publicised.

In the event of the Board concluding that no breach of the Code has been proved or in the event of the Board terminating an investigation; the matter shall be at an end.

If the Board is satisfied that a breach of the Code or other unprofessional conduct has been proved, the Board may:

- warn the member in writing as to his or her future conduct (with or without naming him or her to the wider membership);
- reprimand the member in writing (with or without naming him or her to the wider membership);
- determine to suspend the member from membership for such period, not exceeding two years, as the Board may decide or determine to terminate the member's membership of the Institute.

On receipt of such a determination from the Board, a proposal to ratify such course of action shall be made to members of the Board.