

**Policy Number: 45**

Policy Name: Code of Conduct

Version No. 02

Established: 2008

Present Version Passed: 06/10/2020

Next Scheduled Review: June 2022

## PURPOSE

Northern Geelong Rental Housing Co-operative (NGRHC) recognises that a Code of Conduct is an important requirement of maintaining professional governance standards and is committed to ethical conduct while providing the best possible service to the community. The purpose of this policy is to identify NGRHC's position on ethics and proper Codes of Conduct and to document those procedures required to ensure the operation of an ethical housing Co-operative.

## OUR VALUES

The Northern Geelong Rental Housing Co-operative is based on values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity. In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.

## OUR VISION

We are individuals with rights and opinions who are obligated to work together in the capacity of landlords, tenants, and members of the Northern Geelong Rental Housing Co-operative Limited.

## OUR MISSION

We aim to provide, manage, and maintain, secure, decent, affordable housing and to create opportunities for all members to improve their quality of life. We also intend to, facilitate, and control our needs by communicating and participating within formal co-operative structures.

## SCOPE

This policy applies to all tenant-members, non-member directors, contractors, students on work placement, volunteers and staff of the NGRHC.

## RELEVANT CO-OPERATIVE OBJECTIVES

Housing Registrar Performance Standards for Registered Housing Providers.

## POLICY STATEMENT

The Code of Conduct is designed to ensure transparency, good governance, protection for tenant-members, staff, stakeholders and the assets of NGRHC. The co-op will embrace diversity and at all times act in an open and fair manner ensuring equal access to opportunities for all stakeholders.

## Whistle blowing

As soon as any tenant-member or staff become aware of an action that might be regarded as being against the spirit of ethical conduct, the matter should be discussed with the Committee of Management, staff or organisation as appropriate.

## Conflict of interest

A conflict of interest is when a person stands to gain, or not gain, from a decision being made by NGRHC, this includes financial, political or personal benefits.

No tenant-member, or staff, may utilise information or knowledge obtained through their involvement with the Co-op for their own financial gain.

Potential conflicts of interest may be raised by any party that becomes aware of the conflict.

As a mechanism to manage conflicts of interest, discussion of Committee of Management agenda items should allow the opportunity for tenant-members or staff to declare or point out conflicts of interest with any topics for discussion.

Where a conflict of interest has been recognised within a formal meeting, the person/s involved shall remove themselves from the meeting room for the period of the relevant agenda item under discussion and complete the relevant "Conflict of Interest " form and submit this form to the Committee of Management.

If the person with the identified Conflict of Interest fails to remove themselves from the meeting the Chair Person shall direct them to do so.

Once a decision for further action has been reached, the Committee shall inform the person/s involved of any decisions.

## Gifts and hospitality

Staff and tenant-members are not to be influenced in their ethical decision making by gifts or hospitality. Gifts greater than \$100 in value are to be declared to the Committee of Management.

## Procurement

The acquisition of goods and services is meant to encourage open and wide competition for the best quality or price.

Processes should be fair, unbiased, and consistent, and aim to attract the widest and diverse pool of applicants as possible and appropriate.

## Personal gain

Knowledge or information about the affairs of NGRHC shall not be exploited or used for the personal gain by tenant-members or staff.

## Confidentiality

All staff and tenant-members shall abide by the Privacy and Information Sharing Policy of NGRHC. At all times individuals are to maintain confidentiality regarding information gained through their interactions and not divulge any such information to other parties if not appropriate to the circumstances of the interaction.

## Dealing fairly with stakeholders

NGRHC considers stakeholders to include the following: tenant-members, employees, creditors, suppliers, contractors, consultants, Government and Non-Governmental organisations, the communities where our Co-op operates, and other parties that have influence over or are influenced by NGRHC.

This code of conduct reflects NGRHC's high standards of professional conduct and ethics in dealing with all of its stakeholders and its commitment to comply with applicable state and national laws.

## Protecting the Co-op's assets

Tenant-members and staff have worked hard to build up and maintain the good reputation of the NGRHC, and recognise that assets are made up of tangible and intangible items.

All individuals have an obligation to treat the assets of NGRHC with respect and show consideration for other tenant-members, staff and stakeholders in their dealings with, and on behalf of the Co-op.

NGRHC assets include but are not limited to:

- The good name of the Co-op
- Properties managed and owned
- The Office from where NGRHC conducts business
- Office equipment
- Intellectual property
- Office furnishings
- Financial assets

## RESPONSIBILITIES

All tenant-members of the Co-op and its staff have a responsibility for adhering to this policy and to demonstrate professional ethical behavior at all times.

Staff and all tenant-members shall ensure that no individual has unfettered powers of decision-making and that:

- Both publicly and privately support the organisation, acting with courtesy and respect,
- Perform their duties as best they can,
- Comply with the prescribed terms and conditions of their employment,
- Carry out their duties in a lawful manner and ensure the organisation carries out its business in accordance with the law while recognising the difference between both legal and moral responsibilities,
- Work within the organisation's policies and objectives,
- Follow approved practices for tenant-member selection, and
- Ensure that no special treatment or favors are granted in the allocation of properties.

## BREACHES OF THIS CODE

The behaviors listed in this code reinforce the Co-ops values and outline an expected standard of behavior. Behaviors which are contrary to the spirit or the stated requirements of this Code may result in the provision of counselling and/or guidance. In severe or repeated cases of behavior which disregard the Code, disciplinary action may be taken in accordance with Fair Work Act 2009.

Actions could include:

- Verbal or written warnings;
- Undertakings to correct behavior, attending training or mentoring to improve behavior; and/or
- Where necessary, termination of employment or cessation of engagement with NGRHC, in accordance with any relevant policies or procedures and current employment legislation.

## RELATED DOCUMENTS

Complaints and Appeals Policy

Rules of the NGRHC

Privacy and Information Sharing Policy

Staff Training and Performance Review Policy

Staff Recruitment Policy

Conflict of personal interest declaration by Co-operative Tenant Members and Non Member Directors

Conflict of personal interest declaration by Co-operative Staff

## LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

This policy implements NGRHC obligations under:

- Housing Act 1983 (Vic)
- Performance Standards for Registered Housing Agencies
- DHHS Victorian Housing Register Operational Guidelines
- Human Rights and Responsibilities Charter Act 2006
- Privacy Act 1988 (C'wlth)
- Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014 (Vic)
- Children Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)
- Child wellbeing and safety Act 2005(Vic)
- Fair Work Act 2009
- Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award 2010 [MA000100]

## TRANSPARENCY AND ACCESSIBILITY

This policy is available on the NGRHC website [www.ngrhc.org.au](http://www.ngrhc.org.au)