

Professional and Personal Relationships in the Workplace Policy

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Professional and Personal Relationships in the Workplace Policy	1.0.0	June 2018
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Purpose

This policy addresses the appropriate management of close personal or financial relationships in the workplace with the objectives of maintaining public confidence with the decisions made and services provided by Greater Hume Shire Council (GHSC) through fostering a workplace culture of integrity, high ethical standards, mutual respect and personal dignity.

GHSC acknowledges that some staff, clients and associates of Council will be related to one another or may have, or develop, a close personal or financial relationship. While GHSC does not wish to intrude on any reasonable privacy expectations, Council does need to ensure that situations where the potential for inappropriate or non-professional conduct, conflict of interest or other non-ethical behaviours are prevented or minimised as far as possible.

This policy clarifies appropriate disclosure and management of close personal or financial relationships to avoid misunderstandings, complaints of favouritism or unfair treatment or harassment, or dissention that may result from the appearance of conflict of interest caused by close personal or financial relationships of GHSC employees.

Scope

This policy applies to the conduct expected in the professional performance of duties of all GHSC employees and their interactions with colleagues, clients, the public and other associates of GHSC, such as contractors.

Definitions

Close personal or financial relationship means:

- a relationship that goes beyond the bounds of a platonic / personal friendship or a working relationship and includes being a relative, a family relationship, or personally involved relationship, such as dating, romance, sexual or other similar close personal relationships that may be consensually undertaken by both individuals; or
- a relationship which gives rise to a real or potential or perceived conflict of interest and includes relatives and financial relationships; or
- a relationship where one person is financially dependent on another; or
- relationships where there have been previous instances of serious conflict between the parties.

Council means Greater Hume Shire Council (GHSC), ABN: 44 970 341 154.

Employee refers to an individual who works under a contract of employment with GHSC. For the purpose of this policy, this does not include: a contractor or subcontractor; an employee of a contractor or subcontractor; an employee of a labour hire company who has been assigned to work in the business or undertaking; a student gaining work experience; a volunteer; or a person involved with an employment scheme (such as work for the dole, etc).

GHSC means Greater Hume Shire Council or Council, ABN: 44 970 341 154.

Workplace means a place where work is carried out for a business or undertaking and includes any place where a worker goes, or is likely to be, while at work. Workplace includes:

- a vehicle, vessel, aircraft or other mobile structure, and
- any waters and any installation on land, on the bed of any waters or floating on any waters, in accordance with Section 8 of the Work Health and Safety Act 2011.

Policy Content

An employee should not be able to act to the detriment of GHSC's interests nor advance or hinder the interests of another person on the basis of their personal or financial relationship.

GHSC does not discriminate against relatives of, or people in a close personal or financial relationship with, an employee and permits the employment / engagement of suitably qualified / experienced relations provided such employment / engagement does not create a real or perceived conflict of interest and the requirements of this policy are met.

Self-Disclosure

GHSC will rely on employees disclosing that a potential or perceived conflict of interest exists because of the existence of a close personal or financial relationship.

Conflict of Interest

The requirement to disclose the existence of a relationship is based solely on the potential for, or perception of, a conflict of interest where the possibility that a decision may be biased or prejudiced, either in favour of or against, a person with whom there is a close personal or financial relationship.

Equity of Treatment

This policy seeks to assure that no undue advantage or disadvantage occurs because of the existence of a close personal or financial relationship.

Expectations

GHSC expects employee self-disclosure of any conflicts of interest in accordance with the Model Code of Conduct Policy and this policy.

An employee should not take part in the employment or contractual selection process where they have a close personal or financial relationship with the candidate.

An employee with a close personal or financial relationship with another employee shall not be involved in decision making or formal performance reviews or other employment assessment procedures leading to the appointment, promotion, disciplinary proceedings or any other determinations relating to employment conditions, benefits or entitlements for the employee.

All employees are to behave in accordance with the Model Code of Conduct.

Where close personal or financial relationships exist, employees must conduct themselves in a professional manner while in the workplace or while undertaking work for GHSC.

Conflict or disagreements arising out of family, emotional and/or financial relationships are not to be addressed in the workplace or during the course of employment.

Employees in breach of the Model Code of Conduct or this Policy and respective policies or procedures may be managed in accordance with the Performance and Misconduct Policy.

Management of Disclosures

The supervisor/manager aware of, or notified of, the close personal or financial relationship is required to notify the relevant Director or the General Manager.

The Director or General Manager will consider the nature of the relationship and the appropriateness of the employee to resume any activities that involve the conflict.

If it is determined that a conflict of interest (actual or perceived) exists, the General Manager may make alternative arrangements for the supervision of the employee or transfer either party to a different work area or work group to alleviate the situation.

Approving or directing the management of a known close personal or financial relationship, or failing to act promptly to correct a known situation in accordance with this policy, may be deemed misconduct and managed in accordance with the Performance and Misconduct Policy.

Links to Policy

Bribes, Gifts and Benefits Policy
Bullying and Harassment Policy
Fraud Control Policy
Model Code of Conduct Policy
Performance and Misconduct Policy
Recruitment and Selection Policy
Risk Management Policy
Statement of Business Ethics
Work Health and Safety Policy

Links to Procedure

Performance and Misconduct Procedure
Risk & WHS Responsibility, Authority, Accountability Procedure

Links to Forms

Bribes, Gifts and Benefits Register
Performance Management Action Plan

References

Insert Content

Responsibility

Directors and the General Manager are responsible for ensuring this policy and its related policies and procedures are understood and followed, appropriate to each employee's role and function.

Document Author

Risk & WHS Coordinator

Relevant Legislation

Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988
Work Health and Safety Act 2011

Associated Records

Greater Hume Shire Council – Risk & WHS Management System (RWHSMS)