

## Conflict of interest policy

Version 1, 15<sup>th</sup> September 2019

### 1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to help council members of the Australasian Epidemiological Association (AEA) to effectively identify, disclose and manage any actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest in order to protect the integrity of the AEA and manage risk.

### 2. Objective

The AEA Council (called the 'council' in this policy) aims to ensure that council members are aware of their obligation to disclose any conflicts of interest that they may have, and to comply with this policy to ensure they effectively manage those conflicts of interest as representatives of AEA.

### 3. Scope

This policy applies to elected council members of the AEA, and also to co-opted members (e.g. Student Officer, Website coordinator), and other members working closely with council, including the Executive Officer, Public Officer, and Ex-officio,

### 4. Definition of conflicts of interests

A conflict of interest occurs when a person's personal interests conflict with their responsibility to act in the best interests of the charity.

Personal interests include direct interests, as well as those of family, friends, or other organisations a person may be involved with or have an interest in (for example, as a shareholder).

It also includes a conflict between a council member's duty to the AEA and another duty that the council member has (for example, to another charity). A conflict of interest may be actual, potential or perceived and may be financial or non-financial.

These situations present the risk that a person will make a decision based on, or affected by, these influences, rather than in the best interests of the charity.

Therefore these situations must be managed accordingly.

### 5. Policy

This policy has been developed to address conflicts of interest affecting AEA.

Conflict of interest are common, and they do not need to present a problem to the charity as long as they are openly and effectively managed.

It is the policy of AEA, as well as a responsibility of the council, that ethical, legal, financial or other conflicts of interest be avoided and that any such conflicts (where they do arise) do not conflict with the obligations to AEA.

AEA will manage conflicts of interest by requiring council members to:

- avoid conflicts of interest where possible
- identify and disclose any conflicts of interest
- carefully manage any conflicts of interest, and
- follow this policy and respond to any breaches.

### **5.1. Responsibility of the council**

The council is responsible for:

- establishing a system for identifying, disclosing and managing conflicts of interest across the charity
- monitoring compliance with this policy, and
- reviewing this policy on an annual basis to ensure that the policy is operating effectively.

The charity must ensure that its council members are aware of the ACNC governance standards, particularly governance standard 5, and that they disclose any actual or perceived material conflicts of interests as required by governance standard 5.

### **5.2. Identification and disclosure of conflicts of interest**

Once an actual, potential or perceived conflict of interest is identified, it must be entered into the AEA's register of interests, as well as being raised with the council.

Where every other council member shares a conflict, the council should refer to ACNC Governance Standard 5 to ensure that proper disclosure occurs.

The register of interests must be maintained by the Secretary. The register must record information related to a conflict of interest (including the nature and extent of the conflict of interest and any steps taken to address it).

### **5.3 Confidentiality of disclosures**

The AEA Council shall have access to the register of interests. The public can request access to the register of interests by contacting [secretary@aea.asn.au](mailto:secretary@aea.asn.au).

## **6. Action required to manage conflicts of interest**

### **6.1. Conflicts of interest of council members**

Once the conflict of interest has been appropriately disclosed, the council (excluding the council member who has made the disclosure, as well as any other conflicted council member) must decide whether or not those conflicted council members should:

- vote on the matter (this is a minimum),
- participate in any debate, or
- be present in the room during the debate and the voting.

In exceptional circumstances, such as where a conflict is very significant or likely to prevent a council member from regularly participating in discussions, it may be worth the council considering if it is appropriate for the person conflicted to resign from the council.

## **6.2. What should be considered when deciding what action to take**

In deciding what approach to take, the council will consider:

- whether the conflict needs to be avoided or simply documented
- whether the conflict will realistically impair the disclosing person's capacity to impartially participate in decision-making
- alternative options to avoid the conflict
- the charity's objects and resources, and
- the possibility of creating an appearance of improper conduct that might impair confidence in, or the reputation of, the charity.

The approval of any action requires the agreement of at least a majority of the council (excluding any conflicted council member/s) who are present and voting at the meeting.

The action and result of the voting will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting and in the register of interests.

## **7. Compliance with this policy**

If the council has a reason to believe that a person subject to the policy has failed to comply with it, it will investigate the circumstances.

If it is found that this person has failed to disclose a conflict of interest, the council may take action against them. This may include seeking to terminate their relationship with the charity.

If a person suspects that a council member has failed to disclose a conflict of interest, they must discuss with the person in question, and notify the secretary who may notify the council.

## **Contacts**

For questions about this policy, contact the AEA Secretary by [secretary@aea.asn.au](mailto:secretary@aea.asn.au).