

# Code of Conduct Policy

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| Policy Number | HR5.1                                  |
| Policy Type   | Corporate                              |
| Policy Owner  | Executive Director People & Capability |

## 1. Version control

| Date       | Version | Prepared by                            | Approved by | Review Date |
|------------|---------|----------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Sept 2007  | 1.0     | Director People & Capability           | CEO         | Sept 2010   |
| Sept 2014  | 1.1     | Director People & Capability           | CEO         | Sept 2017   |
| Sept 2017  | 1.2     | Director People & Capability           | CEO         | Sept 2020   |
| Oct 2019   | 1.3     | Director People & Capability           | CEO         | Oct 2022    |
| Sept 2021  | 1.4     | Director People & Capability           | CEO         | Sept 2024   |
| April 2025 | 1.5     | Executive Director People & Capability | CEO         | April 2028  |

## 2. Purpose of this policy

In accordance with YWCA Canberra's values, we aim to be an employer of choice by providing a work environment that is supportive and conducive to creativity, learning and development, and teamwork. We all have a responsibility to assist in attaining YWCA Canberra's vision, values and strategic goals. The code of conduct is a statement of expected behaviour for all staff and others who engage in particular relationships with YWCA Canberra.

By working for YWCA Canberra staff commit to operate in accordance with this Code which is founded in our Vision, Purpose and Values. As a values-driven organisation, it is essential that we live out our values in our words, actions, and performance.

The values which guide and inspire our work are:

**Courage** – We are dauntless, agile and resilient as we transform power structures. As a proudly feminist organisation, we challenge the status quo to benefit everyone. We have the passion to make a difference.

**Equality** - We value equality of opportunity, outcomes and rights. We work with communities to achieve social, cultural, economic and political participation and prioritise the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalised.

**Respect** - We engage with fairness and professionalism in our organisation, with our supporters and communities. We believe that respectful relationships are fundamental to achieving positive social change.

**Inclusion** - We embrace the diversity of our communities and adopt an intersectional approach that respects differences in gender and gender expression, culture, race, spirituality, age, sexuality, abilities, political beliefs, and socioeconomic status

**Reconciliation** - We support the self-determination and agency of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls and women and proactively work with communities to achieve reconciliation.

**Responsibility** - We are innovative, accountable and manage resources and risks to ensure the sustainability of the organisation. We are forward thinking and curious. We value collaboration and systems leadership so that our work results in positive outcomes for the change we want to see in our communities.

### 3. Scope

This policy, from the date of endorsement, applies to all people involved in the organisation, including:

- employees (permanent and casual)
- volunteers, including board members
- contractors
- sub-contractors
- work experience students and students on placement
- indirect service providers
- any other individual involved in this organisation

### 4. Definitions

| Term                 | Definition                                                                         |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>YWCA Canberra</b> | means all facilities, services and any entities operated as part of YWCA Canberra. |

### 5. Policy

#### Principles

- This Code of Conduct is a guide that provides a broad framework for the identification and resolution of issues concerning the conduct of employees of YWCA Canberra.
- It does not address all possible situations that may arise in employment with YWCA Canberra but is a set of principles to guide staff on acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.
- The code applies to all employees and to all individuals who enter into particular relationships with YWCA Canberra for a specified time period(s), for example members of the Board, committees, students, volunteers and contractors.
- The Code does not replace or exclude the rights and obligations of employees under common or state law.

#### Employee Guidelines

- Perform official duties with skill, care, and diligence, using our authority in a fair and unbiased way.
- Apply our knowledge and skills in a positive, imaginative and judicious way, not just obeying instructions.
- Observe all Acts, Regulations, Determinations, Awards, YWCA Canberra policy, instructions, and lawful directions that relate to our official duties.



- Treat colleagues, clients, and members of the public with courtesy and sensitivity, and with respect to their rights, duties and aspirations.
- Behave at all times in a manner that upholds or enhances the reputation of YWCA Canberra.
- Participate honestly in forums established by YWCA Canberra that see our input or feedback, such as team meetings, staff evaluations and exit interviews.
- Act in the best interest of the organisation.

### **Conflict of Interest**

If there may be a personal, financial, commercial or other interest that might affect the way we perform official duties, or the way we are seen to perform official duties, this conflict of interest must be declared to an Executive Director or Portfolio Manager. An approach to manage the declared interest can then be negotiated, recorded and approved by the CEO. This could involve not working on a particular task for a period of time, removing yourself from a YWCA Canberra decision making process or divesting yourself of those interests. In such situations it may be advisable to initiate and participate in formal mentoring with a senior staff member to ensure that personal and professional boundaries are maintained.

It is important to remember a conflict can be actual or apparent, and in both situations needs to be identified and managed. Whilst we are encouraged to be involved in the community, we do not participate in activities or decisions which conflict or appear to conflict with our duties and responsibilities to YWCA Canberra.

### **Use of Official Position**

We are not permitted to use our official position to seek or obtain any financial advantage, bribe, or kick-back for ourselves, our family or any other person or organisation. Nor can an individual use their official position to harass, compromise or deny the rights of another YWCA Canberra (or other YWCA) staff member, individual, or group.

### **Accepting Gifts and Benefits**

We are not permitted to accept gifts or benefits of any significant value related to the performance of our official duties without the approval of our Executive Director or Manager. Acceptance of token gifts (e.g. chocolates and flowers) is generally acceptable. Under no circumstances should staff accept money. Money is to be receipted on behalf of YWCA Canberra and included in staff amenity or YWCA Canberra donation funds. Under no circumstances should any gift be accepted from a client who is under the administration of a public trustee or who might reasonably be considered to be in a confused state. While not prohibited, offers of entertainment should be cleared with your supervisor before acceptance.

External income relating to YWCA Canberra activities must be paid to YWCA Canberra. This may include consultancy fees, sitting fees, and seminar or facilitation fees.

### **Dress and Appearance**

Appropriate professional dress, appearance and manner help to present a positive impression when representing YWCA Canberra externally. It is acknowledged that different dress may be appropriate when interacting with different stakeholders of YWCA Canberra and there is an expectation that

consideration of appropriate dress and appearance is undertaken by staff in their day-to-day work. You are also expected to wear any protective clothing or safety equipment provided, in the manner prescribed by YWCA Canberra policies, or as required by external organisations with whom you may work.

### **Use of YWCA Canberra Resources**

Through the course of their work employees and volunteers will have access to organisational equipment (such as laptops, phones, cameras, cars) and resources (such as credit cards, software, internet access, books and reports) to enable people to fulfil the requirements and duties of their role. Any such items or resources are to be used efficiently and economically for work related purposes only (subject to negotiation with a supervisor or in accordance with the Acceptable Use of IT policy). Any personal use of equipment and resources by an employee or volunteer that has not been specifically negotiated and approved by a supervisor may be deemed as a breach of the Code of Conduct. It is the responsibility of the individual who has direct responsibility for any equipment or resources to ensure its appropriate use including the usage of a third party. We are entitled to request a written record of what your obligations are if there is any doubt.

### **What is my responsibility if I see a breach of the Code or any illegal behaviour?**

All YWCA Canberra staff are responsible for acting in regard to any activities that are illegal or outside of the spirit of this Code of Conduct. Sometimes it may only be necessary to speak to other staff involved or affected to resolve the matter. Alternatively, it may be appropriate for you to discuss the matter with your Executive Director or Manager.

Staff who bring complaints to the attention of an Executive Director or Manager without malice and with reasonable belief that a case of misconduct or non-compliance with policy exists, will not be disadvantaged or discriminated against in any way. On the other hand, where staff make malicious, vexatious or frivolous allegations, or allegations without having reason to believe they are true, YWCA Canberra will not support them if legal proceedings are initiated against them.

Staff are bound by various legislative instruments such as the Crimes Act, Privacy Act, and Work Health and Safety and Equal Opportunity legislation. Each of us must make a judgment about which action is best in any particular situation, consult with Managers, and be able to clearly articulate the rationale for any particular decision.

If you feel uneasy or unsure about whether to raise an issue, independent assistance can be sought from The Ethics Centre, which provides a free, confidential and anonymous ethics counselling service. The service offers a safe, non-judgemental space for reflection and the exploration of dilemmas challenges and issues. Please book a call via <https://ethics.org.au/initiatives/ethi-call> if you would like to arrange to speak to one of their trained ethics counsellors. The web address is [www.ethics.org.au](http://www.ethics.org.au)

### **The Work Environment and Culture**

YWCA Canberra recognises that the creative output of its staff, the conditions under which they work, and the way in which they are managed, have significant impacts on performance, productivity and levels of satisfaction. The Organisation values a positive working environment that encourages open, effective communication with each other and our clients. At all times, we conduct ourselves in a professional and ethical manner.

We're building a culture which values diversity and provides equal employment opportunities for all employees. We work together as a team to ensure a safe and harmonious workplace free of harassment and discrimination. Harassment in any form, including the use of offensive language or behaviour, is not acceptable.

We use a performance management system to formally discuss with our staff the scope, standards, accountability, authority, priorities and goals of their job and to review their performance in achieving specified objectives and competency development. We will undertake appropriate performance counselling to improve performance which may be unsatisfactory.

We do not carry out work or represent that we act on behalf of YWCA Canberra if we are under the influence of alcohol, drugs or medication which impair our judgement.

We do not initiate rumours or circulate false facts and we ensure that rumours are not passed on in a way which is personally offensive, hurtful or damaging to individuals or organisations.

As an organisation we welcome both criticism and positive feedback as opportunities to develop and grow not as opportunities to assign blame, but to find solutions.

We recognise that each member of YWCA Canberra community has a positive contribution to make to the Organisation.

We strive to acknowledge the value of those contributors and wherever possible provide each other with positive feedback.

We recognise that at times we are critical of errors of judgement and breakdown of processes of work and strive to make criticism a positive and constructive experience.

While we strive not to lose our temper or control, we recognise that human failings in ourselves and others and apologise for our actions and accept the apologies of others.

### **Participation in Decision-Making**

Being an active member of a work team and participating fully in the planning and conduct of work will enhance both the quality of YWCA Canberra's outcomes, and the way in which these are achieved. Executive Directors and Managers have a particular responsibility to ensure that work arrangements are conducive to maximum participation by all staff, and that the right of staff members to exercise their discretion is recognised. All staff members have a responsibility to attempt to resolve matters of concern through the line management structure in the first instance.

### **Equity and Fair Treatment**

All staff are responsible for treating colleagues fairly, and with consideration and respect. Equity and natural justice principles should underpin all working relationships and the application of YWCA Canberra policies and processes.

In undertaking our official duties, particularly where you are an Executive Director or Manager, we should be aware of the responsibilities placed on us by the YWCA Canberra's Equal Employment Opportunities policies and by administrative and employment law. We are not permitted to discriminate against or harass any colleague, client, or member of the public.

## **Work Health and Safety**

We accept responsibility and accountability for protecting the health and safety of each other, volunteers, our clients, as well as contractors and visitors to our services. We take a proactive approach to WHS, recognising our positive duty to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of ourselves and others. While we have a legal and moral obligation to meet this objective, effective safety management will assist in improving the delivery of our services and contribute to the long-term sustainability of our business, consistent with the values and strategic direction of YWCA Canberra.

We are aware of the implications and responsibilities of legislation and YWCA Canberra's policies; in particular we refer to our WHS Policy and Injury Management Policy.

## **External Interactions**

If our work requires us to interact with commercial clients, funding bodies, advocates, such as CECA, the Commissioner for Children and Young People, politicians or their staff, the media, or to present the outcomes of our work in public or professional forums, then the following practices apply. These are necessary to protect the property, reputation and integrity of YWCA Canberra.

Please note that the CEO is the only official media spokesperson for the Organisation and other staff and managers must have approval by the CEO to make any official media statement on behalf of the Organisation.

## **Managing official information**

We are not permitted to use or disclose official information without approval from our Executive Director or Manager. We may be aware of, or be entrusted with, information that relates to clients or other YWCAs who expect, on both legal and ethical grounds, that this information will be protected. We have an absolute duty of care to comply with those expectations and must make ourselves aware of any agreements and expectations that relate to our program or work area. If we have access to, are aware of, or have been entrusted with personal or sensitive information about, or that relates to, other staff members, clients, members of the public, or other organisations, we are expected to observe all privacy and administrative laws relating to disclosure of information. Privacy and administrative laws contain strict controls regarding the disclosure or use of such information other than for specific purposes. See the Privacy and Confidentiality Policy for further details.

## **Confidentiality**

Employees of YWCA Canberra are highly regarded as professionals in their fields. The maintenance of a professional attitude by all staff, as representatives of YWCA Canberra, is critical in ensuring the security of the Organisation and its employees.

All staff have a duty to protect the confidentiality of internal discussions, including issues raised and discussed at meetings, and to use appropriate organisational processes to raise internal employment or program issues.

All issues related to practice, procedures, or specific workplace issues or incidents should, in the first instance, be raised with a direct supervisor. Should the matter not be satisfactorily resolved, the employee and/or the supervisor should discuss the matter with the appropriate Portfolio Manager who should assist and advice. Unresolved matters may then be raised with any of the Executive Directors or the CEO.

## **Publishing or Making Statements or Commitments about Official Matters**

We are only permitted to make statements or commitments on behalf of YWCA Canberra by following relevant protocols and guidelines, and with the approval of the CEO and our Executive Director . If we wish to make a statement on official matters as a private citizen or representative of a particular group, we must declare this to your audience. Any statements made in an employee's private capacity that is deemed offensive, causes harm to others or gives rise to complaints to YWCA Canberra, due to the nature of our work and working with vulnerable people, YWCA Canberra may take further action, as per our policies and procedures.

It is most important that we make it clear when you are expressing opinions rather than stating facts, especially when our opinions are not shared by colleagues. In making public comment, acting as an expert witness, or in presenting or publishing work outcomes:

- do not use our position as a YWCA Canberra employee to add any credence to public statements we might make about non-YWCA Canberra matters
- give accurate and full reference to another's work to avoid potential defamation action
- acknowledge all substantial assistance or advice
- obtain written permission from YWCA Canberra before entering into any publication contracts, or disclosing any information that may be confidential or protected by commercial arrangements.

## **Intellectual Property**

YWCA Canberra retains ownership and control of intellectual property (IP). No employee may use materials created during employment at YWCA after employment ceases. YWCA Canberra may grant permission upon receipt of written request, which will include YWCA Canberra's ownership of the material is acknowledged.

## **Consequences of breach the code of conduct**

Each of us is responsible for our own actions. Every one of us can always, in confidence, seek advice from a manager, supervisor or peer if we are unsure whether our actions or decisions, or those of a fellow staff member, breaches our Code of Conduct.

Staff who breach our Code of Conduct may face counselling or even disciplinary action in accordance with the provisions of the respective Enterprise Agreement and YWCA Canberra policies and procedures.

## **Additional guidelines/Managers' responsibilities**

In the course of our work, Managers will at times need to make decisions or take actions that are not standard or explicitly stated in this Code of Conduct. The following principles have been developed to assist Managers to act ethically and professionally and in a manner can be justified.

*Managers have a responsibility to:*

- set good examples by their own good behaviour and actions
- maintain open communication

- treat employees fairly, equitably and with consistency, ensuring that they do not make false reports concerning others
- ensure their employees understand performance standards and that performance is objectively assessed
- provide professional development opportunities for employees equitably
- ensure legislative requirements are met and
- act with honesty, integrity, respect, fairness and in good faith in a manner which will reflect well upon themselves and YWCA Canberra.
- act in the best interest of YWCA Canberra.

#### *Confidentiality to Persons and Process*

Managers are to ensure that information concerning any person is not accessed or divulged other than in the direct course of professional duties. This includes ensuring that confidential and sensitive documents are appropriately stored and discussions of another person's personal details or circumstance are not overheard.

Working within a management team to achieve common goals, Managers respect the confidential nature of meeting discussions and debate and ensure that individual views or comments are not divulged or discussed outside the management team. Commitment to, and promotion of, agreed directions and decisions is an outward sign of shared leadership and accountability for collective management team decisions.

#### *Stewardship*

As stewards of YWCA Canberra's resources, Managers avoid waste, abuse and extravagance in the provision or use of resources. Managers should exercise restraint where choices are available using only the resources required to meet actual needs and within approved limits. The use of property, equipment and facilities is restricted to official purposes unless otherwise approved by the CEO in advance.

As Organisational leaders, Managers pursue best practice standards and continuous improvement in their work and seek to influence others in the improvement of standards of management, sound business practices and continuous endeavours to improve our stewardship of resources. Benefits facilitated through system-wide collaboration, and resource sharing in particular, are to be pursued either on an individual or group basis.

As part of their own professional development, Managers are to maintain their skills and knowledge required to undertake a management position and to lead others within the Organisation by example.

Through our commitment to openness and respect for the dignity of the individual, Managers should not avoid managing poor performance or conceal the consequences of poor performance of their employees. Avoidance of confrontation on performance issues can allow individuals to form inaccurate perceptions of their current abilities. It also precludes the individual from pursuing avenues for professional growth and development which may remedy skills deficits. If prolonged, eventual discussion of performance can then be damaging and hurtful to the individual – far beyond the implications of the poor performance.

## 6. References including legislation

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|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Related Legislation</b> | <p>External Business Ethics reference sources</p> <p>Edmund Rice Business Ethics Initiative<br/> <a href="http://www.erc.org.au/busethics/">http://www.erc.org.au/busethics/</a></p> <p>Australian Business Ethics Network<br/> <a href="http://www.bf.rmit.edu.au/Aben/index.html">http://www.bf.rmit.edu.au/Aben/index.html</a></p> <p>The Ethics Centre<br/> <a href="http://www.ethics.org.au/">http://www.ethics.org.au/</a></p> <p>Work Health and Safety Act 2011</p> <p>Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)</p> <p>YWCA Canberra Enterprise Agreement</p>                                                                      |
| <b>Related Policies</b>    | <p>OP2.3 Anti discrimination Policy</p> <p>OP2.6 Donations Policy</p> <p>OP2.11 Privacy &amp; Confidentiality Policy</p> <p>OP2.13 Acceptable Use of IT Policy</p> <p>OP2.24 Conflict of Interest Policy</p> <p>WHS4.1 Work Health &amp; Safety Policy</p> <p>HR5.5 Staff Feedback and Counselling Policy</p> <p>HR5.6 Disciplinary Policy</p> <p>HR5.7 Prevention of Workplace Bullying and Harassment Policy</p> <p>SD3.6 Child Protection Code of Conduct</p> <p>SD3.7 Staff and Service User Relations Policy</p> <p>FIN6.5 Fraud prevention and detection</p> <p>Social Media Policy</p> <p>Client Service Charter</p> |

## Acknowledgment

YWCA Canberra acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People as the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we live and pays respect to their Elders past, present and future.

We are committed to inclusive communities, workplaces, policies and services for people of all backgrounds, genders, sexualities, cultures, bodies and abilities.

