

Williamstown Rental Housing Co-op Policy Document

Policy Number :	002
Policy Name :	Code of Conduct
Version Number :	002
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1. Introduction

The Board of Williamstown Rental Housing Cooperative Ltd (WRHC) is committed to ethical conduct and the principles of dignity, equality and mutual respect in providing the best possible service to the community. This policy applies to all members (General and Board), staff (casual, permanent and contract) and volunteers of the organisation.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to identify the Williamstown Rental Housing Co-operative Ltd. position on ethics and proper practice, and to document the standards expected in providing a service to the community.

3. Relevant Co-op Objectives

To ensure that WRHC demonstrates ethical behaviour in all aspects of its operations as reflected in its Mission Statement and Values.

4. Policy

Members, staff and volunteers of Williamstown Rental Housing Cooperative Ltd. have a legal and moral responsibility to act in the best interests of the Co-operative. They have an obligation to demonstrate ethical behaviour at all times – in their responsibilities to the organisation, in their relationships with each other, and in their professional service to the community – and will be required to adhere to this Code of Conduct.

5. Procedures

5a. All members are expected to:

- Be active and informed, and uphold the Co-operative Principles
- Act in the best interests of WHRC at all times

- Treat fellow members, Directors and staff with respect and courteousness at all times.
- Behave considerately towards their neighbours
- Abide by WRHC's Constitution and policies

When a member has breached the Code of Conduct, the matter should be reported to the Manager in the first instance, who may request a formal letter explaining the breach and will initiate an enquiry. This will then be taken to a Directors meeting.

Where the breach is the result of a formal complaint from another person the matter will be referred directly to the Board for resolution. The Board will request a formal explanation of the alleged action from the relevant parties.

Where the action is considered a breach of the Members Code of Conduct, the Directors will decide on and enact an official warning in writing in the form of a Breach Notice.

After two such warnings or in a situation in which a member has seriously breached the Code of Conduct, a member may be expelled from the co-operative. The following are considered serious breaches that may result in expulsion:

- Preventing or hindering the Co-operative from carrying out its primary activity or one or more of its primary activities
- Bringing the Co-operative into disrepute
- Causing the Co-operative harm

The member will be given a 90 day notice for "No Specific Reason" with the knowledge that this may result in VCAT action.

5b. Board members are expected to:

- Be diligent, attend Board meetings and devote sufficient time to preparation for meetings to allow for full and appropriate participation in the Board's decision-making.
- Observe confidentiality relating to non-public information acquired by them in their role as board members and not disclose such information to any other person.
- Treat all personal information about members or applicants for housing as confidential and take appropriate steps to ensure confidentiality is maintained at all times.
- Discuss confidential matters discussed at Board meetings only with other Board members.
- Abide by principles of the Anti Discrimination and Equal Opportunity legislation and the Privacy Act.
- Accept the legislative framework of the Residential Tenancies Act (1997) and the Cooperatives Act (1996) as the basis upon which to conduct all decision-making with respect to tenancy agreements and Cooperative development.
- Follow established protocols for dealing with other organisations and government departments.

- Meet regularly to monitor the performance of management and the organisation as a whole. To do this the Board will ensure that appropriate monitoring and reporting systems are in place and that these are maintained and utilised to provide accurate and timely information to the Board.
- Ensure there is an appropriate separation of duties and responsibilities between itself and senior management and that no individual has unfettered powers of decision-making
- Ensure that the independent views of Board members are given due consideration and weight and accept the principles of fairness and equality in interpersonal relations, including the right of everyone to express their own opinion in a non discriminatory and non aggressive manner.
- Accept WRHC conflict resolution procedures as the accepted means of resolving conflict and disputes with the organisation and with staff.
- Participate in the Cooperative and work towards common objectives.
- Ensure that stakeholders are provided with an accurate and balanced view of the organisation's performance, including both financial and service provision.
- Regularly review its own performance as the basis for its own development and quality assurance. Individual Board members should also review their own performance with a view to ensuring a suitable contribution to Board deliberations and decision-making and, if found lacking, either pursue training or assistance to improve their performance, or resign.
- Carry out its meetings in such a manner as to ensure fair and full participation of all Board members.
- Ensure that the organisation's assets are protected via a suitable risk management strategy.
- Ensure that personal and financial interests do not conflict with the duty to the organisation.

Failure to adhere to these policies and procedures will result in the Board by a majority vote suspending a Director from participating in Board, Board committee and other Board activities for a period of time determined by the Board. If the suspension is not time limited (e.g. suspension from participation for a three month period), the Board will organise a general meeting of members for the removal of that Director.

5c Staff and volunteers are expected to:

- Publicly and privately support the organisation and each other and act with courtesy and respect.
- Act honestly and in good faith at all times in the interests of the organisation, ensuring that all stakeholders, particularly those who are recipients of services, are treated fairly according to their rights.
- Perform their duties to the best of their ability, taking into account their skills, experience, qualifications and position. Staff shall act in a safe, responsible and effective manner.
- Be punctual and reliable in attendance and adhere to their prescribed and authorised hours of duty.

- Comply with the prescribed terms and conditions of their employment/engagement.
- Record their attendance for duty in the manner prescribed.
- Notify the organisation of any inability to attend duty as early as possible so as not to inconvenience others or delay the work of the organisation.
- Carry out their duties in a lawful manner and ensure the organisation carries out its business in accordance with the law
- Recognise both the legal and moral duties of their role.
- Respect and safeguard the property of the organisation, the public and colleagues; and observe safe work practices so as not to endanger themselves or others.
- Maintain confidentiality regarding any information gained through their work and not divulge personal information or the address or phone numbers of staff, Board or service users.
- Ensure that all transactions, agreements and records that flow from relationships with Williamstown Rental Housing Cooperative Ltd stakeholders will be accurately and openly recorded in the organisation's books and records, and no entries will be made which obscure the true nature of a transaction.
- Ensure that Williamstown Rental Housing Cooperative will market its services with integrity and accuracy.
- Ensure that personal and financial interests do not conflict with their duty to the organisation.
- Undertake no personal or business activities for personal gain while at the organisation or while conducting business of the organisation. Procedures associated with such activities will not be carried out on the organisation's computers without open and express permission of a higher authority.
- Work within the organisation's policies and principles.
- Discuss issues where appropriate with other staff and the Manager to determine whether or not a contemplated action is ethical.

Any breach of the Code of Conduct will be dealt with according to the Disputes Resolution process and Cooperatives Act.

6. Responsibility

All members (General and Board), staff (permanent, casual and contract) and volunteers are responsible for adhering to all applicable clauses.

Definition:

Nil

7. Related Policies:

Human Rights Policy

8. Related Documents:

Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
Equal Opportunity Act 1995
Information Privacy Act 2000
Governance Manual
Members Manual

References:

Nil

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Board Date

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Board Member's signature Date