



Ahpra
& National
Boards

Code of conduct for board
and committee members



Purpose

The Code of conduct for Board and committee members (the Code) outlines the standard of behaviour expected of members in the performance of their duties and in their interactions with each other, Ahpra employees and stakeholders. The Code aims to support the safety and wellbeing of members, Ahpra staff, and others with whom they interact.

The Code aligns to the [National Registration and Accreditation Scheme's \(National Scheme\) values and behavioural attributes](#) and should be read in conjunction with the [National Scheme Accountability Framework](#) and other relevant policies, procedures and guidelines.

Australia is a culturally and linguistically diverse nation and the Code supports a respectful environment for all communities working with or engaging with Ahpra.

The Code further reinforces Ahpra's commitment to ensuring a culturally safe and respectful environment for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples working with or engaging with Ahpra and a positive duty of all members to take proactive and meaningful action to address racism.

Our values

Integrity

Respect

Collaboration

Achievement

Scope

The Code applies to all members of the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) Board, National Boards, State and Territory Boards, committees of these Boards, and the List of Approved Persons for appointment to panels (collectively referred to as 'members').

Throughout this Code, a reference to National Boards includes a reference to State and Territory Boards, and committees of these Boards, except where explicitly defined.

Your obligations

The *Health Practitioner National Law Act 2009* (the National Law) sets out the general duties of members exercising functions under the National Law.¹ as follows:

1. A person exercising functions under this Law must, when exercising the functions, act honestly and with integrity.
2. A person exercising functions under this Law must exercise the person's functions under this Law—
 - a) in good faith; and
 - b) in a financially responsible manner; and
 - c) with a reasonable degree of care, diligence and skill.
3. A person exercising functions under this Law must not make improper use of the person's position or of information that comes to the person's knowledge in the course of, or because of, the person's exercise of the functions—
 - a) to gain an advantage for himself or herself or another person; or
 - b) to cause a detriment to the development, implementation or operation of the national registration and accreditation scheme.

The National Law² further requires that:

1. A member of a National Board is to act impartially and in the public interest in the exercise of the member's functions as a member.
2. Accordingly, a member of a National Board is to put the public interest before the interests of particular health practitioners or any entity that represents health practitioners.

¹ Division 1 Section 234 General duties of persons exercising functions under this Law and Schedule 4 Part 2 Section 7 and 8.

² This clause only applies to members of National Boards. It does not apply to committee members.

And, if:

- a) a member has a direct or indirect pecuniary or other interest in a matter being considered or about to be considered at a meeting of the National Board; and
- b) the interest appears to raise a conflict with the proper performance of the member's duties in relation to the consideration of the matter;
- c) the member must, as soon as possible after the relevant facts have come to the member's knowledge, disclose the nature of the interest at a meeting of the National Board.³

In addition to the general obligations under the National Law, it is a condition of your appointment that you adhere to this Code which defines the standards of behaviour and conduct expected of a member. It is your responsibility to comply with these expectations and review them regularly, particularly when your circumstances change.

Members should familiarise themselves with the [Board member manual](#).

If you are unsure about how any part of the Code applies to you, please seek guidance from your Chair or the relevant Senior Ahpra employee.

Code of conduct

Be informed

- Understand the work of the National Scheme and the role and functions of your Board or committee.
- Know the duties, responsibilities and accountabilities of your role (including as described within this Code, Ahpra's Health Safety and Wellbeing policy, the Health Safety and Wellbeing Management System Framework and the Respect@Ahpra framework and its related policies and procedure), perform these in good faith and act in the public interest.
- Understand and comply with your obligations to protect information security as outlined in the [Information and IT acceptable use policy](#)
- Become familiar with the environment in which your Board or committee operates and stay informed about all relevant activities.
- Undertake training as directed and comply with all policies and procedures, as well as legislative and legal requirements that apply to you, including, but not limited to workplace health and safety (WHS) obligations.
- Support the decisions taken by your Board or committee, subject to your duty to act lawfully and ethically.
- Understand that Chairs of National Boards are the official spokespeople for their Board. Members are not to make any public comment, including posting on social media, that could be connected to their role or where views expressed could damage the reputation of the National Board or the work of the National Scheme, without authorisation from the Chair.

Be active

- Attend all meetings – where attendance is not possible, members must submit an apology or seek a leave of absence if the leave is planned.
- Participate actively and work cooperatively with fellow members, Ahpra employees and other stakeholders to achieve Scheme objectives and goals.
- Prepare for meetings by reading and considering papers circulated with the agenda.
- Contribute to continuous improvements in the effectiveness of your Board or committee and apply and promote good governance.
- Promote and advance the [National Scheme Strategy](#), including the values and behavioural attributes, and support Ahpra in achieving its strategic objectives.
- Promote and advance a safe, respectful and inclusive workplace, including by calling out inappropriate or disrespectful behaviour or conduct when you see it (if it is safe for you to do so), or reporting the behaviour or conduct (See [Resolution management procedure for members](#)).

³ This clause applies to National Board and committee members.

Show respect

- Uphold a culture of mutual respect and professionalism; treat each other, Ahpra employees and stakeholders fairly and with courtesy, respect, and dignity.
- Be inclusive, value others, and consider a range of perspectives.
- Contribute to a safe, respectful and inclusive workplace, by engaging in appropriate behaviours and encouraging others to do the same.
- Act in a culturally safe way.
- Consider the views of stakeholders and affected parties about issues under consideration.
- Do not engage in any form of behaviour that is disrespectful, inappropriate and/or unlawful, including any behaviour that is, or can be considered to be, bullying, harassment (including sexual, sex or gender-based harassment) discrimination, or conduct that creates a hostile workplace environment.
- Demonstrate a commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility and equal opportunity through use of inclusive language when communicating with individuals, or when discussing matters and affected individuals detailed within Board papers. Examples of inclusive language can be found [here](#).

Act ethically

- Be open, honest and competent and make decisions that promote public confidence and support public safety.
- Maintain the integrity, confidentiality and security of protected and confidential information.
- Avoid actual or perceived conflicts of interest, whether direct or indirect, ensure personal or financial interests do not interfere with the performance of your role, and declare conflicts where these exist or may potentially arise. The [Guidelines for Board and committee members with respect to conflict of interest](#) provide advice for members in relation to management of perceived or actual conflicts of interest.
- Avoid using your position to attempt to influence the Board or a committee to make a decision for the benefit of a third party.
- Adhere to the [Gifts, benefits and hospitality policy](#).
- Express concerns to the Chair or other relevant authority about decisions or actions contrary to your Board or committee's primary responsibility to act in the public interest.
- Disclose any information about actual or potentially unethical, dishonest and/or corrupt conduct to the Chair, a senior Ahpra employee or, if necessary, the appropriate reporting body. A record of the incident will be captured by an appropriate Ahpra employee in Ahpra's incident management system -LogIt.

In line with [Ahpra's Health, safety and wellbeing policy](#), *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anti-Racism Policy* and *Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Anti-Racism Policy* members also have a responsibility to:

- ensure their own behaviour contributes to a positive working environment that is physically and psychologically safe, and free of racism, discrimination, incivility, bullying, harassment, violence, hostility and other disrespectful or harmful behaviour
- recognising and addressing both overt and subtle forms of racism, including microaggressions and lateral violence, and take action against racism through direct discussion, anonymous reporting, or seeking support from Senior Ahpra staff
- take reasonable care to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of themselves and others
- make sure their actions do not cause or threaten harm to the health, safety and wellbeing of others
- report any incidents, injuries, near misses or workplace hazards to Ahpra
- comply with instructions given by Ahpra in relation to workplace health and safety.

How to raise a concern or report an incident

Ahpra and National Boards have an obligation to treat concerns and incidents seriously and manage any associated risks.

The [Resolution management procedure for members](#) outlines how to respond to behaviour or conduct concerns raised either by or about a member.

Where an Ahpra employee raises a concern or reports an incident about the behaviour or conduct of a member, the employee raising the concern or reporting the incident will be directed to the *Ahpra workplace complaints and reporting procedure* for reporting options. The resolution of that report will then be managed in accordance with the [Resolution management procedure for members](#).

This procedure is not designed to deal with members subject to regulatory complaints or notifications. Such notifications are managed in accordance with the [Procedure for Board or committee members subject to complaints or notifications](#).

Resolution management and escalation

Ahpra and National Boards are committed to working together constructively and transparently. In line with our shared values, Ahpra and National Boards must work to resolve concerns raised or incidents reported about the behaviour or conduct of members in a timely way.

In some instances, concerns or incidents may be addressed through early intervention and informal pathways. In situations where informal pathways are not appropriate, more formal steps to resolve the issue, such as a formal investigation or referring the matter to police, may be required. For more information, see the [Resolution management procedure for members](#).

Where the concern raised may amount to a Public Interest Disclosure under the [Public Interest Disclosure policy](#) additional protections and requirements apply. Such a concern will be immediately referred to an Ahpra Public Interest Disclosure Officer who will handle it in accordance with the policy.

Depending on the seriousness of the matter (such as where a member's conduct breaches this Code, health and safety obligations, the National Law or other applicable legislation), the member *may* be removed from their position, on the basis that the member has engaged in misconduct or has failed or is unable to properly exercise the member's functions as a member, in accordance with the *National Law*.⁴

Ahpra and the National Boards are committed to protecting any person who raises genuine concerns or reports an incident in good faith from victimisation or retaliation. Any attempt to take adverse action against a person who raises a genuine concern or incident will be treated seriously and may be a breach of the Code.

Whistleblower complaints

Any concerns regarding a member engaging in possible improper conduct or corruption in the administration of the National Law can be raised under the [Public interest disclosure \(whistleblower\) policy](#), which sets out the process for managing such disclosures, and the protections available to the person making the disclosure.

Support available

Thrive@Ahpra

At any time, Chairs and members may seek support from the Thrive@Ahpra service provided by Altius PeopleSense on 1300 307 912. The Thrive@Ahpra service is a confidential independent 24/7 program available at no cost to members. Qualified professional consultants may help Chairs and members by working with them to develop strategies to resolve the concern.

⁴ See: Schedule 2, Part 2, Section 4(2)(d) in respect of the Ahpra Board; Schedule 4, Part 2, Section 4(2)(e) in respect of National Boards.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Safety

Sometimes, the resolution of concerns or incidents requires cultural knowledge within a cultural context. Where concerns or incidents reported involve one or more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, support can be provided by the National Director, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People Programs. Altius PeopleSense also have a dedicated team of qualified and experienced specialist Indigenous clinicians delivering counselling to Indigenous employees and Board members, their families and their leaders and can be contacted on 1300 307 912.

Related documents

- [*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Cultural Safety Strategy 2020–2025*](#)
- [*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anti-Racism Policy*](#)
- [*Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Anti-Racism Policy*](#)
- [*Guidelines for Board and committee members in exercising delegated functions*](#)
- [*Guidelines for Board and committee members with respect to conflict of interest*](#)
- [*Guideline Information Management obligations of Board, committee and panel members*](#)
- [*Health profession agreements*](#)
- [*Information and IT acceptable use policy*](#)
- [*Manual for National Boards and their committees*](#)
- [*National Scheme Strategy 2020–25*](#)
- [*Procedure for Board or committee members subject to complaints or notifications*](#)
- [*Resolution management procedure for members*](#)
- [*Public interest disclosure \(whistleblower\) policy*](#)
- [*Gifts, benefits and hospitality policy*](#)
- [*Health Practitioner Regulation National Law \(National Law\)*](#)
- [*Health, safety and wellbeing policy*](#)
- [*Respect@Ahpra framework*](#)

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