

# GP003 STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT

<b>Version:</b>	4.0 <i>Please note that once printed, this is no longer a controlled document. All care should be taken to ensure that you are operating from the current version.</i>
<b>Commencement and Review:</b>	This policy has been reviewed and commences from 01/01/2023. It will be reviewed as required by legislative, regulatory or operational changes. Changes of a minor nature, such as corrections, may be made with the approval of the Chief Executive Officer.
<b>Document Owner:</b>	Chief Executive Officer
<b>Approval Date:</b>	13/12/2022
<b>Meeting Resolution:</b>	M22/196



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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Application

This Code applies to employees of Paroo Shire Council.

For the purposes of this document only, employees are defined as:

- any Queensland public service agency employee whether permanent, temporary, full-time, part-time or casual; and
- any volunteer, student, contractor, consultant or anyone who works in any other capacity for Paroo Shire Council (Council).

The Code always applies when we are performing official duties, including when we are representing Council at conferences, training events, on business trips and attending work- related social events. This Staff Code of Conduct replaces all previous versions of the Code.

## 1.2 How this Code Works

The Public Sector Ethics Act 1994 provides ethical principles that apply to all employees of Council. The 4 Ethics Principles are:



Each principle is strengthened by a set of **values** that gives a detailed application of the principle.

This Code of Conduct contains specific Standards of Conduct for each principle. These Standards help us as individuals to understand how we put these principles and values into practice.

The standards are not intended to cover every possible scenario. They are only examples of things we should or should not do. We are committed to upholding the **intention and spirit** of the principles and values.

We will also comply with all relevant legislation, awards, certified agreements and standards.

## 1.3 Council's Vision, Mission, and Values

Paroo Shire Council is as unique as the region it serves. How we apply these principles are shaped by Council's Vision, Mission and Values:



# Vision

- Paroo Shire is committed to being progressive in thought and action, where our inclusive communities provide unique places for people to live, visit, and prosper

# Mission

- To improve the Paroo Shire's assets and amenities, act as custodian of culture and the environment, and foster sustainable development and innovation

# Values

- P - Pride
- A - Accountability
- R - Respect
- O - Open and Transparent
- O - Opportunities for employment
- S - Safety
- C - Commitment

## 1.4 Summary

The principles and their values tell employees what we need to do. The Standards of Conduct show us some of the ways we meet our obligations. Our unique values as a region also shape how we perform our work.

## 2 USING THIS CODE

The Code describes how we will conduct ourselves in delivering services to the Paroo Community. An ethical culture in Council starts with our Chief Executive Officer and is demonstrated through our senior leaders and all employees.

All employees should be familiar with this code and how it affects their work.

### 2.1 All Employees

We take personal responsibility to uphold this Code and demonstrate the principles and values of the *Public Sector Ethics Act 1994* by the way we perform our duties.

This Code recognises that we can all demonstrate ethical leadership in how we perform our role. It is a statement of our commitment to the people of Paroo, their elected representatives, and our colleagues.

### 2.2 Chief Executive and Directors

As our senior leaders, the Chief Executive and Directors have a responsibility to visibly demonstrate and uphold the principles and values of the *Public Sector Ethics Act 1994*. They are to promote an organisational culture that values high ethical standards and behaviour.

The Chief Executive and Directors openly demonstrate their conscious commitment to ethics by communicating the importance of ethical decision-making in the workplace and promoting ethical behaviour in day-to-day actions.

They also ensure employees have access to training in the operation of this Code and in ethical decision-making more broadly, making the Code meaningful for all employees.

### 2.3 Managers and Supervisors

Managerial behaviour sets the tone for the conduct of all employees. Managers and supervisors have a responsibility to model and promote this Code.

Managers can influence others by fostering an ethical environment and demonstrate this in performing their duties and in making decisions.



Managers ensure employees understand the Code, and any other relevant legislation, delegations, policies, or other information required to satisfactorily perform our duties. Managers also ensure that appropriate development and training is provided to allow us to perform our duties.

## 2.4 Upholding this Code

As part of demonstrating our commitment to uphold this Code, we need to identify, and report conduct that is not consistent with this Code.

Managers have a responsibility to make fair, transparent, and consistent decisions regarding any allegations of behaviour that does not uphold this Code.

We will support employees who report genuine concerns of wrongdoing and manage any reports of suspected wrongdoing in a fair, transparent, and consistent manner.

## 3 PRINCIPLE 1 – INTEGRITY AND IMPARTIALITY

The *Public Sector Ethics Act 1994* states:

*“In recognition that public office involves a public trust, public service agencies, public sector entities and public officials seek to promote public confidence in the integrity of the public sector and -*

- a) are committed to the highest ethical standards;*
- b) accept and value their duty to provide advice, which is objective, independent, apolitical, and impartial;*
- c) show respect towards all persons, including employees, clients, and the general public;*
- d) acknowledge the primacy of the public interest and undertake that any conflict-of-interest issue will be resolved or appropriately managed in favour of the public interest; and*
- e) are committed to honest, fair, and respectful engagement with the community.”*

### STANDARDS OF CONDUCT FOR PRINCIPLE 1

#### 3.1 Commit to the Highest Ethical Standards

As Council employees we are required to ensure that our conduct meets the highest ethical standards when we are fulfilling our responsibilities.

We will:

- a) Ensure any advice that we provide is objective, independent, apolitical and impartial;
- b) ensure our decision making is ethical;
- c) engage with the community in a manner that is consultative, respectful and fair; and
- d) meet our obligations to report suspected wrongdoing, including conduct not consistent with this Code.

#### 3.2 Manage Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest involves a conflict between our duty as Council employees to serve the public interest and our personal interests. The conflict may arise from a range of factors including:

- a) our personal relationships;
- b) our employment outside Council;
- c) our membership of special interest groups; or
- d) our ownership of shares, companies, or property.

As Council employees we may also experience conflicts of interest between our public service ethics and our professional codes of ethics (for example as health care professionals or as lawyers), or with our personal beliefs or opinions.

Some examples of conflicts of interest are:

- a) We are making a decision that affects a house or animal that we own;
- b) We own a business that does work for Council and as a part of our job we decide if a Council contract goes to our own business or not;
- c) We may be a supervisor involved in hiring a new employee and one of the applicants is a close relative of ours

Having a conflict of interest is not unusual and it is not wrong. However, **failing to disclose and manage the conflict appropriately is likely to be wrongdoing.**



As Council employees we are committed to demonstrating our impartiality and integrity in fulfilling our responsibilities and as such we will:

- a) always disclose a personal interest that could, now or in the future, be seen as influencing the performance of our duties. This will be done in accordance with Council policies and procedures;
- b) actively participate with our agency in developing and implementing resolution strategies for any conflict of interest; and
- c) ensure that any conflict of interest is resolved in the public interest.

To assist in managing conflicts of interest, as well as fatigue management, employees must seek written approval from the Chief Executive Officer prior to undertaking employment outside of Council.

### **3.3 Contribute to Public Discussion in an Appropriate Manner**

Commenting on government policy is a matter for Councillors, not employees. Unless prior authorisation has been given, we will not comment to the media on Council policy.

Where providing factual information to the public on Council policy is a part of our official duties and responsibilities, we will ensure that information is appropriately authorised, and that we properly represent Council policy and administration in its intended manner and spirit.

Like any other citizen, we have the right to contribute to public discussions on community and social issues in our private capacity.

In doing so, we will:

- a) take reasonable steps to ensure that any comment we make will be understood as representing our personal views, not those of government;
- b) maintain the confidentiality of information we have access to due to our roles, that is not publicly available; and
- c) be aware that personal comments about a public issue may compromise our capacity to perform the duties of our role in an independent, unbiased manner.

### **3.4 Manage Participation in External Organisations**

Our work as a Council employee does not remove our right to be active privately in a political party, professional organisation, or trade union.

As a member of a political party, however, we are aware that participating in activities in the public arena, where we may be identified as a Council employee, can give rise to a perception of conflict of interest (see section 3.2). Where this situation arises, we will declare and manage our activities in accordance with Council's policies.

If we are elected as workplace representatives or officials of a trade union or professional association, we are not required to seek permission from our workplace before speaking publicly in **that** capacity, and we will make it clear that our comments are made **only on behalf of that organisation**.

In all instances, we will comply with the appropriate laws of privacy, confidentiality and information management.

### **3.5 Demonstrate a High Standard of Workplace Behaviour and Personal Conduct**

We have a responsibility to always conduct and present ourselves in a professional manner, and demonstrate respect for all persons, whether fellow employees, clients or members of the public.

We will:

- a) treat co-workers, clients and members of the public with courtesy and respect, be appropriate in our relationships with them, and recognise that others have the right to hold views which may differ from our own;
- b) ensure our conduct reflects our commitment to a workplace that is inclusive and free from harassment;
- c) ensure our fitness for duty, and the safety, health and welfare of ourselves and others in the workplace, whether co-workers or clients;
- d) ensure our private conduct maintains the integrity of the public service and our ability to perform our duties; and
- e) comply with legislative and/or policy obligations to report employee criminal charges and convictions.



## 4 PRINCIPLE 2 – PROMOTING THE PUBLIC GOOD

The *Public Sector Ethics Act 1994* states:

*“In recognition that the public sector is the mechanism through which the elected representatives deliver programs and services for the benefit of the people of Queensland, public service agencies, public sector entities and public officials -*

- a) accept and value their duty to be responsive to both the requirements of government and to the public interest;*
- b) accept and value their duty to engage the community in developing and effecting official public sector priorities, policies, and decisions;*
- c) accept and value their duty to manage public resources effectively, efficiently and economically;*
- d) value and seek to achieve excellence in service delivery; and*
- e) value and seek to achieve enhanced integration of services to better service clients.”*

### STANDARDS OF CONDUCT FOR PRINCIPLE 2

#### 4.1 Commit to Excellence in Service Delivery

Council is entrusted with public funds to develop and deliver services to the community. We have a responsibility to:

- a) deliver services fairly, courteously, effectively, and ensure we use resources efficiently and economically;
- b) assist all members of the community, particularly people with disabilities, those who speak languages other than English, and those who may find it difficult to access government services; and
- c) treat complaints from clients and the community seriously and respond to constructive feedback as an opportunity for improvement.

#### 4.2 Ensure Appropriate Community Engagement

Community participation is crucial to the development of quality government planning and decision-making processes. We have a responsibility, where appropriate and in accordance with our official duties, to:

- a) listen and respond to issues and concerns raised by individuals or communities;
- b) consult with the public to assist in the development of public policy; and
- c) assist in raising community awareness about public issues and policies.

#### 4.3 Work as an Integrated Service

In order to deliver excellence in customer service, we will work together to address complex issues and provide integrated services to the community. We have a responsibility, where appropriate and in accordance with our official duties, to:

- a) share information across Council, where permitted by law, to enhance the seamless delivery of services;
- b) share common-use assets, accommodation, and infrastructure within Council to generate economies and efficiencies;
- c) collectively plan and deliver related programs and services within Council; and
- d) work cohesively at the locally and regionally to provide integrated services.

## 5 PRINCIPLE 3 – COMMITMENT TO THE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT

The *Public Sector Ethics Act 1994* states:

*“In recognition that the public sector has a duty to uphold the system of government and the laws of the State, Commonwealth and local government, public service agencies, public sector entities and public officials -*

- a) accept and value their duty to uphold the system of government and the laws of the State, the Commonwealth and local government;*
- b) are committed to effecting official public sector priorities, policies and decisions professionally and impartially; and*
- c) accept and value their duty to operate within the framework of Ministerial responsibility to government, the Parliament and the community.”*

(This) does not limit the responsibility of a public service agency, public sector entity or public sector official to act independently of government if the independence of the agency, entity or official is required by legislation or government policy, or is a customary feature of the work of the agency, entity or official.





## STANDARDS OF CONDUCT FOR PRINCIPLE 3

### 5.1 Commit to Our Roles in Public Service

Our role is to undertake our duties, and to give effect to the policies of the elected Council, regardless of its political complexion. We will:

- a) accept that the Council has the right to determine policy and priorities;
- b) be responsive to the Council of the day and implement decisions and policies professionally and impartially;
- c) comply with the laws of State, Australian and local governments;
- d) comply with all relevant awards and certified agreements; and
- e) adhere to the policies, values, and procedures of Council.

It is our responsibility to understand all Council Policies and Procedures that are relevant to our work. If you are not sure of what you need to do, you should seek help from your supervisor, the HR Officer or the WHS Officer.

Some Specific policies that you need to be compliant with are:

- Work Health and Safety Management Plan;
- Positive Workplace Policy;
- Alcohol and Drugs Policy;
- Injury and Illness Management and Return to Work Policy; and
- Portable Devices Policy

### 5.2 Ensure Proper Communication with Councillors

We have the right to communicate directly with a Councillors on any issue affecting us as a private citizen. In communicating with Councillors as private citizens, we will maintain the confidentiality of information that is not publicly available, and we have access to due to our roles.

Communication with Councillors in our working capacity will be through the Chief Executive Officer, unless an exception is required by law or regulation or authorised by the CEO.

## 6 PRINCIPLE 4 – ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

The *Public Sector Ethics Act 1994* states:

*“In recognition that public trust in public office requires high standards of public administration, public service agencies, public sector entities and public officials -*

- a) are committed to exercising proper diligence, care and attention;*
- b) are committed to using public resources in an effective and accountable way;*
- c) are committed to managing information as openly as practicable within the legal framework;*
- d) value and seek to achieve high standards of public administration;*
- e) value and seek to innovate and continuously improve performance; and*
- f) value and seek to operate within a framework of mutual obligation and shared responsibility between public service agencies, public sector entities and public officials.”*

## STANDARDS OF CONDUCT FOR PRINCIPLE 4

### 6.1 Ensure Diligence in Public Administration

We have an obligation to seek to achieve high standards of public administration and perform our duties to the best of our abilities. We will:

- a) apply due care in our work, and provide accurate and impartial advice to all clients whether members of the public, public service agencies, or any level of government
- b) treat all people equitably and consistently, and demonstrate the principles of procedural fairness and natural justice when making decisions
- c) exercise our lawful powers and authority with care and for the purpose for which these were granted, and
- d) comply with all reasonable and lawful instructions, whether or not we personally agree with a given policy direction.





## 6.2 Ensure Transparency in our Business Dealings

To ensure all government dealings with private industry are conducted with the highest level of integrity we will ensure:

- our business meetings with persons who were formerly elected officials or public servants are not on matters those persons had official dealings with in their recent previous employment in accordance with government policy;
- any engagement we have with lobbyists is properly recorded; and
- we manage gifts, benefits, or hospitality in accordance with Council policies.

## 6.3 Ensure Appropriate Use of Official Resources, Public Property and Facilities

We are accountable for all resources that we use in the course of our duties. We will:

- a) be economical and avoid waste and extravagance in the use of public resources for proper purposes;
- b) use any public resource in accordance with official policies;
- c) purchase, manage and care for public resources in accordance with official policies; and
- d) responsibly utilise human assets such as corporate knowledge and intellectual property, as public resources.

## 6.4 Ensure Appropriate Use and Disclosure of Official Information

The public has a right to know the information that is created and used by the government on their behalf. This right is balanced by necessary protections for certain information, including personal information.

Information privacy legislation protects against the misuse of personal information and we have an obligation to ensure the lawful collection and handling of personal information. In addition, we will:

- a) treat official information with care and use it only for the purpose for which it was collected or authorised
- b) store official information securely, and limit access to those persons requiring it for legitimate purposes, and
- c) not use confidential or privileged information to further personal interests.

We will continue to respect the confidentiality of official information when we leave Council's employment.

## 6.5 Commit to Innovation and Continuous Performance Improvement

The capacity of the public service to deliver services to the community depends on an innovative and creative workforce, and a commitment to continuously improve the performance of our agency and ourselves.

We each have a responsibility, having regard to our own roles, to:

- a) maintain and develop our professional skills and knowledge;
- b) in consultation with our managers, take reasonable steps to identify and apply for development opportunities relevant to our current roles and responsibilities;
- c) actively participate in employee performance management processes, including induction, performance planning and development; and
- d) actively contribute to developing and improving business planning and processes, including innovative ways of delivering services.

# 7 HOW CAN I MAKE GOOD DECISIONS?

This Code of Conduct does not cover every possible situation you might face. How can we make ethical decisions when there are no specific rules?

This section of the Code provides some tools to help you make the best decision

## 7.1 The PLUS Filter

The PLUS filter provides a way to remember all the things we need to consider when making a decision. PLUS stands for:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| P | Policies – Is it consistent with Council's policies, procedures, and guidelines |
| L | Legal – Is it legal under the relevant Laws and Regulations                     |
| U | Universal – Does it meet the standards of Council and the Community we live in? |
| S | Self – Does it meet my personal definition of what is right, good, and fair?    |

If you answer no to any of the questions, you will need to find a way to address the ethical problem you make your decision.



You can use this filter at all stages of the decision-making process to help you make the most ethical decision.

## 7.2 The Decision-making Process

Using the PLUS filter to help you, most decisions can be broken down into the following steps:

1. Define the problem – does the existing situation break any of the PLUS filters?
2. Get assistance, guidance, and support
3. Identify possible solutions to the problem
4. Assess your options – Which options will best resolve the problem? Would it create any new problems?
5. Make the Decision and Implement it.

## 7.3 Who Can Help Me?

If you need help getting information you need to decide, you can talk to any of the following:

- Your supervisor,
- Your director, or
- The HR Officer

## 8 WHAT CAN I DO IF I'M CONCERNED ABOUT SOMETHING?

It is important for all of us to make ethical decisions. It is equally important that we speak up if we have any concerns about the actions of others.

If you honestly believe and have reasonable grounds that you possess information about another Council Officer's conduct that relates to:

- misconduct; or
- maladministration that adversely affects a person's interests; or
- a substantial misuse of public resources, other than an alleged misuse based on mere disagreement over policy that may properly be adopted about amounts, purposes or priorities of expenditure; or
- a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety; or
- a substantial and specific danger to the environment.

You have the right to make a Public Interest Disclosure to a proper authority subject to, and in accordance with, the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010*.

We should make our initial report through internal channels. However, if we have tried this and have not had a satisfactory response **or** feel it is inappropriate to report internally, you can also use external reporting channels.

Should you wish to make such a disclosure please contact:

**Internal Channels:** Chief Executive Officer,  
Director of Community Support and Engagement, or  
Director of Infrastructure

**External Channels:** Crime and Corruption Commission      [ccc.qld.gov.au](http://ccc.qld.gov.au)  
Human Rights Commission      [qhrc.qld.gov.au](http://qhrc.qld.gov.au)

### 8.1 Where Can I Go For More Information?

If you need assistance about how this employee Code of Conduct relates to you, please contact the HR Team or speak to your supervisor.


Copies of this Code for Council employees are available on our website, in Happy HR or on request from your supervisor.

## 9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Paroo Shire Council acknowledges the assistance of the State of Queensland in giving approval to use the Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public Service as the basis for this Code of Conduct. It has been adapted by Paroo Shire Council to our local government environment.

The copyright is attributed to the *State of Queensland (Public Service Commission) 2010*.



<b>Endorsed</b>		<b>Date:</b> 13/12/2022
<b>Name:</b>	Cassandra White	
<b>Title:</b>	Chief Executive Officer, Paroo Shire Council	
<b>Signature:</b>		

## VERSION CONTROL

Date	Version	Meeting Resolution	Amendments / Comments
31/07/17	2.0	M17/147	
16/10/2018	3.0	M18/180	Reviewed/ amended
13/12/2022	4.0	M22/196	Reviewed based on Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public Service

