

Shire of Merredin

EMPLOYEE CODE OF CONDUCT

25 June 2024



SHIRE OF
MERREDIN
INNOVATING THE WHEATBELT

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MESSAGE FROM THE CEO AND PRESIDENT

A code of conduct communicates expected standards of conduct and integrity to all those involved in an organisation. Effective codes, that are well communicated throughout the workplace, contribute to building and sustaining a culture of integrity, and create a robust and transparent framework in which to operate, both of which are fundamental to good organisational performance and high public confidence.

The *Local Government Act 1995* (the Act) requires all local governments to adopt a code of conduct to be observed by Elected Members, Committee Members and employees. The Shire of Merredin – Employee Code of Conduct (the Code) has been prepared by the Shire of Merredin pursuant to this obligation. Employees are expected to be familiar with the Code and to observe it at all times. Please note that Elected Members are subject to a separate Code of Conduct, which is similar to the Employee Code of Conduct.

Employees play an important role in the local community. This role includes the delivery of a diverse range of services and facilities and is essential for ensuring confidence in the local government. Further to this, all must act – and be seen to act – with integrity. All have a responsibility to perform their duties in the public interest and to make accountable and ethical decisions.

It is considered that the adoption of the Code of Conduct:

- operates as evidence of a demonstrable commitment by employees to observe the highest ethical and professional standards in performing their duties and functions;
- will assist in bringing about a good and sound understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of Elected Members and employees, and the maintenance of respect between them; and
- will serve to strengthen the community's confidence in the integrity of those who are responsible for local government in the Shire of Merredin.



Mark McKenzie
Shire President



Craig Watts
Chief Executive Officer

1. INTRODUCTION

The Shire of Merredin - Employee Code of Conduct (the Code) provides employees with clear guidelines for the standards of professional conduct expected of them in carrying out their functions and responsibilities.

The Code addresses the broader issue of ethical responsibility and encourages transparency and accountability. The Code expresses the Shire of Merredin's commitment to high standards of ethical and professional behaviour and outlines the principles in which individual responsibilities are based.

The Code is complementary to the principles adopted in the *Local Government Act 1995* (the Act) and associated regulations, which incorporate four fundamental aims:

- a) better decision-making by local governments;
- b) greater community participation in the decisions and affairs of local governments;
- c) greater accountability of local governments to their communities; and
- d) more efficient and effective local government.

1.1 STATUTORY ENVIRONMENT

The Code addresses the requirement in section 5.51A of the Act for the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to prepare and implement a code of conduct to be observed by employees of the Local Government, and includes the matters prescribed in Part 4A of the *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996*.

The Code should be read in conjunction with the Act and associated regulations. Employees should ensure that they are aware of their statutory responsibilities under this and other legislation.

1.2 APPLICATION

For the purposes of the Code, the term employees includes persons employed by the Shire of Merredin or engaged by the Shire of Merredin under a contract for services. The Code applies to all employees (including the CEO), consultants and volunteers while on the Local Government's premises or while engaged in Local Government related activities. Clause 3.15 of this Code (Gifts) does not apply to the CEO.

1.3 GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND ETHICAL STANDARDS

The following are the guiding principles of this Code:

- We act with reasonable care and diligence;
- We act with honesty and integrity;
- We act lawfully;
- We act professionally, in a clear and transparent manner;
- We avoid damage to the reputation of the Shire of Merredin;
- We are open and accountable to the public;
- We base decisions on relevant and factually correct information;
- We treat others with respect and fairness;
- We will not be impaired by mind affecting substances; and
- We ensure that decision-making takes into account the interests of the Shire of Merredin

ratepayers and residents as a whole.

References:

Regulation 3 Local Government (Rules of Conduct) Regulations 2007

Elected Members and employees accept the responsibility of maintaining these Principles and Standards by:

- communicating and promoting the Shire's Vision;
- creating and sustaining a supportive environment which encourages Elected Members and employees to achieve their full potential; and
- demonstrating commitment to these Principles and Standards through their personal behaviour.

2. OUR VISION

Merredin is the commercial and cultural heart of the Eastern Wheatbelt region. A place people are proud to call home and where visitors are always welcome.

3. OUR VALUES

All employees at the Shire of Merredin will demonstrate the below values:



INTEGRITY

Act in an honest, open and accountable manner in all of our Act activities ensuring they are equitable and socially just.



PARTICIPATION

Provide genuine opportunities for informed community participation in decision making in a framework of local democracy.



SERVICE

Be sensitive and responsive to the needs and aspirations of our community and focusing on customer satisfaction and value for money.



LEARNING

Continue learning from training, our actions and experiences, and continually seeking better and more innovative ways of doing things.



VALUING PEOPLE

Value the contribution the people inside and outside the organisation make to the achievement of the Shire's vision.



COMMITMENT

Ensure our actions serve the people of Merredin and its long-term interests.



SUSTAINABILITY

Have a global perspective and ensure our actions minimise the impact on the environment and the resources available for future generations.

4. CODE OF CONDUCT

4.1 ROLE OF CEO AND EMPLOYEES

The role of employees in local government is determined by the functions of the CEO as set out in section 5.41 of the Act.

5.41. Functions of CEO

The CEO's functions are to:

- a) advise the council in relation to the functions of a local government under this Act and other written laws;*
- b) ensure that advice and information is available to the council so that informed decisions can be made;*
- c) cause council decisions to be implemented;*
- d) manage the day to day operations of the local government;*
- e) liaise with the mayor or president on the local government's affairs and the performance of the local government's functions;*
- f) speak on behalf of the local government if the mayor or president agrees;*
- g) be responsible for the employment, management supervision, direction and dismissal of other employees (subject to section 5.37(2) in relation to senior employees);*
- h) ensure that records and documents of the local government are properly kept for the purposes of this Act and any other written law; and*
- i) perform any other function specified or delegated by the local government or imposed under this Act or any other written law as a function to be performed by the CEO.*

Local Government Act 1995

4.2 PRINCIPLES AFFECTING EMPLOYMENT BY THE SHIRE OF MERREDIN

The principles set out in section 5.40 of the Act apply to the employment of the Shire of Merredin's employees:

5.40. Principles affecting employment by local governments

The following principles apply to a local government in respect of its employees —

- a) employees are to be selected and promoted in accordance with the principles of merit and equity; and*
- b) no power with regard to matters affecting employees is to be exercised on the basis of nepotism or patronage; and*
- c) employees are to be treated fairly and consistently; and*
- d) there is to be no unlawful discrimination against employees or persons seeking employment by the City on a ground referred to in the Equal Opportunity Act 1984 or on any other ground; and*
- e) employees are to be provided with safe and healthy working conditions in accordance with the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984; and*
- f) such other principles, not inconsistent with this Division, as may be prescribed.*

4.3 PERSONAL BEHAVIOUR

Employees will:

- a) Act, and be seen to act, properly, professionally and in accordance with the requirements of the law, the terms of this Code and all policies of the Shire of Merredin;
- b) Perform their duties impartially and in the best interests of the Shire of Merredin uninfluenced by fear or favour;
- c) Act in good faith (i.e. honestly, for the proper purpose, and without exceeding their powers) in the interests of the Shire of Merredin and the community;
- d) Make no allegations which are improper or derogatory (unless true and in the public interest);
- e) Refrain from any form of conduct, in the performance of their official or professional duties, which may cause any reasonable person unwarranted offence or embarrassment; and
- f) Always act in accordance with their obligation of fidelity to the Shire of Merredin.

4.4 HONESTY AND INTEGRITY

Employees will:

- a) Observe the highest standards of honesty and integrity, and avoid conduct which might suggest any departure from these standards;
- b) Be frank and honest in their official dealing with each other; and
- c) Report any dishonesty or possible dishonesty on the part of any other employee to their Executive Manager or the CEO in accordance with this Code and the Shire of Merredin's policies.

4.5 PERFORMANCE OF DUTIES

While on duty, employees will give their whole time and attention to the Shire of Merredin's business and ensure that their work is carried out efficiently, economically and effectively, and that their standard of work reflects favourably both on them and on the Shire of Merredin.

4.6 COMPLIANCE WITH LAWFUL AND REASONABLE DIRECTIONS, DECISIONS AND POLICIES

- a) Employees will comply with any lawful and reasonable direction given by any person having authority to make or give such an order, including but not limited to their Line Manager, Executive Manager or the CEO.
- b) Employees will give effect to the lawful decisions and policies of the Shire of Merredin whether or not they agree with or approve of them.

4.7 ADMINISTRATIVE AND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Employees will ensure compliance with proper and reasonable administrative practices and conduct, and professional and responsible management practices.

4.8 INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

The title to Intellectual Property in all duties relating to contracts of employment will be assigned to the Shire of Merredin upon its creation unless otherwise agreed by separate contract.

4.9 RECORDKEEPING

Employees will ensure complete and accurate local government records are created and maintained in accordance with the Shire of Merredin's Recordkeeping Plan.

4.10 DEALING WITH OTHER EMPLOYEES

- a) Employees will treat other employees with respect, courtesy and professionalism, and refrain from behaviour that constitutes discrimination, bullying or harassment.
- b) Employees must be aware of, and comply with their obligations under relevant law and the Shire of Merredin's policies regarding workplace behaviour and work health and safety, in accordance with the Shire of Merredin Policy Manuals.
- c) Employee behaviour should reflect the Shire of Merredin's values and contribute towards creating and maintaining a safe and supportive workplace.

4.11 DEALING WITH COMMUNITY

- a) Employees will treat all members of the community with respect, courtesy and professionalism.
- b) All Shire of Merredin services must be delivered in accordance with relevant policies and procedures, and any issues resolved promptly, fairly and equitably.

4.12 PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATIONS

- a) All aspects of communication by employees (including verbal, written and electronic), involving the Shire of Merredin's activities should reflect the status, values and objectives of the Shire of Merredin.
- b) Communications should be accurate, polite and professional.

4.13 PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

- a) Personal communications and statements made privately in conversation, written, recorded, emailed or posted in personal social media, have the potential to be made public, whether intended or not.
- b) Employees must not, unless undertaking a duty in accordance with their employment, disclose information, make comments or engage in communication activities about or on behalf of the Shire of Merredin, its Elected Members, employees or contractors, which breach this Code.
- c) Employee comments which become public and breach the Code of Conduct, or any other operational policy or procedure, may constitute a disciplinary matter and may also be determined as misconduct and be notified in accordance with the *Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act 2003*.

4.14 PERSONAL PRESENTATION

Employees are expected to comply with professional, neat and responsible dress standards at all times, in accordance with the Shire of Merredin's relevant policies and procedures.

4.15 GIFTS

- a) Application
This clause does not apply to the CEO.
- b) Definitions

In this clause –

activity involving a local government discretion has the meaning given to it in the *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996*;

activity involving a local government discretion means an activity –

- a) that cannot be undertaken without an authorisation from the local government; or
- b) by way of a commercial dealing with the local government;

[r.19AA of the *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996*]

associated person has the meaning given to it in the *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996*;

associated person means a person who –

- a) is undertaking or seeking to undertake an activity involving a local government discretion; or
- b) it is reasonable to believe, is intending to undertake an activity involving a local government discretion

[r.19AA of the *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996*]

gift has the meaning given to it in the *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996*;

gift –

- a) has the meaning given in section 5.57 [of the Local Government Act 1995]; but
- b) does not include –
 - i. a gift from a relative as defined in section 5.74(1); or
 - ii. a gift that must be disclosed under the Local Government (Elections) Regulations 1997 regulation 30B; or
 - iii. a gift from a statutory authority, government instrumentality or non-profit association for professional training; or
 - iv. a gift from WALGA, the Australian Local Government Association Limited (ABN 31 008 613 876), the Local Government Professionals Australia WA (ABN 91 208 607 072) or the LG Professionals Australia (ABN 85 004 221 818);

[r.19AA of the *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996*]

gift means –

- a) a conferral of a financial benefit (including a disposition of property) made by 1 person in favour of another person unless adequate consideration in money or money's worth passes from the person in whose favour the conferral is made to the person who makes the conferral; or
- b) a travel contribution;

travel includes accommodation incidental to a journey;

travel contribution means a financial or other contribution made by 1 person to travel

undertaken by another person

[Section 5.57 of the Local Government Act 1995]

relative, in relation to a relevant person, means any of the following —

- a) a parent, grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, lineal descendant of the relevant person or of the relevant person's spouse or de facto partner;
- b) the relevant person's spouse or de facto partner or the spouse or de facto partner of any relative specified in paragraph (a),

whether or not the relationship is traced through, or to, a person whose parents were not actually married to each other at the time of the person's birth or subsequently, and whether the relationship is a natural relationship or a relationship established by a written law;

[Section 5.74(1) of the Local Government Act 1995]

prohibited gift has the meaning given to it in the *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996*;

prohibited gift, in relation to a local government employee, means —

- a) a gift worth the threshold amount or more; or
- b) a gift that is 1 of 2 or more gifts given to the local government employee by the same person within a period of 1 year that are in total worth the threshold amount or more;

[r.19AA of the *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996*]

reportable gift means:

- i. a gift worth more than \$10 but less than \$300; or
- ii. a gift that is 1 of 2 or more gifts given to the local government employee by the same person within a period of 1 year that are in total worth more than \$10 but less than \$300].

threshold amount has the meaning given to it in the *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996*, subject to the CEO's determination under subclause (c);

threshold amount, for a prohibited gift, means \$300 or a lesser amount determined under regulation 19AF.

[r.19AA of the *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996*]

c) Determination

In accordance with Regulation 19AF of the *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996*, the CEO has chosen not to determine a lesser amount.

d) Employees must not accept a prohibited gift from an associated person.

e) An employee who accepts a reportable gift from an associated person is to notify the CEO in accordance with subclause (f) and within 10 days of accepting the gift.

f) The notification of the acceptance of a reportable gift must be in writing and include:

- i. the name of the person who gave the gift; and
- ii. the date on which the gift was accepted; and
- iii. a description, and the estimated value, of the gift; and

- iv. the nature of the relationship between the person who is an employee and the person who gave the gift; and
- v. if the gift is one of two or more accepted from the same person within a period of one year:
 - 1) a description;
 - 2) the estimated value; and
 - 3) the date of acceptance, of each other gift accepted within the one year period.
- g) The CEO will maintain a register of reportable gifts and record in it details of notifications given to comply with subclause (f).
- h) The CEO will arrange for the register maintained under subclause (g) to be published on the Shire of Merredin's official website.
- i) As soon as practicable after a person ceases to be an employee, the CEO will remove from the register all records relating to that person. The removed records will be retained for a period of at least 5 years.

4.16 CONFLICT OF INTEREST

- a) Employees will ensure that there is no actual (or perceived) conflict of interest between their personal interests and the impartial fulfilment of their professional duties.
- b) Employees will not engage in private work with or for any person or body with an interest in a proposed or current contract with the Shire of Merredin, without first disclosing the interest to the CEO. In this respect, it does not matter whether advantage is in fact obtained, as any appearance that private dealings could conflict with performance of duties must be scrupulously avoided.
- c) Employees will lodge written notice with the CEO describing an intention to undertake a dealing in land which is within the district of the Shire of Merredin, or which may otherwise be in conflict with the Local Government's functions (other than purchasing the principal place of residence).
- d) Employees who exercise a recruitment or any other discretionary function will disclose any actual (or perceived) conflict of interest to the CEO before dealing with relatives or friends and will disqualify themselves from dealing with those persons.
- e) Employees will conduct themselves in an apolitical manner and refrain from political activities which could cast doubt on their neutrality and impartiality in acting in their professional capacity.

4.17 SECONDARY EMPLOYMENT

An employee must not engage in secondary employment or business activities (including paid and unpaid work) without receiving the prior written approval of the CEO.

4.18 DISCLOSURE OF FINANCIAL INTERESTS

- a) All employees will apply the principles of disclosure of financial interest as contained within the Act.
- b) Employees who have been delegated a power or duty, have been nominated as 'designated employees' or provide advice or reports to Council or Committees, must ensure that they are aware of, and comply with, their statutory obligations under the Act.

4.19 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS RELATING TO IMPARTIALITY

- a) In this clause, **interest** has the meaning given to it in the *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996*.

interest —

- a) means an interest that could, or could reasonably be perceived to, adversely affect the impartiality of the person having the interest; and
- b) includes an interest arising from kinship, friendship or membership of an association.

[r.19AA of the *Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996*]

- b) An employee who has an interest in any matter to be discussed at a Council or Committee meeting attended by the employee is required to disclose the nature of the interest:
 - i. in a written notice given to the CEO before the meeting; or
 - ii. at the meeting immediately before the matter is discussed.
- c) An employee who has given, or will give, advice in respect of any matter to be discussed at a Council or Committee meeting not attended by the employee is required to disclose the nature of any interest the employee has in the matter:
 - i. in a written notice given to the CEO before the meeting; or
 - ii. at the time the advice is given.
- d) A requirement described under (b) and (c) excludes an interest referred to in section 5.60 of the Act.
- e) An employee is excused from a requirement made under (b) or (c) to disclose the nature of an interest because they did not now and could not reasonably be expected to know:
 - i. that they had an interest in the matter; or
 - ii. that the matter in which they had an interest would be discussed at the meeting and they disclosed the nature of the interest as soon as possible after the discussion began.
- f) If an employee makes a disclosure in a written notice given to the CEO before a meeting to comply with requirements of (b) or (c), then:
 - i. before the meeting the CEO is to cause the notice to be given to the person who is to preside at the meeting; and
 - ii. at the meeting the person presiding must bring the notice and its contents to the attention of persons present immediately before a matter to which the disclosure relates is discussed.
- g) If:
 - i. to comply with a requirement made under item (b), the nature of an employee's interest in a matter is disclosed at a meeting; or
 - ii. a disclosure is made as described in item (e)(ii) at a meeting; or
 - iii. to comply with a requirement made under item (f)(ii), a notice disclosing the nature of an employee's interest in a matter is brought to the attention of the persons present at a meeting,the nature of the interest is to be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

4.20 USE AND DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

- a) Employees must not access, use or disclose information held by the Shire of Merredin except as directly required for, and in the course of, the performance of their duties.
- b) Employees will handle all information obtained, accessed or created in the course of their duties responsibly, and in accordance with this Code, the Shire of Merredin's policies and procedures.
- c) Employees must not access, use or disclose information to gain improper advantage for themselves or another person or body, in ways which are inconsistent with their obligation to act impartially and in good faith, or to improperly cause harm, detriment or impairment to any person, body, or the Shire of Merredin.
- d) Due discretion must be exercised by all employees who have access to confidential, private or sensitive information.
- e) Nothing in this section prevents an employee from disclosing information if the disclosure:
 - i. is authorised by the CEO or the CEO's delegate; or
 - ii. is permitted or required by law.

4.21 IMPROPER OR UNDUE INFLUENCE

- a) Employees will not take advantage of their position to improperly influence Elected Members or employees in the performance of their duties or functions, in order to gain undue or improper (direct or indirect) advantage or gain for themselves or for any other person or body.
- b) Employees must not take advantage of their position to improperly influence any other person in order to gain undue or improper (direct or indirect) advantage or gain, pecuniary or otherwise, for themselves or for any other person or body.
- c) Employees must not take advantage of their positions to improperly disadvantage or cause detriment to the local government or any other person.

4.22 USE OF SHIRE OF MERREDIN RESOURCES

- a) In this clause –

Shire of Merredin resources includes local government property and services provided or paid for by the Shire of Merredin;

local government property has the meaning given to it in the Act.

local government property means anything, whether land or not, that belongs to, or is vested in, or under the care, control or management of, the local government

[Section 1.4 of the *Local Government Act 1995*]

- b) Employees will:
 - i. be honest in their use of the Shire of Merredin resources and must not misuse them or permit their misuse (or the appearance of misuse) by any other person or body;
 - ii. use the Shire of Merredin resources entrusted to them effectively, economically, in the course of their duties and in accordance with relevant policies and procedures; and
 - iii. not use the Shire of Merredin's resources (including the services of employees) for private purposes (other than when supplied as part of a contract of employment), unless properly authorised to do so, and appropriate payments are made (as determined by the CEO).

4.23 USE OF SHIRE OF MERREDIN FINANCES

- a) Employees are expected to act responsibly and exercise sound judgment with respect to matters involving the Shire of Merredin's finances.
- b) Employees will use Shire of Merredin finances only within the scope of their authority, as defined in position descriptions, policies and procedures, and administrative practices.
- c) Employees with financial management responsibilities will comply with the requirements of the *Local Government (Financial Management) Regulations 1996*.
- d) Employees exercising purchasing authority will comply with the Shire of Merredin's Purchasing Policy, and the systems and procedures established by the CEO in accordance with regulation 5 of the *Local Government (Financial Management) Regulations 1996*.
- e) Employees will act with care, skill, diligence, honesty and integrity when using local government finances.
- f) Employees will ensure that any use of Shire of Merredin finances is appropriately documented in accordance with the relevant policy and procedure, including the Shire of Merredin's Recordkeeping Plan.

4.24 REPORTING OF SUSPECTED BREACHES OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Employees shall report suspected breaches of the Code to their Line Manager, any Executive Manager or the CEO.

4.25 HANDLING OF SUSPECTED BREACHES OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT

Suspected breaches of the Code will be dealt with in accordance with the relevant Shire of Merredin policies and procedures, depending on the nature of the suspected breach.

4.26 REPORTING SUSPECTED UNETHICAL, FRAUDULENT, DISHONEST, ILLEGAL OR CORRUPT BEHAVIOUR

- a) Employees may report suspected unethical, fraudulent, dishonest, illegal or corrupt behaviour to their supervisor, Manager, or the CEO.
- b) In accordance with the *Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act 2003*, if the CEO suspects on reasonable grounds that the alleged behaviour may constitute misconduct as defined in that Act, the CEO will notify:
 - i. the Corruption and Crime Commission, in the case of serious misconduct; or
 - ii. the Public Sector Commissioner, in the case of minor misconduct.
- c) Employees, or any person, may also report suspected serious misconduct to the Corruption and Crime Commission or suspected minor misconduct to the Public Sector Commissioner.
- d) Employees, or any person, may also make a Public Interest Disclosure to the Shire of Merredin to report suspected unethical, fraudulent, dishonest, illegal or corrupt behaviour, using the Shire of Merredin's Public Interest Disclosure Procedures, published on the Shire of Merredin's website.

4.27 HANDLING OF SUSPECTED UNETHICAL, FRAUDULENT, DISHONEST, ILLEGAL OR CORRUPT BEHAVIOUR

Suspected unethical, fraudulent, dishonest, illegal or corrupt behaviour will be dealt with in accordance with the appropriate Shire of Merredin policies and procedures, and where relevant, in

accordance with the lawful directions of the appropriate statutory body.

4.28 OTHER APPLICABLE INFORMATION

This code of conduct should be considered in conjunction with all other Shire of Merredin Policies and Procedures.