



**Commissioner for
Children and Young People**
Western Australia

Code of Conduct

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Message from the Commissioner

As Commissioner for Children and Young People, I am the independent person who works closely with children and young people, their families, community and government to make Western Australia a better place for children and young people.

My staff assist me in this work, providing research and advice, policy, communications and internal support to enable me to work effectively.

As the advocate for our youngest citizens, our office must always work towards the best interests of the child.

We obtain and represent the views of children and young people; present research and policy on how the needs of our children and young people can best be fulfilled; promote the work and the profile of the office; and ensure that children and young people are given the voice they need.

As employees of the WA Public Service, we have obligations to each other, to the Government of WA as our employer, and to the people of WA. These obligations include ensuring that we serve the public interest, make accountable and ethical decisions and conduct our work and our relationships professionally.

This Code of Conduct helps guide all of us in our behaviour in the workplace, to ensure we meet those obligations.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colin Pettit'. The signature is stylized and somewhat cursive.

Colin Pettit

Commissioner for Children and Young People WA

Introduction

The Western Australian Public Sector Code of Ethics is established under the *Public Sector Management Act 1994*. It sets out minimum standards of conduct and integrity to be complied with by public sector bodies and employees and establishes high level principles and values to guide our behaviour in the workplace, with colleagues and with stakeholders. The Code of Ethics principles are:

- **Personal Integrity:** We act with care and diligence and make decisions that are honest, fair, impartial, timely, and consider all relevant information.
- **Relationships with Others:** We treat people with respect, courtesy and sensitivity and recognise their interests, rights, safety and welfare.
- **Accountability:** We use the resources of the State in a responsible and accountable manner that ensures the efficient, effective and appropriate use of human, natural, financial and physical resources, property and information.

Further information can be found in the Public Sector Commissioner's Instruction No.7 - <https://publicsector.wa.gov.au/node/1691>

Section 9(a) of the *Public Sector Management Act 1994 (WA)* requires all public sector bodies and employees to observe the principles of conduct and to comply with the provisions of:

- the Public Sector Management Act and any other Act governing their conduct
- the Commissioner's Instructions, public sector standards and codes of ethics, and
- any code of conduct applicable to the public sector body or employee concerned.

It also requires public sector bodies and employees to act with integrity, courtesy, consideration and sensitivity in dealings with employees and members of the public.

The Commissioner for Children and Young People Code of Conduct complies with this code and provides additional scope specific to the Agency.

The Code of Conduct applies to:

- All staff including permanent, fixed-term, seconded and casual staff
- Volunteers
- Student placement program and work experience attendees.

In this document, **Commissioner** refers to the person in the role of Commissioner for Children and Young People, and **we/our** refers to staff of the Commissioner's office.

Vision, values and principles

Our job

We support the Commissioner to work proactively with children and young people, their families, the community and government in Western Australia to improve the wellbeing of children and young people.

Our hope for the future

All children and young people in Western Australia are heard, are healthy and safe, reach their potential and are welcomed as valued members of the community.

Our special priorities

The Commissioner represents and advocates on behalf of all children and young people under 18 years of age in Western Australia. The Act requires the Commissioner to give priority to the interests and needs of:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people
- children and young people who are vulnerable or disadvantaged for any reason or circumstance.

In accordance with statutory obligations, the Commissioner:

- advocates for children and young people – children and young people are entitled to live in a caring and nurturing environment, to be protected from harm and exploitation, and encouraged to reach their potential
- promotes strategies and outcomes which enhance the wellbeing of children and young people
- monitors the wellbeing of children and young people generally in the community
- recognises parents, guardians, families and communities have the main role to protect children and young people and promote their wellbeing, and advocates that they should be supported in carrying out this role
- monitors the way in which a government agency investigates a complaint against it by a child or young person and monitors trends in these complaints
- promotes the participation of children and young people in decision making that affects their lives and encourages government and non-government agencies to include children and young people in decision making
- promotes and encourages the views of children and young people as valuable and that they should be seriously considered when decisions are made on matters that affect them
- promotes awareness and understanding in the community about the wellbeing of children and young people

- consults with children and young people and their families in their communities
- considers and makes recommendations on laws, policies, programs and services affecting children and young people
- inquires into any matter affecting the wellbeing of children and young people.

Our values

We strive to live our values in all that we do.

Our values are:

Respect | Honesty | Inclusion | Creativity | Positivity | Determination | Independence
| Integrity

Legislation and guidelines

The principal legislation includes the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 2006*, *Public Sector Management Act 1994 (WA)* and the *Financial Management Act 2006* and associated relevant legislation, regulations, policies and procedures.

We need to know the responsibilities of our employment and be aware that they impose certain conditions on us. These include adherence to this Code of Conduct.

The Commissioner approved a Commitment to Child Safety in 2017 reflecting the work of the office in leading Child Safe Organisations in Western Australia. The commitment statement reflects the principle of the act s1(4)(a):

Children and young people are entitled to live in a caring and nurturing environment and to be protected from harm and exploitation. Children and young people should be safe, feel safe and be respected wherever they are. The Commissioner for Children and Young People prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in all work of the office and in our work with other organisations.

Definitions related to Code of Conduct

Breaches of this Code of Conduct

Breaches of this Code of Conduct, or practices outlined in CCYP policies, are managed internally through discipline, grievance or performance management, and overseen by the Commissioner. Where applicable, the matter is referred to the Public Sector Commission.

CCYP Resources

CCYP resources include staff time and expertise, information technology, hardware and software, other communication devices, facilities and equipment, stationery, furniture and furnishings, motor vehicles, goods, supplies and services.

Misuse of information

Misuse of information includes:

- Disclosing information to a member of the public or to other public servants or Government departments/agencies without proper authority;
- Accessing official information for personal benefit or advantage, or for the benefit or advantage of another person, and
- Seeking to take advantage of another person on the basis of information held in official records.

Public comment

Public comment includes public speaking engagements, comments on radio and television and views expressed in letters to newspapers or in books, journals or notices where it might be expected that the publication, circulation or electronic communication of the comment will spread to the community at large. Comments made in email messages may also be interpreted as public comment.

Circumstances in which public comment would be deemed as inappropriate include:

- Where it would be inferred that the public comment, although made in a private capacity, is in some way an official comment of CCYP; and
- Where public comment, even though unrelated to our normal duties, amounts to criticism sufficiently strong or persistent to give the impressions that we are not prepared to implement or administer the policies of CCYP.

Code of Conduct

Personal Behaviour

We put the best interests of children and young people first.

We provide all necessary and appropriate assistance to members of the public.

We adhere to child-safe and child-friendly work policies, practices and procedures to ensure children and young people feel safe and respected.

We treat members of the public and other employees with courtesy, respect, sensitivity and equity.

We respect the diversity of our community, including diversity in culture, gender, sexuality, ability, and heritage.

We conduct ourselves in a professional manner when representing the office, including appropriate dress and behaviour.

We do not tolerate any form of discrimination, harassment or bullying.

We do not tolerate reprisal action against those who speak up about misconduct and integrity matters.

We do not engage in any private activity that may adversely affect the performance of our duties. Such behaviour includes, but is not limited to, harming a child, alcohol or drug abuse or violent behaviour.

We make sure that all matters we handle are dealt with consistently, promptly and fairly. Matters must be dealt with in accordance with approved policies and procedures and without discrimination on any grounds.

Communication and official information

We ensure we have appropriate permission to make comment on behalf of CCYP or to otherwise represent the office, including in person, in communications and online.

We may only disclose official information when we have been given the proper authority by CCYP, or when required to do so by law.

We maintain our right as members of the community to make public comment or enter in public debate on political and social issues but our views are not linked in any way to our employment with CCYP or as public sector employees.

We are aware of the protocols around internet forums and social networking sites and adhere to the CCYP policy on Staff Participation in Social Networking.

We take care to maintain the integrity and security of official documents and information entrusted to us in the course of our duties. Such documents and information are only be used in the legitimate exercise of CCYP's functions.

We adhere to the requirements of the *State Records Act 2000* for maintaining the integrity of records.

On leaving CCYP we ensure that information gained in the course of our employment is not disseminated unlawfully or unethically.

Fraudulent or corrupt behaviour

We are honest in all our dealings with the public and with other staff.

We are responsible for our own acts and omissions and are accountable for them.

We do not take or seek improper advantage from authority or information gained in the course of our employment.

We have a responsibility to notify our manager or another appropriate senior manager of any unethical behaviour or misconduct by another employee.

Use of public resources

We carry out our duties in an efficient, effective and economical manner.

We comply with all relevant legislative, industrial, policy or administrative requirements and financial delegations.

We maintain adequate documentation to support any decision made, and make impartial decisions when using discretionary powers.

We are efficient and economical in the use and management of CCYP resources.

We are careful in the use of public property and services.

We obtain official permission before any use of CCYP facilities and equipment for any personal purposes beyond what is authorised in CCYP policy and practices.

We ensure we only incur or authorise expenditure on behalf of CCYP within our delegations and according to government purchasing requirements for goods and services.

We acknowledge that computers, telephones and other equipment and facilities are available to us to perform our official duties and should, with the exception of reasonable private use, be only used when carrying out our duties.

Record keeping and use of information

We record actions and decisions on appropriate files.

We are responsible for adhering to the *Australian Government's Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* which guides us in dealing with personal information as a public sector agency.

We are mindful of privacy issues when accessing our information systems.

We maintain information securely to preserve the obligation of privacy and fairness to individuals.

We only access information or records that are relevant to the execution of our duties.

Conflicts of Interest and gifts and benefits

We are responsible for declaring and managing any personal interests, associations and activities (financial or otherwise) that either conflicts with or is perceived to conflict with the proper exercise of our duties, in accordance with the CCYP Conflict of Interest Policy.

We report any offer of a gift or benefit to ourselves, our family or other people personally connected with us that may be regarded by the public as likely to influence the way we do our work.

We record any gifts in the CCYP Gifts Register, and use them only in accordance with the Gifts and Benefits Policy.

Reporting suspected breaches of the code

We comply with this Code of Conduct, and associated internal policies.

We report any concerns or suspected breaches to this Code that we become aware of.