

Code of Conduct & Ethics

*Adopted in December 2017,
updated December 2018.*

PREAMBLE

The National Party of Australia – NSW is defined by its Members and their shared values which are set out in the “We believe” statement that forms the preamble to the Party’s Constitution and Rules.

Among these values are equal opportunity; freedom of speech, movement and philosophy; freedom of religion and association; equality and justice before the law; reward for initiative; civic nationalism and Australian identity, and opposition to social and political ideas that threaten freedom and democracy in Australia and throughout the world.

The National Party (previously named the Country Party) is a respected institution in Australia and New South Wales. It is dedicated, in particular, to protecting and advancing the interests of the people who live and work in regional and rural Australia and New South Wales. Our Members have an obligation to protect the values and ideals of our Party and to carry on its legacy in a manner in keeping with our proud history. This is essential to the maintenance of both our Party’s standing in the community and respect for our nation’s democracy.

This code sets out the principles by which Party Members are required to carry out their political activity and the auspices under which these principles are to be upheld.

This Code recognises the competitive and adversarial nature of Australia’s political system, which fosters vigorous public debate and, in so doing, serves the public interest.

1. Application

1.1.1 This Code applies to:

- (a) all Members of the Party;
- (b) any person holding a position in the Party's campaign organisations;
- (c) candidates;
- (d) any person who volunteers for the Party;
- (e) staff of the National Party of Australia – NSW;
- (f) NSW Nationals Members of the Parliament of Australia and the Parliament of New South Wales;
- (g) any person who holds, or is declared as seeking, any office within the Party; and
- (h) regular suppliers of services or goods to the Party, when acting in that capacity.

1.1.2 NSW Nationals Members of the Australian or NSW Parliaments shall ensure their staff members behave in ways that maintain the confidence and respect of the public and conform to relevant parliamentary codes of conduct or guidelines.

2. Definitions

2.1.1 In this Code:

“Member” means Registered Party Members;

“Candidate” means any person who has applied to be a pre-selection nominee, or who has been duly nominated, pre-selected or endorsed, to represent the Party in a federal, state or local election, or who has been nominated to be elected or appointed to any office in the Party.

“Respondent” means any person against whom a complaint has been made.

“Senior office in the Party” refers to Members of the Central Executive and senior Central Council staff.

3. Ethical principles

- 3.1.1 The Party and its Members should pursue their activities with a commitment to basic values and principles of ethical behaviour central to which are integrity, honesty, responsibility, respect, humility, fairness and compassion.
- 3.1.2 Fundamental to the effectiveness and reputation of the Party and each of its Members is a principled, values-driven and reasoned approach to all actions and decisions. Each Member has an obligation to the Party and every other Member to act constructively and in a timely manner to inspire respect and support for this Code and to adhere to it when acting on behalf of the Party.

4. Guidelines

- 4.1.1 The following guidelines address some of the most commonly encountered ethical issues that face Members. Recognising the impossibility of anticipating every situation that may arise, this is not to be viewed as limiting the range of the ethical guidelines binding the Party and its Members. These guidelines may be expanded upon or modified as the Central Council and Constitution & Ethics Committee encounter new situations and gain experience in the hearing and disposing of cases. The Committee may proactively issue written guidelines to provide assistance to Members with respect to specific matters.

GENERAL CONDUCT

- 4.2.1 Members shall strive to conduct themselves with integrity so as to sustain and enhance public confidence in the Party and the political process.
- 4.2.2 Members shall make every effort to ensure that their conduct is above reproach in the view of reasonable, fair minded and informed persons. Members shall avoid conduct or practices likely to bring discredit upon themselves or the Party or any other Members of the Party.
- 4.2.3 Members shall display respect for each other, and refrain from disparaging fellow Members or the Party in public and in the media beyond the bounds of policy discourse.
- 4.2.4 Members shall not engage in online activities that could be construed as bringing the Party into disrepute, or use social media to attack or abuse others, or post derogatory or offensive comments in any forum in any context.
- 4.2.5 Members shall not engage in harassment, sexual harassment or bullying of each other.
- 4.2.6 Members shall exercise appropriate discretion with regards to the affairs and records of the Party and not discuss or disclose information obtained in the course of Party meetings to any others not otherwise entitled to be privy to that information.
- 4.2.7 Members shall have regard to the need to protect personal information received in dealings between Members, office-bearers and staff of the Party and the community.
- 4.2.8 Members, in addition to observing these high standards personally, shall encourage and support their observance by other Members.

- 4.2.9 NSW Nationals Members of Parliament shall abide by any code of conduct adopted by the parliament in which they serve and adhere to guidelines issued by the parliament in respect of their use of public resources and parliamentary expenses.
- 4.2.10 Members shall not make vexatious or frivolous complaints against other Members.
- 4.2.11 Where a dispute arises within a Branch or Electorate Council, that Branch or Electorate Council shall, as far as reasonable, take responsibility for resolving the dispute locally.
- 4.2.12 Members shall be faithful to the letter and spirit of this Code, the objectives of the National Party of Australia - NSW and its Constitution & Rules, including the Rules of Debate and Guidelines issued by Central Council, and to the laws of Australia and New South Wales.
- 4.2.13 Any doubt as to the propriety of any course of action shall be discussed with a Panel of Ethics Advisers appointed by the Constitution & Ethics Committee from time to time.

ADVERTISING & CAMPAIGNING

- 4.3.1 Members, in any advertising, campaigns and promotional material, shall strive at all times to make statements that are accurate and to avoid statements that are misleading or deceptive.
- 4.3.2 Members shall not sponsor advertising or issue other promotional materials that make false and defamatory references to another Member, leader, or any candidate of another political party, or another political party generally.
- 4.3.3 Members shall not sponsor advertising or other promotional material containing language or other visual representation that promotes hatred toward any individual or group.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

- 4.4.1 Members should take care to identify and avoid any conflict of interest.
- 4.4.2 Where a conflict or a potential conflict of interest arises, Members shall be guided by existing codes regarding conflict of interest such as those which apply to parliamentarians in their elected capacity, lobbyists and public servants.
- 4.4.3 Members listed on the Australian Government Register of Lobbyists and/or the NSW Government Register of Third-Party Lobbyists shall cease any such employment or business activities before seeking election or appointment to a senior office in the Party.
- 4.4.4 At the commencement of any meeting of a Party unit, Members shall be invited to declare any conflict or potential conflict of interest on matters on the meeting agenda. A conflict of interest does not exist where the Member is only affected as a member of the public or a member of a broad class.
- 4.4.5 Members are encouraged to seek advice from the Party's Panel of Ethics Advisers prior to taking any action which may pose a conflict of interest.

USE OF PARTY FUNDS AND FUNDRAISING

- 4.5.1 Members who are authorised to expend Party funds shall do so in a manner consistent with the Constitution and Rules and this Code.
- 4.5.2 No Member shall pressure prospective donors or induce donations by threatening retaliation or the withholding of legitimate government actions and no Member shall offer benefits to induce donations.
- 4.5.3 Members shall abide by both the letter and spirit of state and federal laws governing political donations.

5. Enforcement – Investigations and Sanctions

- 5.1.1 Investigations of alleged breaches of this Code shall be conducted under the auspices of Central Council. Procedures in dealing with Respondents shall be consistent with principles of natural justice.
- 5.1.2 Where Members have been found to have breached this Code, sanctions shall be applied under the Powers and Duties of Central Council as set out in the Constitution and Rules.

6. Annual Review

- 6.1.1 This Code shall be reviewed annually by the Constitution & Ethics Committee. The Committee shall make any recommendations for amendments to Central Council.

As resolved by Central Council December 2017, and updated by Central Council in December 2018.