

# VESPIIA'S CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT



Upon the granting of Membership of all classes, the Members of VESPIIA commit to upholding this Code of Professional Conduct. Members accept that they will be held accountable for their conduct under this Code and the disciplinary procedures of the By-Laws of the Institute.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This Code provides the core principles of conduct required of our Members to ensure they practice their profession with the highest ethical and professional standards. The Code serves to ensure integrity of their decisions and of the sector as a whole, and to foster confidence and respect, continuing the cycle of service for the community they serve.

In adhering to this Code, Members should pursue an appropriate balance of the following

- Commitment to best practice and decisions based on facts and evidence
- Sustainable and ethical development of programs and support
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' connections to country and their internationally recognised rights to self-determination and free, prior and informed consent (consistent with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples)
- Responsible management of records and information of their beneficiaries and donors
- Effective and fair governance
- Pleasant, healthy, safe and socially connected working environments.

VESPIIA's mission is to uphold the professionalism and wellbeing of those who serve, protect, and support the community. This Code reflects that mission by setting clear standards of conduct for members.

This Code is a shared commitment between the Institute and its members to uphold professional and ethical standards across the service community.

## 2. PRINCIPLES

Members must act at all times in a manner that upholds the integrity and reputation of VESPIIA and the broader veteran, emergency services and policing community.

The five guiding principles are:

- Competence and diligence
- Ethical conduct
- Respect, honesty and integrity
- Professional behaviour
- Confidentiality and disclosure

Members undertaking any form of paid, pro bono, voluntary or honorary commission are bound by the Code. Members are to conduct themselves in accordance with the Code at all times so that they do not prejudice their professional status or the reputation of the Institute.

## 3. SCOPE

This Code applies to:

- a.all Individual Members, Fellows, and Honorary Members of VESPIIA;
- b.all Organisational Members and;
  - i.their officers, and employees, when acting in connection with VESPIIA programs, events, or representation.

Compliance with this Code is a condition of membership and ongoing participation in VESPIIA programs or governance structures.

## 4. COMPLIANCE

- Members will comply with all Federal, State and Municipal laws and regulations applicable to their operations, programs and fundraising activities.
- Any complaint raised against a Member for an alleged breach of this Code or for other alleged unprofessional conduct will be considered in accordance with the Complaints Policy and By-Laws of the Institute.
- Members agree to accept the decision of the Panel, or Directors, in respect of any complaint brought against them under the code.
- Members agree to have their adherence to the Code monitored by VESPIIA.

## 5. CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

- Members must treat all information acquired through their professional or voluntary activities as confidential unless disclosure is authorised or required by law.
- Information must be stored and disposed of securely.
- Members must comply with applicable privacy and data protection laws, including obligations relating to data collection, retention, and breach notification.
- Personal information must never be used for personal gain or shared with third parties without proper authority.
- When using technology or artificial intelligence tools, members must ensure personal or sensitive data is not disclosed or processed in a way that risks privacy or confidentiality.

## 6. COMPETENCE AND DILIGENCE

- Members must perform their duties diligently and only within the limits of their competence, training, and authority.
- Members must maintain appropriate professional knowledge and undertake ongoing learning to ensure currency in their field.
- Members must accurately represent their qualifications, experience, and role.
- Members must maintain any insurance or professional registrations required by law or the Institute.
- Members must report to VESPIIA any serious misconduct or breach of this Code by another member where they have direct knowledge of it.
- Members must not make public statements or representations on behalf of VESPIIA unless expressly authorised.

## 7. ETHICAL CONDUCT AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

- Members must act honestly and in good faith in all professional dealings.
- Members must not engage in conduct likely to bring themselves, VESPIIA, the profession, or the sector into disrepute.
- Conflicts of interest must be disclosed promptly and managed appropriately.
- Members must not solicit or accept any gift, benefit, or hospitality that could reasonably be perceived as influencing their decisions.
- Organisational Members must have internal policies for managing conflicts of interest, gifts, and hospitality that meet or exceed the standards of this Code.
- Members must not offer inducements or improper benefits to others in relation to their professional activities.

## 8. RESPECTFUL CONDUCT AND SAFETY

### 8.1. Purpose

VESPIIA is an inclusive Institute. We recognise and respect the diversity of those who serve and support the veteran, emergency services, and policing communities, including their families. VESPIIA values all forms of service equally, without distinction based on role, branch, employment status, or length or type of service.

We are committed to providing a professional environment free from harassment, discrimination, and bigotry. This includes respect and safety for people of all races, cultures, genders, sexual orientations, gender identities or expressions, abilities, ages, beliefs, and backgrounds.

VESPIIA has a zero-tolerance stance on sexual harassment, sexual violence, and any form of gender-based harm. No form of harassment, violence, exclusion, prejudice, or disrespectful behaviour will be tolerated.

### 8.2. Expected Conduct

All members must treat others with dignity and respect in every professional interaction.

Members must not engage in, condone, or ignore conduct that could reasonably be regarded as bullying, sexual harassment, discrimination, or victimisation.

Members must also refrain from language or behaviour that demeans, excludes, or disrespects others on the basis of their background, service, or identity

## 8. RESPECTFUL CONDUCT AND SAFETY

### 8.3. Definitions

- **Bullying** means repeated, unreasonable behaviour that creates a risk to health or safety.
- **Sexual harassment or sexual violence** means any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favour, behaviour, or act of a sexual nature that a reasonable person would expect to cause offence, humiliation, intimidation, or harm, regardless of intent.
- Discrimination means less favourable treatment, deliberate exclusion, or harassment based on any protected attribute including race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin, cultural background, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, intersex status, age, disability, religion, political belief, marital or family status, or service history.
- Victimisation means subjecting a person to detriment for raising, supporting, or participating in a complaint or process under this Code.

### 8.4. Responsibilities of Individual Members

- Conduct themselves respectfully and professionally in all settings linked to their professional role or VESPIIA activities.
- Take reasonable steps to prevent and address inappropriate conduct if it occurs within their control.
- Challenge and report behaviour inconsistent with VESPIIA's commitment to inclusion and respect.
- Co-operate with any VESPIIA inquiry or process relating to a complaint under this section.
- Not engage in behaviour, on or offline, that may bring the Institute, its programs, or its members into disrepute.

### 8.5. Responsibilities of Organisational Members

- Maintain and enforce policies addressing sexual harassment, bullying, discrimination, and victimisation that meet or exceed legal obligations.
- Provide clear internal mechanisms for staff, volunteers, and contractors to report such behaviour safely and confidentially.
- Promote an inclusive culture that reflects and supports the diversity of the service community.
- Notify VESPIIA promptly if a substantiated complaint arises in connection with any VESPIIA-related program, project, or event.
- Ensure that any event or activity bearing VESPIIA's name or sponsorship operates in a safe, respectful, and inclusive manner.

### 8.6. Institute-Sponsored or Supported Activities

Where VESPIIA supports, sponsors, or endorses an activity delivered by a member or member organisation, that member or organisation remains responsible for:

- Implementing its own workplace conduct and safety policies;
- Ensuring participants are aware of behavioural expectations; and
- Preventing any action or omission that could reasonably be seen to compromise the safety, integrity, or reputation of the Institute.

## 9. RESPECT, HONESTY AND INTEGRITY

- Members must act honestly, transparently, and in good faith in all professional and volunteer dealings.
- Members must not misrepresent their role, qualifications, or professional capability.
- Members must not misuse their position or access to people, information, or resources for personal advantage.
- Members must not exploit the experiences, images, or stories of individuals or communities for personal or organisational gain.
- Members must ensure their conduct, statements, and representations reflect the integrity and reputation of the Institute and the broader service community.

## 10. SOCIAL MEDIA AND PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

- Members must ensure that all public communications, including social media, are factual, respectful, and consistent with professional standards.
- Members must not disclose confidential or sensitive information through any public platform.
- When expressing personal views, members must make it clear that those views are their own and not those of VESPIIA.
- Members must not post, share, or endorse material that could reasonably be regarded as offensive, harassing, defamatory, or damaging to the reputation of the Institute or its stakeholders.
- Organisational Members must have a social media or communications policy that covers online conduct, representation, and crisis escalation.



## // **11. FUNDRAISING AND USE OF FUNDS**

- Members involved in fundraising must ensure transparency, accuracy, and accountability.
- Donations must be used only for their intended purpose and recorded appropriately.
- Members must not accept donations or sponsorships that may create a conflict of interest or that could reasonably be perceived to compromise integrity.
- Fundraising directed at vulnerable persons or minors must be handled with extra care and comply with relevant laws.
- All promotional or marketing material must be truthful and not misleading.

## // **12. SAFEGUARDING AND BOUNDARIES**

- Members must maintain appropriate professional boundaries in all interactions with beneficiaries, clients, and participants.
- Members must not use their role within VESPIIA to gain personal, financial, or other advantage over others.
- Members working directly with children or vulnerable people must comply with relevant Working With Children Check and screening requirements.
- Organisational Members must maintain policies and screening procedures consistent with their jurisdictional obligations.
- Members must escalate any safeguarding concern or incident connected to VESPIIA activities promptly to the Institute.

## // **13. WHISTLEBLOWING AND NON-RETALIATION**

- Members may report suspected breaches of this Code or other serious misconduct to VESPIIA confidentially.
  - Anonymous complaints will only be accepted where there is a genuine safety concern or risk of harm that prevents the complainant from being identified (for example, in cases involving sexual harassment or similar conduct).
- Members must not victimise or retaliate against anyone who raises a concern in good faith.
- VESPIIA will take reasonable steps to protect the confidentiality and safety of whistleblowers in accordance with its Complaints Policy and applicable privacy protections.

## // **14. COMPLIANCE AND DISCIPLINARY PROCESS**

- Alleged breaches of this Code will be handled in accordance with the Complaints and Disciplinary Procedures set out in the Members Handbook and By-laws.
- The Board may impose sanctions including education, supervision, written warning, suspension, or termination of membership.
- Members must cooperate fully with any investigation.
- Members must comply with any directions or corrective actions issued by VESPIIA as a result of a complaint finding.

## // **15. REVIEW**

VESPIIA will review this Code at least every three years, or sooner if required by law or organisational change, to ensure it remains current and effective.

## // **16. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

All members acknowledge that compliance with this Code is a condition of membership and agree to uphold its provisions as a commitment to professional and ethical standards. By maintaining membership, each member confirms their ongoing agreement to uphold this Code and any future amendments approved by the Board.