



**STORMWATER**  
AUSTRALIA

**Policy Library v1.5**

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# 1 Code of Conduct

The SIA is the peak body for the Stormwater Sector. All members, staff and contractors of the SIA are required to sign and adhere to the SIA Code of Conduct (“Code”). By signing the SIA Code all signatories agree to conduct their activities with integrity, respect, transparency and accountability. This means they undertake to assist in the running of a well-managed organisation, to be financially transparent in all matters relating to the SIA, and to uphold the agreed set of values and principles in the work they undertake for and on behalf of the SIA. The Code aims to maintain and enhance standards throughout the SIA community, ensuring public confidence in the integrity of individuals and organisations comprising the SIA community and quality and effectiveness of SIA programs.

SIA members, employees and contractors and contractors are required, under the Code, to behave at all times in a way that upholds the SIA Values.

The Code requires that members and employees and contractors must:

- Behave honestly and with integrity in the course of SIA membership or employment;
- Act with care and diligence in the course of SIA membership or employment;
- When acting in the course of SIA membership or employment, treat everyone with respect and courtesy, and without harassment;
- Seek to enhance gender equity;
- In all of its activities and particularly their communications to the public, members and staff will accord due respect to the dignity, values, history, religion, and culture of the people with whom they work consistent with principles of basic human rights and environmental protection.
- At all times seek to uphold a Principle of fairness, to build on relationships that ensure fairness with regard to the common environment and life opportunities
- At all times seek to uphold a Principle of care recognising that actions should be managed in a precautionary and responsible manner to protect the health and well being of current and future generations and the environment.
- When acting in the course of SIA membership or employment, comply with all applicable Australian laws;
- Maintain appropriate confidentiality about dealings that the member or employee has with any government or industry representatives
- Members and staff will oppose and not be a willing party to wrongdoing, corruption, bribery, or other financial impropriety in any of their activities. They shall take prompt and firm corrective action whenever and wherever wrongdoing is found among the SIA, paid staff, contractors, volunteers and partner Organisations.
- Disclose, and take reasonable steps to avoid, any conflict of interest (real or apparent) in connection with SIA membership or employment;
- Use SIA resources in a proper manner;

- Not provide false or misleading information in response to a request for information that is made for official purposes in connection with the member or employee's SIA membership or employment;
- Not make improper use of inside information, or the member or employee's duties, status, power or authority, in order to gain, or seek to gain, a benefit or advantage for the member or employee or for any other person;
- At all times behave in a way that upholds the SIA Values and the integrity and good reputation of the SIA,
- While on duty, at all times behave in a way that upholds the good reputation of the SIA as a peak body;
- Comply with any other conduct requirement that is prescribed by the SIA Constitution or any other SIA policy

## **2 Confidentiality Policy**

### **2.1 Background**

This policy elaborates the requirements relating to Confidentiality and sets out the obligation to act appropriately when dealing with information that is confidential to SIA and its constituents.

Confidential information may be inherent in the business and activities of the SIA. This policy serves to protect the security of such information in accordance with legislation.

Any confidential information of the SIA must remain absolutely confidential. Any party may not disclose confidential information without the prior written consent of the SIA Committee. It will be the responsibility of SIA members to ensure that its employees and contractors, officers, members and agents comply with these obligations of confidentiality.

#### **2.1.1 Definition of Confidentiality**

For the purposes of this policy, confidential information includes all privileged documents, minutes, policies, commercially valuable information in whatever form including marketing plans or proposals or results or market research or other information and materials which is not disclosed by the SIA or is used for the purposes of confirmation and/or decision making.

Confidential information does not include information which the receiving party can prove is information which:

- a) Is already in the public domain.
- b) After the date of disclosure becomes part of the public domain otherwise than as a result of an unauthorised disclosure by the receiving party or its representatives
- c) Is or becomes available to the receiving party from a third party lawfully in possession of that information and who has the lawful power to disclose such information to the receiving party on a non confidential basis
- d) Is rightfully known by the receiving party (as shown by its written record) prior to the date of disclosure; or
- e) Is developed independently by an employee of the receiving party who has no knowledge of the disclosure under this policy.

#### **2.1.2 Application of Policy**

This policy applies to all members and staff of the SIA, and all recipients of confidential information from members or staff of the SIA, whether the intended recipient or not.

### 2.1.3 Storage and Protection of Confidential Information

Confidential information shall be kept in a secure place. Confidential information is for the intended recipient only, and any recipient other than the intended should inform the SIA immediately and destroy all copies of the document.

### 2.1.4 External Communications

All written external communication shall be signed with the following statement of confidentiality:

Attention:

The information in this document/e-mail and any attachments is confidential and is subject to the SIA's Confidentiality Policy.

The information may be legally privileged.

The information is intended for the recipient identified in the document/e-mail only.

If you are not an intended recipient of this document/e-mail, please contact the SIA immediately that you received this, either by return using the same mode of communication or by telephone on **NUMBER**.

Unless authorised you should not review, print, re-send, distribute, store or take any action in reliance on information in this document/ e-mail or any attachments, and should destroy all copies of same.

### 2.1.5 Failure to Maintain Confidentiality

Failure to Maintain Confidentiality could result in

- Misconduct or other disciplinary proceedings against the SIA member.
- Action by agencies such as the audit office, ICAC, or ombudsman.
- Legal action against the individuals concerned.

## **3 Conflict of Interest Policy**

### **3.1 Background**

This policy elaborates the requirements relating to Conflict of Interest and sets out the obligation to act appropriately when a conflict arises between a member or employee's own self-interest and their duty to the Stormwater Industry Association (SIA). Where such conflict does or may arise, the issue shall be disclosed to an appropriate officer and, wherever feasible, the member or employee plays no role in decision-making that might be associated with that issue or contract.

Conflicts of interest may be inherent in the appointment and conditions of some categories of members or employees and contractors, where the relationship of the member or employee of SIA as well as to their employer(s) may lead to a situation of differing interests which may, at times, be in conflict.

### **3.2 Preamble**

The NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) guidelines on Conflict of Interest state clearly 'there is nothing unusual or necessarily wrong in having a conflict of interest. How it is dealt with is the important thing'.

While conflicts of interest are not wrong in themselves, and indeed cannot always be avoided or prohibited, the potential for conflict of interest exists in certain aspects of SIA operations, including research, administration, and commercial activity. With increasing links between the SIA and other organisations, companies, and institutions, it is important that there is no perception that a member or employee has benefited by using their association with the SIA inappropriately, or acting in any way contrary to the membership interests.

Because the complexity and diversity of relationships and perspectives at SIA is extensive, the most effective means to address unavoidable conflicts of interest is to establish a system under which directors, committee members, members or employees and contractors disclose and obtain evaluation of potential conflict. This system assumes that avoiding the conflict of interest is the best first strategy in dealing with conflicts of interest.

The purpose of this policy is to outline just such a system "SIA's principles and procedures for the identification and management of actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest", and to assist in addressing conflict of interest issues.

### **3.3 Definition of Conflict of Interest**

The ICAC has defined conflict of interest in the following terms, based on the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) definition:

'A conflict of interest involves a conflict between the public duty and private interests of a public official, in which the public official has private interests which could improperly influence the performance of their official duties and responsibilities' (OECD guidelines, 2003, para10).

More specifically, conflicts of interest can be actual, perceived, or potential:

- Actual: involves a direct conflict between current duties and responsibilities and existing private interests
- Perceived: conflict exists where it could be perceived, or appears, that private interests could improperly influence the performance of duties—whether or not this is in fact the case
- Potential: arises where private interests could conflict with official duties

A conflict of interest can be pecuniary (involving financial gain or loss) or non-pecuniary (based on enmity or amity). A conflict of interest can arise from avoiding personal losses as well as gaining personal advantage, financial or otherwise.

## **3.4 Application of Policy**

This policy applies to all members, employees and contractors of the SIA.

### **3.4.1 Objective Key Test for Conflict of Interest**

The test is: Whether an individual could be influenced, or appear to be influenced, by a private interest in carrying out their duties and responsibilities. This test should focus on the official role and the private relationships and interests of the person concerned, and whether a reasonable disinterested person would think these relationships and interests could conceivably conflict or appear to conflict with the person's SIA role.

### **3.4.2 Material Conflict of Interest**

A conflict of interest is considered 'material' if a reasonable disinterested person would consider it in exercising judgment or making a decision. Only material conflicts of interest (those conflicts of interest of sufficient dimension and significance) are within the scope of this policy.

Factors such as the following can increase the risk that a situation will have inherent potential for conflict of interest and that the conflict of interest will be material:

- Increasing magnitude of the personal benefit expected
- Increasing level of leadership or authority
- When a researcher holds equity in a company which may jeopardise research integrity

### **3.4.3 Examples of Conflicts of Interest**

#### **Research**

- In research, the term 'conflict of interest' refers especially to situations in which financial or other personal considerations may compromise, or may have the appearance of compromising, an investigator's professional judgment in conducting or reporting research. The bias can affect collection, analysis, and interpretation of data, hiring of staff, procurement of materials, sharing of results, choice of protocol, and the use of statistical methods.
- In the peer review and publication process, a conflict of interest may arise where an author, reviewer, or editor allows personal conviction, financial interests, or personal relationships (of amity or enmity) to influence the work improperly.
- The supervision of research students presents an environment for potential conflict of interest because of the power relationship between supervisor and student and the extent to which the student may be dependent on the supervisor's support for the completion of their work.
- The use of human subjects in work by an investigator who has compensation from a company creates, for the human subjects, additional risk for adverse consequences.

## **Administration**

- In administration, the term 'conflict of interest' refers especially to situations in which financial or other personal considerations may compromise, or may have the appearance of compromising, decisions made by administrators.

## **Outside work and/or commercial activity**

- A conflict that arises in relation to the allocation of time, intellectual energy and primary professional commitment between SIA responsibilities and external activities can constitute a conflict of interest.
- Conflict of interest can arise where a member, employee or contractor has multiple official roles (such as being an officer of the SIA and serving as the Director of a company controlled by SIA). Such conflicts may be difficult to identify, as personal interest may not be involved. In these situations, a person may use information obtained in exercising one role to the advantage or disadvantage of another organisation in an improper way.
- Conflict of interest may be particularly difficult to identify and manage in work environments characterised by complex commercial relationships, such as where there is a mix of SIA as well as other externally funded centre, spin-off companies, and/or SIA controlled entities.
- The following is a partial list of activities or actions that merit case-by-case examination to determine whether they create a material conflict of interest that should either be managed appropriately or eliminated.
  - Consulting
  - Engaging in contract research
  - Purchasing goods or services for the SIA from businesses in which the member or employee or his or her close associates has a financial interest or benefit
  - Receiving gifts, gratuities, loans, or special favours (including trips or speaker's fees) from research sponsors or vendors
  - a member or employee or director on committees of committee members, committees, advisory groups (or similar bodies) of governmental, for-profit, or not-for-profit entities, including SIA controlled entities and associated companies
  - Using information received as an SIA employee for personal purposes
  - Serving on selection and promotions committees
  - Exercising financial delegations
  - Transferring allocations or expenses between accounts
  - Holding of an ownership interest by the member or employee or their close associates in any real or personal property leased or purchased by the SIA
  - Holding of an equity, royalty, or debt instrument interest by the member or employee or their close associates in an entity providing financial support to the SIA, including research or other support or services, when such support will benefit the member, employee, or persons supervised, directly or indirectly.
  - Receiving directly cash, services, or equipment in support of the member or employee's SIA activities from non-SIA sources

### 3.4.4 Disclosure Review Committee

A Disclosure Review Committee (DRC) monitors conflict of interest compliance at SIA. This committee could comprise of:

- The President
- A person with legal expertise in a relevant field,
- A person with commercial expertise in a relevant field,
- The Committee may obtain advice from external or internal independent experts.

A register of situations and responses regarding the management of conflict of interest shall be kept.

The responsibilities of the Disclosure Review Committee include:

- (a) Determination of conflict of interest management procedures, where these cannot be agreed between the member or employee and the committee.
- (b) At least an annual review of the types of disclosures and management strategies used, and evaluation of the effectiveness of chosen management strategies;
- (c) Suggestions on matters to be included in induction programs for new committee members, employees, contractors, managers and new staff and other forms of staff development.

### 3.4.5 Management of Conflicts of Interest

The following procedures are designed to manage situations that present conflicts of interest. The procedure to be applied will depend on assessment of the degree of risk in the situation, based on the key test for conflict of interest—whether a reasonable disinterested person would think these relationships and interests could conceivably conflict or appear to conflict with the person’s public role.

The procedures for management fall into categories based on increasing levels of risk. These procedures are not all-inclusive and may require variation in particular circumstances.

- (a) An actual, perceived, or potential conflict of interest must always be disclosed. Information about the procedure for the disclosure of actual, perceived, or potential conflict of interest is set out below. The form of the disclosure must be sufficient to allow a decision to be made about its management. In most situations, compliance with the disclosure procedure will be the only management required.
- (b) In the case of multiple relationships by a committee member, member, contractor or employee with the same company or other external organisation, it may be necessary for the SIA Committee to review the totality of the relationship between the member or employee and the company or organisation. This situation may arise where consulting arrangements and financial support for research are derived from the same source. It may also arise in a complex commercial environment, where a committee member, member, contractor or employee may have varying levels of commitment and opportunities for benefit.
- (c) Management procedures will escalate commensurate with the risk presented. This may include public disclosure of conflict of interest.

### **3.4.6 Disclosure of Procedure**

Members and employees and contractors are required to complete a confidential Disclosure Statement as soon as they become aware that they may have an actual or potential conflict of interest.

A copy of the Disclosure Statement shall be completed and then either emailed or personally delivered to the SIA committee for evaluation.

If a management procedure beyond disclosure is deemed to be required by the committee, this will be reported to the committee member, member, contractor or employee and, if appropriate, to other relevant officers of the SIA. An appropriate procedure to manage or eliminate the conflict of interest will be agreed.

Any unresolved situation or disagreement will be referred to the Disclosure Review Committee (DRC) for a final decision.

A perceived, potential, or actual conflict of interest affecting an SIA director shall be disclosed to the committee through the President. If the conflict disclosure is to be made by the President then disclosure shall be made through the Deputy President.

### **3.4.7 Confidentiality of Disclosure**

The SIA will seek to ensure that confidential disclosures are protected from misuse. Conflict of Interest disclosures will be treated as confidentially as possible, within the requirements of the law.

An authorised person in receipt of a disclosed conflict of interest will exercise his or her judgment about the level of confidentiality necessary to manage the conflict. If in doubt, the person shall seek advice from the DRC.

The supervisor will inform the person disclosing the conflict of their decision on further disclosure, where this arises. If this is not agreed between the parties, the matter will be referred to the DRC.

### **3.4.8 Disclosure Forms**

Disclosure only occurs when submitted in writing or minuted at a directors meeting. The fact that a matter may be known by others, or is considered public knowledge, is not a substitute for disclosure.

### **3.4.9 Whistle-Blowing**

If a member or employee has knowledge that leads them to the assumption that a conflict of interest exists that may not be disclosed, they shall deal with this through notification of the SIA Board or President.

### **3.4.10 Failure to avoid or Disclose Conflicts of Interest**

Failure to avoid conflicts of interest, or failure to adequately disclose and manage unavoidable conflicts of interest, may result in:

- Resentment amongst members or employees and contractors who perceive others to be gaining unfair advantage;
- SIA and individual's inability to respond to unfounded accusations of personal benefit;
- Damage to the reputation of the SIA and the individual;
- Loss of public trust in the SIA and its research, teaching, services, or management.

Failure to disclose actual or potential conflicts of interest can lead to:

- Misconduct or other disciplinary proceedings against the member or employee;
- Action by agencies such as the audit office, ICAC, and ombudsman;
- Legal action against the SIA or the individuals concerned.

## **4 Environmental Policy**

### **4.1 Policy Purpose & Company Commitments**

The Stormwater Industry Association (hereafter referred to as SIA) recognises its moral and legal responsibility in respect of the environment, in particular to all acts, and all associated regulations. SIA recognises and is committed to environmental performance and beneficial environmental initiatives that extend far beyond mere legal compliance.

SIA is an organisation aiming to improve the quality of stormwater runoff and increase the availability of recycled stormwater runoff for the benefit of the public at large and the betterment of the state, national and global environment. Driven by the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD), SIA is striving to promote a distinct stormwater market sector in Australia which will lead to improved waterway health while providing an alternative source of water for non potable (drinking) use.

The current key areas of interest to SIA are:

- Increasing the use of appropriate stormwater treatment and reuse systems.
- Increasing the availability of treated stormwater to the community;
- Increasing the profile of stormwater in the community;
- Reducing the amount of pollution entering waterways.
- Making more legitimate treatment systems available to the general public at reasonable prices

This document has been developed to provide all members of SIA, staff, sub-contractors and visitors with access to the environmental policies of SIA. The policy is not intended to be a complete guide to environmental issues, but to be an initial point of reference.

### **4.2 Policy Statement**

The environmental policy of SIA aims to:

- Promote environmental awareness and sensitivity among all members, staff, sub-contractors and visitors;
- Strive for best practice and continual improvement of environmental performance;
- Become an influential stormwater promotion and awareness group;
- Strive to create a distinct stormwater market sector within Australia;
- Be aware of, implement, monitor and review compliance with legislative obligations in relation to the environment;
- Be aware of the importance of a precautionary approach when necessary;
- Recognise obligations to present and future generations both locally and globally.

### **4.3 Consultation Process**

SIA has a total commitment to encouraging open consultation and co-operation between management, members, employees and contractors and sub-contractors, through the creation of environmental structures and responsibilities.

### **4.4 Review**

The policy will be reviewed annually from the date of creation of this document.

## 5 Conflict Resolution Policy

The Stormwater Industry Association (hereafter referred to as SIA) recognises that from time to time disagreements and situations of potential conflict may arise between members of the association and its governing structure that may (amongst other things) have the potential to distract the focus of the association from core activities, bring the association into disrepute or foster a situation that exposes the risk of litigation.

To this end SIA considers it important to have a policy and procedures for identifying and dealing with potential conflict situations.

To avoid the potential minefield of dealing with general conflicts that arise in the industry at large this policy relates specifically to conflict situations which arise in relation to committee members or relate to governance of the association (and extends to include any sub committees or seconded persons who are assisting the governing bodies with conduct of association activities).

In the first instance it is required that a potential conflict situation be brought to the attention of the Association by way of a formal complaint with supporting evidence. SIA should be open to receive and consider such complaints, and make this known to its members. In many instances, activities and persons which may be the subject of a complaint being made will be required to adhere to certain standards of conduct or work within a defined scope (e.g. through Terms of Reference) and for the complaint to be properly considered it should be framed as such.

### 5.1 Application of Policy

This policy applies to all members and staff of the SIA, and all members involved in supporting the association through involvement in sub committees and secondments.

#### 5.1.1 Implementation of the Policy

The following steps are provided to describe how the policy intent can be achieved.

#### 5.1.2 Define the issue(s) for the SIA

- Receive formal complaint with evidence.
- Confirm the identities of the parties directly involved.
- Identify any commercial issues that are to be excluded from consideration.
- Establish relevance to SIA and if so define and document the issue(s) (e.g. bringing the Association into disrepute through misrepresenting personal views as those of the Association)
- Check the relevance of the issue against required standards of conduct and adopted policies
- Get concurrence of the complainant(s) on the complaint statement prepared by SIA and advise that this will be provided to the respondent.
- Establish the outcome sought by the complainant in relation to any SIA issues.
- Identify a course of action.
- Consult Association rules to establish any grounds for consideration or specific requirements process requirements<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> It is possible that a complaint may be considered even if not explicitly allowed for in the Association rules, but if a process is allowed then it is recommended that this be followed, and if departures, explanations provided and documented.

- Conduct risk analysis (e.g. if the situation is not resolved what would be the repercussions?).
- Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement - what is the **best** the SIA can expect if there isn't a negotiated agreement reached?
- Worst Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement - what is the **worst** the SIA can expect if there isn't a negotiated agreement?
- Most Likely Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement - what is the **most likely** alternative for the SIA if there isn't a negotiated agreement?

### 5.1.3 Establish a process with ground rules

- SIA Executive to review the physical evidence of the complaint(s) in relation to the relevant issues identified by the SIA<sup>2</sup>.
- Establish if a prima face case exists.
- If yes, provide details to the respondent and meet separately with each individual party as required.
- If appropriate meet with both parties simultaneously.
- Identify an appropriate Space (Private and Neutral) and appropriate time for discussion of the issues
- Get mutual consent to negotiate.
- Identify the role of SIA participants (Facilitators, Mediators, Advocates), as needed (e.g. identify issues clearly and concisely, generate options (brainstorm) while deferring judgment, be open to "tangents" and other problem definitions, clarify criteria for decision-making).
  - i) Get agreement from all parties on the meeting ground rules:
  - ii) One person speaks at a time.
  - iii) The parties will keep to the defined issue(s).
  - iv) The parties will make a sincere commitment to listen to one another, to try to understand the other person's point of view before responding.
  - v) The parties will keep matters discussed in confidence, unless there is explicit agreement regarding who needs to know further information e.g. report to SIA Committee.
  - vi) Agree to talk directly with the person with whom there are concerns, and not seek to involve others in "gossip" or "alliance building."
  - vii) The parties agree to try their hardest to resolve the issue(s) and trust that others are doing the same within the group.
  - viii) The parties support the expression of dissenting opinion in a harassment free environment.
  - ix) The parties agree to attack the issues, not the people with whom there is a disagreement.

### 5.1.4 Seek to reach agreement based on the following considerations:

- Is it fair? Do all parties feel the agreement is fair and reasonable?
- Is the agreement balanced? Does everyone have a stake and role in its implementation?
- Are the action steps realistic? Do we have the time, energy, skills and resources to follow-through and implement this agreement?
- Is the agreement specific enough to proceed? Does everyone understand what we need to do and when we need to do it?
- To what degree is the agreement self-enforcing, or does it rely on others who were not present for the discussion? What do we do if others are unwilling to do things we hoped they would do in the agreement?
- Is the agreement future-oriented? Have we considered what we will do if there are other problems or conflicts in the future?

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<sup>2</sup> If the complaint relates to a member(s) of the Executive a neutral third party must be included to ensure a balance of considered views.

## **5.2 Outcomes**

- If resolution is reached then the action steps are to be documented and signed by all present.
- If resolution is unable to be reached the matter should be referred to mediation.

## **6 DRAFT Stormwater Australia Editorial Policies (Bulletin)**

### **6.1 Context.**

Stormwater Australia publishes a regular Bulletin which is distributed to members via electronic and limited hardcopy distribution.

Its content is a mixture of editorial and organisational messaging, articles provided by members (and can include opinion, technical or advertorial content). The Bulletin also advises of upcoming events and key contact details for member state associations. Other articles (generally of international interest) are drawn from other publications.

Electronic distribution channels allow hyperlinking back to source material (e.g articles, or in the course of advertising- corporate websites).

The process for preparing a Bulletin is managed by a third party, who then consult with Stormwater Australia before finalising content.

This policy complement aims to provide a framework around acceptance and publication of articles, and the management and addressing of complaints arising. It should be read in conjunction with Stormwater Australia's Code of Conduct and other policies.

In developing this editorial policy we have examined commonly accepted Australian editorial procedures freely available through the Australian Communications and Media Authority and modelled them on organisations which are characterised as 'not for profit' and constituted to promote robust discussion and debate within their target audience.

Stormwater Australia's constitution sets out a purpose and function is to act as a peak body which will advocate for the best outcomes of its members. Analysis of members reveals a range of end users and policy organisations (i.e. government at local and state level), product suppliers and professional service providers to the industry.

As our major publication source and communication channel the Bulletin is seen as an important contributor to assisting the Association to garner the views of its membership.

These procedures have been developed to ensure standards and oversight supporting the decision to publish, to ensure appropriate debate and right of reply is equitably available and to provide avenues of redress to any parties who feel aggrieved.

Consistent with media practice designed to encourage discussion and informed debate, these procedures have been framed to allow editorial judgement to be exercised in support of due process.

Recognising the role of different media (e.g. print and social) this policy has been developed with a primary purpose of applying to 'official' publications, and in particular where the published offerings may be perceived as having benefitted from some level of editorial process or endorsement (e.g. the Bulletin).

The broad principles in this policy can be adapted for more other media (e.g. social media) in the form of acceptable use policies and policies for moderating or publishing content.

## **6.2 Accepting content**

Stormwater Australia seeks to accept contributions from invited sources as well as the general membership and public. The reason for accepting content may vary for a range of reasons (e.g. are contributions intended to provoke discussion or to provide technical facts).

Stormwater Australia recognises that the various obligations on it arising from the motivations for providing content may vary.

In exercising its right to publish Stormwater Australia should have a mind to accountability (e.g. factual accuracy, disclosure of interest) and quality of content (e.g. relevance to industry, well-reasoned argument). In practice these considerations can interact in complex ways, and editorial judgement is required when balancing the various factors.

The following sections provide a range of principles, techniques and considerations that should be applied when accepting content.

## **6.3 Ensuring Accuracy**

In line with established journalistic and editorial practice, Stormwater Australia has a duty to ensure that the gathering and presentation of news and information is accurate according to recognised industry standards. The credibility of articles depends heavily on factual accuracy.

Types of fact-based content include industry news and analysis of current issues. Where articles are provided as paid advertorials, this fact should be disclosed.

In determining fact-based content the following should be taken into consideration:

- the type, subject and nature of the content;
- the likely audience expectations of the content;
- the likely impact of reliance by the audience on the accuracy of the content; and
- the circumstances in which the content was made and presented.

The accuracy standard applies primarily to assertions of fact, not to expressions of opinion (although the considerations listed above remain relevant).

## 6.4 Dealing with Opinions

An opinion, being a value judgement or conclusion, cannot be found to be accurate or inaccurate in the way facts can. Accuracy standards requires that opinions be conveyed accurately, in the sense that quotes or assertions are accurate in line with the supporting facts; any editing should not distort the meaning of the opinion expressed.

In deciding to publish an opinion piece, Stormwater Australia should request and assess the factual information on which the opinion is based. If, on a prima facie basis, this information is considered credible the article can be considered for publication.

The efforts reasonably required to ensure accuracy will depend on the circumstances and can include a range of documentary or qualified testimony. Some examples are provided.

- Documentary evidence such as letters, transcripts, receipts where the bona fides of the origin can be determined.
- Sources with relevant expertise, or experience may be relied on more heavily than those without.
- First hand testimony usually carries more weight than second-hand accounts.
- The passage of time or the inaccessibility of locations or sources can affect the standard of verification reasonably required- more weight should be given to current information. If historical accounts are being used, any supplementary information (e.g. contemporaneous notes) to demonstrate how opinion was 'flagged' at the time.

After assessing the evidence and deciding to publish, Stormwater Australia should make reasonable efforts, appropriate in the context, to signal to audiences gradations in accuracy (for example by qualifying assertions, and balancing partly right and correcting the plainly wrong). Factual content should not be presented in a way that will materially mislead the audience. In some cases, publishing said content may require appropriate labels or other explanatory information.

In accepting an opinion piece Stormwater Australia must exercise editorial judgement to ensure that the piece will not create undue offence or breach relevant laws (e.g. defamation).

## 6.5 Right of Reply, Corrections and clarifications

A commitment to accuracy includes a willingness to correct errors and clarify ambiguous or otherwise misleading information. Swift correction can reduce harmful reliance on inaccurate information, especially given content can be quickly, widely and permanently disseminated.

A commitment to fostering discussion and debate on issues of interest to members should allow rights of reply to potentially affected or aggrieved parties, and to ensure wider discussion and debate is well informed. Corrections, clarifications and timely reply rights can contribute to achieving fairness and impartiality.

**Clarifications and corrections.** If Stormwater Australia becomes aware that an article was published with factual inaccuracies that could materially affect how the news or information was received and interpreted by a significant proportion of the readership, subsequent publications should seek to redress this. Dependent on the nature of the inaccuracy and its impact this can vary and could include a simple by-line or more something more prominent. The nature of the redress could include a range of measures ranging from a simple clarification to a complete retraction.

**Right of Reply.** A Right of Reply exists to allow information or opinion received from parties not in agreement with previous publications to be made available through the Bulletin (and other channels).

Under the Right of Reply process the following considerations should factor in determining whether to publish responses received.

- consider giving priority to replies originating from parties likely to have been impacted by opinion;
- consider whether the reply adds value to the broader discussion;
- consider the range of responses received to support balanced views.

## 6.6 Ensuring impartiality and diversity of perspectives

Stormwater Australia has a duty to ensure that the gathering and presentation of news and information is impartial according to the recognised editorial standards.<sup>3</sup>

Aiming to equip audiences to make up their own minds is consistent with the objects of Stormwater Australia's constitution.

Stormwater Australia draws its members from different industry sectors including government, product suppliers and consultants. Various its members are responsible for setting policy, designing and implementing solutions, undertaking monitoring and evaluation and conducting research and solution development. The requirements of different industry sectors and roles needs to be considered to ensure balance and diversity.

It is a relevant fact that often people will be putting forth views and contributions based on personal experience, and often with a commercial motive. This is a reality that needs to be managed and judgement needs to be exercised using a number of guiding principles which include:

- Balance that follows from the weight of evidence;
- Fair treatment;
- Open-mindedness; and
- Provision of opportunities over time for principal relevant perspectives on matters of contention to be expressed.

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<sup>3</sup> For example, see <http://about.abc.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/EditorialPOL2011.pdf> (in particular sections 1 and 4).

Impartiality does not require that every perspective receives equal time, nor that every facet of every argument is presented. Assessing the impartiality in any given circumstance requires consideration in context of all relevant factors including:

- The type, subject and nature of the content;
- The circumstances in which the content is made and presented;
- The likely audience expectations of the content;
- The degree to which the matter to which the content relates is contentious;
- The range of principal relevant perspectives on the matter of contention; and
- The timeframe within which it would be appropriate to provide opportunities for the principal relevant perspectives to be expressed, having regard to the public importance of the matter of contention and the extent to which it is the subject of current debate.

It should be a principle that, over time, no significant strand of thought or belief across industry is knowingly excluded or disproportionately represented.

Generally, when accepting contributions Stormwater Australia should take no editorial stance other than its commitment to fundamental democratic principles including the rule of law, freedom of speech and religion, parliamentary democracy and equality of opportunity.

This is appropriately caveated with the recognition that as a primary mode of communication, the Bulletin provides a vehicle for Stormwater Australia to provide commentary, thought leadership and seek views on issues that it believes are of importance to industry<sup>4</sup>.

## **6.7 Fair and honest dealing**

Fair and honest dealing is essential to maintaining trust with audiences and with those who contribute to Stormwater Australia publications.

In rare circumstances, deception or a breach of an undertaking may be justified. Because of the potential damage to trust, deception or breach of an undertaking must be explained openly afterwards unless there are compelling reasons not to do so.

Consistent with engendering trust, in particular amongst potential contributors, sources, source material or evidence provided should be treated as confidential unless there are compelling reasons to do otherwise.

## **6.8 Dealing with contributions**

Parties providing contributions for publication should be informed of the general nature of distribution (e.g. readership) and any special context around specific publications (e.g. themed editions).

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<sup>4</sup> The regular President's message would be an example of this.

Where allegations are made about a person or organisation, or information is misrepresented or credited, Stormwater Australia should make reasonable efforts once it becomes aware of circumstances to provide a fair opportunity to respond.

All content providers should aim to attribute information to its source. In accepting contributions Stormwater Australia relies on the integrity of the contributor, and exhaustive cross referencing against source material will not always be possible.

Similarly, Stormwater Australia expects that contributors will not misrepresent another's work as their own. Assurances given in relation to conditions of participation, use of content, confidentiality or anonymity must be honoured except in rare cases where a contrary approach can be justified in the broader interest of members. Under these circumstances it is recommended that the consideration of the matter should be broadened in line with corporate risk considerations.

## **6.9 Privacy Principles:**

Privacy is necessary to human dignity and every person reasonably expects that their privacy will be respected. But privacy is not absolute.

Stormwater Australia seeks to balance the interests of individuals in respect for their privacy with the broader membership interest in disclosure of information and freedom of expression.

There would need to be exceptional circumstances where privacy could be compromised. In the event this occurs the method of disclosure could support a range of actions beyond immediate editorial actions (e.g. in the event of illegal activity, referral to authority for investigation)

## **6.10 Grievance Procedures**

From time to time persons or organisations may have a grievance that arises as a result of material being published. This is an unescapable fact, and attests to the level of interest and commitment on different matters.

To support sound editorial process a grievance process is required to listen to, understand and take appropriate action. In the first instance a right of reply and clarification process are always available. If a grievance results from inaccuracies bringing alternate evidence to the attention will assist in the determination of what action should be taken.

If the grievance more relates to a difference of opinion, a right of reply course of action may be more appropriate. Offering the right of reply in no way guarantees publication.

In some circumstances Stormwater Australia may decide to publish follow on or extension pieces where it is of the view that an issue warrants further consideration.

It should not be an encouraged practice to meet individually with aggrieved parties, especially in where open and transparent discussion of matters is seen as a desirable outcome, however from a stakeholder management perspective this may be necessary from time to time. Where this does occur, it is recommended issues for discussion are identified in advance and any outcome is noted for the record.

Outside of this grievance procedure further avenues are available through Stormwater Australia policies (e.g. conflict resolution) in addition to regulatory and legal courses of redress.

## **6.11 Riders and Disclaimers**

Supporting this policy Stormwater Australia shall include relevant disclaimers with its publications.

# 7 Conference Paper Acceptance Policy

## 7.1 Context.

Stormwater Australia and its member organisations hold conferences from time to time, and generally put out a public call for papers for consideration in line with the conference theme and program streams.

Conferences may request either peer reviewed or non-peer reviewed submissions, or a mixture of both. These policies have been developed to assist in making determinations to accept or reject submissions and in doing so are intended to outline a robust process that is procedurally fair and ensures relevant conferences presentations of a high standard.

## 7.2 Call for abstracts and papers

A call for papers will preface any conference. It should be prepared and circulated amongst target communities of practice well ahead of the conference date. To ensure a wide diversity of contributions and to allow for new ideas and perspectives to it should also be circulated more widely (i.e. through the use of different distribution channels) and made publically available (i.e. through websites) and should not be exclusive to the Stormwater membership.

The call for abstracts and papers should clearly

- Outline key dates for submission, review, and presentation;
- Outline conference themes and requested streams for presentation;
- Provide key contact details for the conference, including conference and program chair, and relevant conference organising personnel;
- Outline submission and selection process for different submission types (e.g. peer and non- peer review);
- Provide evaluation criteria;
- Provide specifications for final paper (e.g. formatting, referencing);
- Outline any final review process and basis for requesting modifications, caveats, clarifications or restrictions to final content; and
- Outline any process for managing disputes (i.e. in the event of an adverse review).

## 7.3 Recommended evaluation criteria

The following criteria are recommended for evaluating papers, and criteria used should be scored to allow comparative assessment:

- Consistency with the conference topics or streams: The paper must address one or more of the conference topics or streams.
- Originality: The paper is an original piece of work, be it research, experience or case studies of projects undertaken.

- Significance of the subject/project: The paper adds to the knowledge, understanding and practical application of stormwater management.
- Technical content and Methods/ Logical development, clarity and completeness: The paper is structured to clearly outline the methodology, aims, results, discussions and conclusions, and described in clear, and accessible language.
- Likely degree of interest created.

## 8 Recommended evaluation process

Papers sent out for review should be marked against each of the chosen evaluation criteria using a suitably graduated scale to allow an overall score to be calculated. The evaluation process should involve multiple reviewers who are selected to represent a diversity of views, and relevant technical understanding.

The evaluation should be undertaken in effect to 'screen' papers to allow a balanced program to be established. It is intended to obtain sufficient information to allow this screening to occur without requiring excessive effort on the part of the submitter.

It is recognised that additional time and effort may be involved in preparing and managing peer review requests and that timelines may require a more developed abstract to be submitted for papers which are requesting this service. Under these circumstances there should be a similar process to ensure that the intent of the evaluation criteria are achieved, albeit with greater involvement of the peer review panel members.

Under all circumstances the evaluation results should be retained.

### 8.1 Accepting papers after evaluation

Papers are able to be accepted after the evaluation process is complete based on the following set of decision criteria:

- Papers meet a minimum standard in each evaluation criteria;
- The program should seek to achieve a balance across all advertised streams;
- There are sufficient program spaces to include them<sup>5</sup>;
- Papers achieving a higher overall evaluation score should receive preference in each stream.

### 8.2 Provisional acceptance

For a number of reasons the program committee should consider accepting additional papers on a provisional or 'wait listed' basis. These reasons could include the following:

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<sup>5</sup> Depending on availability of program spaces there may be set allocations between per and non-peer reviewed papers, however unless a preference for one way or the other is explicitly stated at the time abstracts are the program should seek to achieve a balance.

- It is a condition of acceptance that presenters will register to attend the conference. Some presenters may not be able to meet this commitment resulting in a paper being withdrawn;
- Some presenters may not be able to complete a paper in time, and it will be withdrawn;
- If, as a result of more detailed reviews that occur post acceptance the paper is withdrawn;
- If, as a result of final drafting the paper does not meet acceptable standards in relation to consistency with abstract, avoidance of defamatory statements or is deemed to be overly commercially biased, the paper may be later rejected from the conference.

### 8.3 Communicating Outcomes

Outcomes of the evaluation process should be communicated to the lead author. Specific evaluation scores should not be revealed.

It is acceptable to provide a summary of review comments, although the identities of and attributions to specific reviewers should not be identified (blind review).

The decision regarding whether to communicate specific comments lies with the conference program chair and in making this they should be mindful of whether comments are likely to be taken as constructive. If they have the potential to cause offence they may be provided in a modified format (while still communicating the general intent) or not disclosed. Generally, this decision process should be consistent across all papers reviewed.

The referees will evaluate the paper, noting weaknesses or problems along with suggestions for improvement. Referees' evaluations usually include an explicit recommendation of what to do with the paper from options provided by the journal or funding agency. Most recommendations are along the lines of the following:

- to unconditionally accept the manuscript or proposal,
- to accept it in the event that its authors improve it in certain ways,
- to reject it, but encourage revision and invite resubmission,
- to reject it outright.

Where a **peer review** has been requested and modifications are required, the paper will be returned to the Author for update based on the recommendation of the reviewer. The revised paper is then returned to the reviewer for final approval before it will be accepted for presentation and publication.

**Non-peer review** papers are less formal than refereed papers. After acceptance the authors can expect a final check of the paper prior to it being approved for publication in the program. This process will be jointly managed by the Conference Program Chair and general Conference Committee. All papers that are presenting case studies should be submitted as a non-refereed paper.

## 9 Peer review process.

Papers opting for a peer review can expect to undergo a rigorous and fair process consistent with international academic standards.

The peer review process will be managed by the program chair, who will be responsible for the overall standard of review, and will determine any course of action should a dispute arise.

The conference program chair will be supported by the peer review panel and the conference organiser secretariat.

### 9.1 Conference Program Chair

With the support of the conference organisers or secretariat the conference program chair will:

- Identify suitably credentialed people to assist in the review process;
- Oversee the paper review process;
- Where a potential conflict of interest is raised, work to identify suitable alternate reviewers;
- Where review panels differ in their individual assessments of papers, work with the relevant reviewers to achieve a consensus result. If this is not able to be achieved, to ensure that another, independent review is undertaken.
- Where potential issues of unethical conduct, impropriety or misconduct are identified as part of the review process, to ensure these are noted and forwarded to Conference Chair with any recommendations on how they should be investigated or handled.
- Assist the conference organisers to ensure a balanced program is put together.

Where peer review panel members are unable to agree on the outcomes of review it is desirable to undertake an independent, separate peer review however this may not always be possible. Under these circumstances the conference program chair may decide to undertake their own review. A recommended process to undertake this is set out below.

- Convene a meeting with the reviewers in question to resolve the issue;
- Determine if the differences in opinion of reviewers can be overcome by including additional qualification or contextual information to the manuscript;
- If the opinion of one reviewer over another is believed justified the rationale should be documented and provided to the author as part of feedback given;
- Consider seeking additional clarification from the author regarding points of contention, and in doing so provide responses to the reviewers for their response.
- Consider offering to accept the paper as non-peer reviewed.

At the conclusion of any review by the conference program chair their determination on outcome is final.

The process and rationale taken in coming to any final determination should be noted in the event a disputed outcome is registered.

## 9.2 Conference Organisers/ Secretariat

The conference organisers or secretariat shall be responsible for:

- Managing the call for abstracts;
- Receiving abstracts and papers;
- Distributing papers and abstracts to the peer review panel on behalf of the program chair;
- Receiving and collating feedback from the peer review panel to assist the program chair;
- Communicating outcomes of the peer review process on behalf of the program chair.

It is not the role of the conference organisers or secretariat to make decisions on the veracity of the peer review process.

## 9.3 Peer review panel

(note these have been adapted from [http://publicationethics.org/files/Ethical\\_guidelines\\_for\\_peer\\_reviewers\\_0.pdf](http://publicationethics.org/files/Ethical_guidelines_for_peer_reviewers_0.pdf))

Members of the peer review panel should:

- only agree to review manuscripts for which they have the subject expertise required to carry out a proper assessment and which they can assess in a timely manner;
- respect the confidentiality of peer review and not reveal any details of a manuscript or its review, during or after the peer-review process, beyond those that are released as part of conference proceedings;
- not use information obtained during the peer-review process for their own or any other person's or organization's advantage, or to disadvantage or discredit others;
- declare all potential conflicting interests, seeking advice from the program chair if they are unsure whether something constitutes a relevant interest;
- not allow their reviews to be influenced by the origins of a manuscript, by the nationality, religious or political beliefs, gender or other characteristics of the authors, or by commercial considerations;
- be objective and constructive in their reviews, refraining from being hostile or inflammatory and from making libellous or derogatory personal comments;
- acknowledge that peer review is largely a reciprocal endeavour and undertake to carry out their fair share of reviewing and in a timely manner;
- provide the program chair with personal and professional information that is accurate and a true representation of their expertise; and
- recognize that impersonation of another individual during the review process is considered serious misconduct.

Peer reviewers should:

- respond in a reasonable time-frame, especially if they cannot do the review, and without intentional delay;
- declare if they do not have the subject expertise required to carry out the review or if they are able to assess only part of the manuscript, outlining clearly the areas for which they have the relevant expertise;

- only agree to review a manuscript if they are fairly confident they can return a review within the proposed or mutually agreed time-frame, informing the program chair promptly if they require an extension;
- declare any potentially conflicting or competing interests (which may, for example, be personal, financial, intellectual, professional, political or religious), and seeking advice from the program chair if they are unsure whether something constitutes a relevant interest.

On being approached to review any particular work, potential Peer reviewers should inform the program chair if:

- they work at the same institution as any of the authors (or will be joining that institution or are applying for a job there);
- they are or have been recent (e.g. within the past 3 years) mentors, mentees, close collaborators or joint grant holders with authors;
- they have a close personal relationship with any of the authors;
- agree to review afresh any manuscript they have previously reviewed for another program chair as it may have changed between the two submissions and the program chairs' criteria for evaluation and acceptance may be different;
- ensure suggestions for alternative reviewers are based on suitability and not influenced by personal considerations or made with the intention of the manuscript receiving a specific outcome (either positive or negative);
- not agree to review a manuscript just to gain sight of it with no intention of submitting a review;
- decline to review if they feel unable to provide a fair and unbiased review;
- decline to review if they have been involved with any of the work in the manuscript or its reporting;
- decline to review if asked to review a manuscript that is very similar to one they have in preparation or under consideration at another conference;
- decline to review if they have issues with the peer-review model used by a program chair (e.g. it uses open review and releases the reviewers' names to the authors) that would either affect their review or cause it to be invalidated because of their inability to comply with the program chair's review policies.

During review process Peer reviewers should:

- notify the program chair immediately and seek advice if they discover either a conflicting interest that wasn't apparent when they agreed to the review or anything that might prevent them providing a fair and unbiased review;
- read the manuscript, ancillary material (e.g. reviewer instructions, required ethics and policy statements, supplemental data files) and any specific instructions thoroughly, getting back to the program chair if anything is not clear and requesting any missing or incomplete items they need to carry out a full review;
- notify the program chair as soon as possible if they find they do not have the expertise to assess all aspects of the manuscript; waiting until submitting their review to do this may will unduly delay the review process;

- not involve anyone else in the review of a manuscript, including junior researchers they are mentoring, without first obtaining permission from the program chair;
- where assistance is provided, the names of any individuals who have helped them with the review should be included with the returned review so that they are associated with the manuscript in the program chair's records and can also receive due credit for their efforts;
- keep all manuscript and review details confidential;
- contact the program chair if circumstances arise that will prevent them from submitting a timely review, providing an accurate estimate of the time they will need to do a review if still asked to do so;
- in the case of double-blind review, if they suspect the identity of the author(s) notify the program chair if this knowledge raises any potential conflict of interest;
- notify the program chair immediately if they come across any irregularities, have concerns about ethical aspects of the work, are aware of substantial similarity between the manuscript and a concurrent submission to the conference or suspect that misconduct may have occurred during either the research or the writing and submission of the manuscript. Reviewers should, however, keep their concerns confidential and not personally investigate further unless the program chair asks for further information or advice;
- not intentionally prolong the review process, either by delaying the submission of their review or by requesting unnecessary additional information from the program chair or author.

## 9.4 Final vetting of papers

Final papers submitted for publication can expect to be subject to a 'final vetting.'

In the case of peer reviewed papers the conference program chair must be satisfied that the paper satisfactorily addresses all issues raised in the review process, and in doing so may rely on the review panel to assist in making this determination.

In the case of non-reviewed papers the conference programmers must be satisfied that the final paper:

- meets the general promise of the submitted abstract, or is likely to provide equal or greater interest in the chosen stream;
- does not expose the conference organisers to excessive risk of libel or defamation by unfavourably identifying any product, practice, process, company or person in specific terms that would allow them to be identified;
- is of sufficient general interest and avoids oblique references to products, companies or proprietary know how that could be considered by a reasonable person as advertorial in nature.

In consultation with the Conference Program Chair the Conference Committee may convene a separate panel of industry practitioners to assist in making these determinations.

If these conditions are not able to be met, consideration should be given to requesting modifications to the paper or rejecting it.

## 9.5 Disputes

Where an author feels that the outcomes of the review process is not fair or reasonable they should have a right of appeal to the Conference Chair.

In this instance the complaint should be put in writing clearly stating the grounds on which a review is being requested.

In determining whether to entertain a review the Conference Chair (in consultation with the Conference Program Chair) should use the following as a guide when considering the subject matter of the manuscript:

- Where the complaint relates to the qualifications of reviewers, they should be satisfied that the reviewers were suitably qualified. If not, the use of an independent reviewer should be considered.
- Where the complaint relates to bias or conflict of interest amongst reviewers, the rationale behind this should be examined. A conservative approach should be taken, and if there is a prospect of bias then an independent review should be considered.

Where the complaint relates to the actions of the Conference Program Chair, before deciding to take action, the Conference Chair (in consultation with the Conference Committee) would need to be satisfied that:

- the Conference Program Chair hadn't largely adhered to the requirements of this policy; and
- the complaint was broadly representative of the process and not an isolated incident.

Where action was deemed necessary the Conference Chair would need to consider options in consultation with the Conference Committee. Actions would need to balance the integrity of the program, while remaining respectful of the effort exerted by both authors and reviewers.

## **10 Board Policy on Member Engagement**

The Board shall ensure appropriate processes are in place for securing the views of members, and may make specific decisions relating to engagement processes, in relation to specific proposals or issues.

Those processes will vary according to the nature of the discussion, and the nature of the views required.

Where the views of members are sought in relation to a specific proposal before the Board, which is the subject of a Board resolution

- teleconferences, phone hooks-ups, web chats, and face to face meetings are all appropriate in differing circumstances,
- in some circumstances, asking members for a response to a survey may be appropriate,
- where practicable, all members should be given an opportunity to participate together with other members, so that discussion, debate, amendment and synthesis of ideas can occur. This means that face to face discussions will be uncommon,
- where a formal decision as to support for a specific proposition is sought, that shall occur through a meeting of the National Advisory Committee, and
- the breadth of views of members should be recorded, and validated with them before presentation to the Board.

This process can be supplemented, but not replaced, by ongoing and routine member engagement.