

## 502 Code of Conduct

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### Code of Conduct Contents

1. Policy Statement .....	2
2. Definitions .....	2
3. Principles .....	2
4. Protocols .....	3
4.1 Policies and Standards .....	3
4.2 Interactions .....	3
4.3 Inclusive and Respectful Behaviour .....	4
4.4 Privacy & Rights .....	5
4.5 Lawful Behaviour .....	6
4.6 Occupational Health & Safety .....	6
4.7 Ethical decision making .....	6
4.8 Whistleblowing .....	7
4.9 Conflicts of Interest .....	7
4.10 Dress .....	8
4.11 Use of Assets/ resources .....	9
4.12 Intellectual Property .....	9
4.13 Procurement .....	9
4.14 Vulnerable Persons Safety .....	10
4.15 Drugs, Alcohol and Medication .....	10
4.16 Outside Engagement or Activities .....	10
4.17 Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality .....	11
4.18 Breaches of the Code of Conduct .....	12
5. Roles and responsibilities .....	12
6. Relevant legislation & other documents .....	12
7. Attachment: Code of Conduct Acknowledgement .....	14

## 502 Code of Conduct

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### 1. Policy Statement

Uniting Housing (Victoria) Limited (Uniting Housing) Code of Conduct (the code) sets out Uniting Housing's professional and ethical standards of conduct and behaviour, and the responsibilities required of Workers (as defined) for the performance of work (paid and unpaid), service provision to consumers and engagement with other Workers and external stakeholders, including governments, suppliers, other agencies and the general public.

Every Worker receives a copy of the code and is required to comply with its intent and contents. Uniting Housing issues the code to new Workers prior to commencing work. Workers must acknowledge that they have read, understood and agree to comply with the code by signing the acknowledgement attachment (to this policy) prior to commencing work.

Workers have a duty to:

- familiarise themselves with and observe the law relevant to their engagement and work with Uniting Housing;
- be aware of their duty of care to consumers, other Workers, governments, other organisations and the community;
- act in accordance with the code;
- be aware of any professional code(s) of conduct or practice relevant to their particular work in addition to this code.

Uniting Housing reviews and updates the code on a regular basis. Workers will be advised of variations and will be required to observe and comply with those variations.

Any breach of the code may be considered misconduct and as such, will result in disciplinary action. This may include a written warning, termination of engagement and other action deemed appropriate by Uniting Housing in accordance with Uniting Housing's human resources policy.

### 2. Definitions

The term **Worker** is a collective term used within this policy to refer to workers, contractors, consultants, Board Directors, and volunteers (including co-opted Board sub-committee members, students and people on work experience).

### 3. Principles

The following general principles apply to all Workers.

- a) A high standard of personal honesty and integrity is expected. Workers must not open themselves to suspicion of dishonesty in any form, including deceit, false accounting, fraud or corruption.
- b) Conduct and behaviour are aligned with Uniting Housing's Vision, Mission and Values.
- c) Workers are responsible for the care of consumers and have a duty to ensure that they are treated with respect and consistent with Uniting Housing's values.

## 502 Code of Conduct

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- d) Workers should be courteous in their behaviour whilst on duty and avoid any action that might bring their conduct into question.
- e) Workers must treat consumers, members of the public and other Workers fairly and reasonably without discrimination.
- f) Workers must not abuse or exploit their position for personal gain.
- g) While on or off duty, Workers must not conduct themselves in a manner that adversely affects their ability to attend the workplace and perform their work, or otherwise discredit Uniting Housing's public profile.
- h) Workers must behave discreetly in matters of public and political controversy.
- i) Workers must not disclose without the Company Secretary's explicit permission, information that they acquire in the course of their work and must protect information that is held in confidence.
- j) Workers must comply with the privacy principles outlined in the various commonwealth and state legislation, which regulates the collection, holding, use and disclosure of personal information.

### 4. Protocols

#### 4.1 Policies and Standards

Workers must comply with Uniting Housing policies and relevant standards as changed from time to time at Uniting Housing's and the relevant government's discretion. Workers must:

- a) routinely review and act in accordance with the requirements of Uniting Housing policy at all times;
- b) conduct themselves in a manner consistent with Uniting Housing's vision, mission and values;
- c) ensure their activities are compliant with the Performance Standards for Community Housing Providers, the NDIS Practice Standards for Specialist Disability Accommodation Providers and DHHS Services Standards.

#### 4.2 Interactions

Uniting Housing maintains an ethical conduct and professional engagement culture. Workers must perform their duties in a manner that meets all legal, industrial and funding obligations and requirements and the moral requirements of their position as set out in the position description. This ensures that relationships with consumers and external stakeholders have clear and appropriate boundaries that serve to protect both parties from misunderstandings, misperceptions or violations of the professional relationship. Workers must:

- a) deliver services without discrimination prohibited by law;
- b) treat all people with respect and dignity, recognising and respecting the ethnic, cultural, gender and sexual orientation, religious or political beliefs and personal life circumstances of Workers, consumers or external stakeholders;
- c) use respectful and unbiased language in all letters, minutes and other verbal and written

## 502 Code of Conduct

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- communication to consumers, Workers and external stakeholders;
- d) promote cultural competence and demonstrate a commitment to the delivery of respectful and appropriate services ensuring cultural safety is upheld;
  - e) treat consumers in a way that preserves their dignity, recognising their right to decision making and the personal dignity of risk;
  - f) ensure physical contact between Workers and consumers always lies within the boundaries of the professional service delivery relationship;
  - g) not enter into any social, sexual or intimate contact or relationship with any current or past consumers; particularly if the past consumer might re-enter the service, been disengaged for less than 6 months, or was known to the service whilst a minor;
  - h) ensure any outside of work contact with consumers is wherever possible discussed beforehand with the Workers manager to ensure the potential contact is transparent and managed within the spirit of this code of conduct ;
  - i) ensure that, when prior advice to the Workers manager was not possible, any contact (including that set out below) is reported to the Manager on the next working day;
  - j) not make contact with consumers outside of designated work hours (e.g. after hours, weekends, sick leave) unless required by their formal duties or approved by their direct manager;
  - k) not have contact with, engage with or discuss consumers outside of any official Uniting Housing social media networks (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, etc.);
  - l) not invite or take consumers to the Worker's place of residence;
  - m) not enter into any contractual or other relationship with a consumer from which they will benefit personally, whether financially or otherwise.

### 4.3 Inclusive and Respectful Behaviour

Uniting Housing maintains an inclusive and respectful workplace culture at all times. Uniting Housing does not tolerate violent, threatening or unsafe behaviour in the workplace. This includes acts of physical violence, aggressive behaviour, harassment, bullying, verbal threats or abuse directed at another Worker or to/from a consumer or visitor. All forms of unlawful discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, bullying and occupational violence are in breach of the code and will not be tolerated by Uniting Housing. Workers must:

- a) not use offensive language, threaten or engage in demeaning or derogatory dialogue or comment when communicating with other Workers. This extends to comments made outside the workplace and/or outside work hours, and includes comments published on social media networks;
- b) not act in any way that could cause harm to the reputation, stakeholder relationships or funding for Uniting Housing during or outside of working hours.
- c) not provide comment, opinion or information to the media relating to the business of Uniting Housing, consumers or Workers of Uniting Housing or concerning an engagement with Uniting Housing, without authorisation from the Company Secretary or Board

## 502 Code of Conduct

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Chairperson;

- d) not comment or share information on social media that could be construed to be related to Uniting Housing without disclosing their professional relationship with Uniting Housing and providing a clear disclaimer that their views are their own and in no way represent those of Uniting Housing;
- e) be punctual and reliable in their attendance and adhere to their prescribed and authorised hours of duty, and record their attendance in the manner required by Uniting Housing;
- f) not engage in any activity involving, or that could be perceived as being an endorsement of any product, service or supplier by Uniting Housing without the prior approval of the Company Secretary or Board Chairperson;
- g) maintain appropriate workplace etiquette and self-care;
- h) ensure any contact by Workers with the Uniting Housing Board of Directors is made through the Company Secretary in the first instance with the exception of circumstances where it is deemed appropriate.

### 4.4 Privacy & Rights

Uniting Housing respects everyone's right to privacy and will maintain the privacy and confidentiality of Workers, consumers, supporters, donors and other stakeholders at all times. Workers acknowledge that the unauthorised release of information held by Uniting Housing will be regarded as serious misconduct which could result in disciplinary action including termination of engagement.

Exceptions arise when, Uniting Housing has specific legislated obligations to disclose certain information under certain circumstances, which are:

- a) in the course of normal service delivery;
- b) with the informed consent of the consumer, supporter, donor or other stakeholder provided that the consumer, supporter, donor or other stakeholder has the legal capacity to provide that consent;
- c) with the written consent of the delegate of the Secretary to the Victorian or Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services, when the Department has a statutory responsibility for the consumer;
- d) with the consent of the consumer's parent or guardian (if a minor), or an Attorney operating under Power of Attorney; and
- e) if required to do so by law – i.e. when providing evidence in legal proceedings.

Workers must:

- f) maintain the confidentiality of internal Uniting Housing affairs, including details of current and past Workers, consumers, supporters, donors and other stakeholders;
- g) articulate to consumers, supporters, donors and other stakeholders that they have the right to privacy and that Uniting Housing will respect and uphold this right;
- h) ensure that all personal information gathered is handled, stored, used and disclosed in accordance with all relevant state and federal legislation, Uniting Housing privacy and

## 502 Code of Conduct

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record management policies and various industry standards;

- i) advise consumers, supporters, donors and other stakeholders that under certain circumstances, private or confidential information may be disclosed to a third person;
- j) inform consumers, supporters, donors and other stakeholders of their rights pertaining to accessing their records of service;
- k) inform consumers of their rights and responsibilities when accessing Uniting Housing's services.

### 4.5 Lawful Behaviour

Workers are bound by the relevant commonwealth and state laws and regulations. Workers are to comply with lawful instructions or requests given by their direct manager or Company Secretary. If a Worker believes that a request or direction is unlawful or unsafe, then the concern should be raised immediately with their direct manager or Company Secretary. Workers must:

- a) act in a manner commensurate with all applicable Australian laws;
- b) familiarise themselves with and observe the law relevant to their engagement and work with Uniting Housing;
- c) formally advise their direct manager within 24 hours or the next business day if they are charged, are under investigation, or have been convicted of a criminal offence.

### 4.6 Occupational Health & Safety

Uniting Housing is committed to a proactive safety and wellbeing workplace culture. Workers must:

- a) take reasonable care of themselves and others when performing duties at a Uniting Housing workplace and off-site;
- b) follow all health and safety policies and procedures, report any observed hazards or injuries, and participate in the management of health and safety risks in line with Uniting Housing policy;
- c) comply with any special clothing or personal protective equipment requirements specific to Uniting Housing's workplaces;
- d) at all times wear and have visible their Worker identification (if supplied) when working (provided it does not create an OH&S risk to the Workers);
- e) comply with Uniting Housing's commitment to being a smoke-free workplace - smoking is prohibited in the workplace;

### 4.7 Ethical decision making

Ethical decision-making is the process of critical reflection, evaluation and judgement through which a Worker resolves ethical issues, problems and dilemmas.

Ethical dilemmas can occur in diverse circumstances. Examples include:

- a) When the interests of consumers conflict with those of various other parties, with the Worker, organisation or wider system.

## 502 Code of Conduct

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- b) When conflict occurs between the care and control functions of the Uniting Housing Worker
- c) When there is a discrepancy between the needs and interests of consumers and the availability and distribution of resources or demands for efficiency and utility
- d) When the Uniting Housing Worker's ethical responsibilities conflict with the interests and/or behaviour of co-workers, other professionals, groups of professionals, Uniting Housing policies/procedures or legislative requirements.
- e) The formation of relationships between workers, or between workers and consumers, that cross proper professional boundaries. That is: Any interaction, consensual or otherwise, in which an worker engages in sexualised behaviour with, or towards, a person with whom he or she is in a professional relationship, e.g. worker and consumer / a worker and another worker who, in Uniting Housing's management structure, is their subordinate or is under their responsibility.

Workers should:

- f) reflect on ethical problems and dilemmas and make decisions about them in the light of Uniting Housing's Vision, Mission and Values Statement.
- g) Consider if the potential course of conduct is consistent with this code
- h) Consider if the potential course of conduct is ethical, legal, whether it would reflect well on them and Uniting Housing, or whether they would want to read about it in the newspaper.
- i) If uncertain, consult with their direct manager or another senior worker when making decisions involving ethical dilemmas.

### 4.8 Whistleblowing

Uniting Housing is committed to the highest standards of legal, ethical and moral behaviour. Uniting Housing will not tolerate unethical, unlawful or undesirable conduct. Uniting Housing recognises that the most common method of detecting fraud is by notification of the wrongdoing by its own workers.

Uniting Housing is committed to maintaining an environment in which workers are able to report, without fear of detrimental action, concerns about any serious instances of wrongdoing that they believe may be occurring in the name of Uniting Housing.

Workers must act in accordance with Uniting Housing Whistle blowing policy.

### 4.9 Conflicts of Interest

Uniting Housing is committed to avoiding actual, potential and perceived conflicts of interest, ensuring the highest levels of integrity and public trust in Uniting Housing. Uniting Housing will protect Uniting Housing's business, financial and operational interests; will ensure that Workers always observe the highest standard of business ethics; and will avoid any activity or interest that might reflect unfavourably upon a workers's own integrity and good name, or upon the integrity and good name of Uniting Housing. Workers must:

- a) act in good faith towards Uniting Housing
- b) be alert to the fact that Uniting Housing's interests are not always the same as those of a consumer
- c) actively avoid being placed in situations of actual or perceived conflict between the interests of Uniting Housing and their own private or personal or interests

## 502 Code of Conduct

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- d) raise any concerns regarding a conflict of interest affecting another Worker with their supervisor, or next level manager where the concerns relate to the supervisor
- e) take reasonable steps to restrict the extent to which a private interest could compromise, or be seen to compromise, their impartiality when carrying out their engagement duties
- f) abstain from involvement in decisions and actions that could reasonably be seen to be compromised by their private interests and affiliations
- g) avoid private action in which they could be seen to have an improper advantage from inside information they might have access to because of their duties
- h) not use their Uniting Housing position or Uniting Housing resources for private gain
- i) ensure that there can be no perception that they have received an improper benefit that may influence the performance of their official duties, and
- j) not take improper advantage of their Uniting Housing position or privileged information gained in that position when seeking engagement outside the public sector.

Workers are responsible for:

- k) Being aware of their obligation to avoid conflicts of interest where possible, and manage conflicts of interest that cannot be avoided
- l) Assessing their private and personal interest, and whether they conflict, or have the potential to conflict with their official duties, and
- m) Disclosing conflicts of interest they may have to the Company Secretary who will place the interest on the Declaration of Interest & Gifts register

The Executive or the Board, to whom a disclosure is made must undertake an evaluation of the potential conflict of interest situation. Following this evaluation, the Executive, or the Board must conclude that either:

- n) No conflict of interest arises and no further action is necessary; or
- o) A conflict of interest arises and the courses of action necessary to deal with the conflict.

Potential courses of action include:

- p) Placing restrictions on the Worker's involvement in the matter
- q) Appoint a neutral third party to oversee part or all of the process that deals with the matter
- r) Make arrangements so that the Worker does not participate at all in the matter
- s) Confirm that the Worker has relinquished the private interest concerned, or
- t) The Worker steps down from the position they hold on a temporary or permanent basis.

Where a conflict of interest is deemed to exist, the relevant Worker will be advised in writing. If the Worker is aggrieved by the decision, he/she has a right to invoke the grievance procedure relevant to the industrial instrument governing that Worker's terms and conditions of engagement or in the absence of one, Uniting Housing's Human Resources policy.

False declarations made in the Declarations and Interests register may result in disciplinary action against the Worker.

### 4.10 Dress

Uniting Housing requires Workers to present themselves in a neat and professional manner. Workers must:



## 502 Code of Conduct

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- a) wear clothes appropriate to their position in the workplace, taking into account occupational health and safety obligations.
- b) Comply with any special clothing or personal protective equipment requirements specific to Uniting Housing's workplaces.

### 4.11 Use of Assets/ resources

Uniting Housing provides Workers with a range of property for use whilst on duty. Workers must:

- a) carefully and correctly use and preserve property provided by Uniting Housing;
- b) only use any property of Uniting Housing in the pursuance of official duties of Uniting Housing or as otherwise duly authorised;
- c) ensure that electronic media for personal use whilst on duty must be reasonable, and the use of Uniting Housing internet, email software or personal devices must be in accordance with organisational policy.

Uniting Housing will ensure that in financial matters, including the handling of monies, there is full accountability in relation to any advice or transaction. Workers must:

- a) Raise and expend money only for the purpose the monies are intended for;
- b) aim to achieve value for money and avoid waste and extravagance in the use of Uniting Housing resources;
- c) Not engage in or tolerate any fraudulent or corrupt activity of any kind, including for the benefit of Uniting Housing.
- d) Act in accordance with Uniting Housing Fraud & Corruption control policy

### 4.12 Intellectual Property

Uniting Housing will secure and retain all rights to intellectual property and assets that relate to Uniting Housing business including patents, design, formulae and processes. Workers must:

- a) agree to inform Uniting Housing about any discovery made, secret process, business method, procedure or improvement that the Worker makes, discovers or develops as part of their engagement with Uniting Housing
- b) execute all necessary documents and take all reasonable steps at the request of Uniting Housing to ensure that the rights in any such intellectual property are secured for, and vested with Uniting Housing.

### 4.13 Procurement

Uniting Housing will ensure its procurement activities deliver best value for money, provide fit for purpose goods and services and are undertaken in an ethical and transparent manner at all times. Workers must:

- a) act in accordance with Uniting Housing Procurement policy
- b) only procure goods and services within their authorised delegation
- c) Meet Uniting Housing regulatory obligations

## 502 Code of Conduct

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- d) Implement Uniting Housing Risk Management policy to mitigate risks associated with major procurement decisions

### 4.14 Vulnerable Persons Safety

Uniting Housing has a zero-tolerance for vulnerable person abuse or misconduct, and is committed to providing safe environments where vulnerable people are cared for, respected, nurtured and sustained.

Uniting Housing has adopted the Uniting Church of Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania 'Keeping Children Safe Policy'. Uniting Housing is committed to compliance with the Victorian Government's *Reportable Conduct Scheme, Child Safe Standards and The Child Wellbeing and Safety Act*; the NDIS Practice Standards, and *National Disability Insurance Scheme (Incident Management and Reportable Incidents) Rules 2018*.

Workers must:

- a) maintain requirements in accordance with the 'Vulnerable persons safety' Policy;
- b) adhere to all policies, requirements, standards and laws pertaining to the rights of children and vulnerable people;
- c) report all allegations of misconduct, abuse or harm involving vulnerable people to the Company Secretary;
- d) adhere to the reporting requirements of all relevant government initiatives and industry schemes aimed at promoting and protecting vulnerable people from harm.

### 4.15 Drugs, Alcohol and Medication

Workers must not be adversely effected by alcohol and/or illicit drugs and/or prescribed drugs in the workplace at any time or under any circumstances. Workers must:

- a) not report for any duty at any time under the influence of illicit drugs, alcohol or medication, to the extent that it may impair their ability and the ability of their colleagues to safely and effectively perform their work requirements. This includes, but is not limited to, the ability to safely operate vehicles, items of plant and equipment and provide a service to consumers of Uniting Housing;
- b) advise their direct manager in the event that prescription medication may affect their performance or capacity whilst at work;
- c) ensure that whilst at functions or events either hosted by Uniting Housing or where attendance is in the capacity of a delegate of Uniting Housing, that their conduct positively reflects the Uniting Housing brand, values and reputation.

### 4.16 Outside Engagement or Activities

Uniting Housing allows participation on either a part-time or freelance basis in any outside business (including a family business). It is expected that outside engagement or activities will not impact on the Worker's primary engagement within Uniting Housing. Examples of such impact may include, but not be limited to, increased absenteeism, fatigue, an inability to perform the inherent requirements of their position. Workers must:

## 502 Code of Conduct

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- a) not perform private paid work while performing duties for Uniting Housing or use Uniting Housing's resources or premises for such purposes;
- b) not use the Uniting Housing name to gain an advantage of any kind in private dealings or arrangements;
- c) ensure that any secondary engagement or outside activities, whether paid or voluntary, do not create a conflict of interest and/or duty with their position within Uniting Housing. This includes sourcing referrals from existing consumers of Uniting Housing's services.

### 4.17 Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality

Uniting Housing is committed to a culture of transparency, professionalism, diligence and probity. Workers must:

- a) not demand or receive a fee, reward, commission, or benefit of any kind from any person or organisation for the initiation, conduct, omission or conclusion of any business with Uniting Housing
- b) not accept or provide gifts or entertainment that will obligate or appear to obligate the recipient. Occasional gifts and entertainment may only be accepted or provided to promote appropriate working relationships and must be approved by the Worker's direct manager;
- c) not seek, solicit, or use their position with Uniting Housing to obtain gifts or benefits from external organisations or individuals for personal use;
- d) ensure that a person, company or organisation is not placed in a position in which they feel obliged to offer gifts or hospitality to secure or retain Uniting Housing business;
- e) report any incidences where a bribe and/or cash is offered as well the receipt or offer of any gifts to the Company Secretary;
- f) ensure that records are kept of accepted gifts, benefits and hospitality of more than \$50 and those such records are subject to regular scrutiny;
- g) ensure that any gift or hospitality is provided for a business purpose in that it furthers the conduct of official business or other legitimate organisational goals, or promotes and supports government policy objectives and priorities;
- h) ensure that any expenses are proportionate to the benefits obtained for Uniting Housing and would be considered reasonable in terms of community expectations.

Workers may:

- i) Attend a conference either as a participant or speaker or apply for an award in recognition of their Uniting Housing work. Any benefits accruing from the Workers activities belong to Uniting Housing. This includes door prizes, fees for speaking and financial grants. Uniting Housing will record any revenue from fees and grants on the finance system and, in the case of the grants, may choose to fund the Worker's further work or development;
- j) Receive offers of sponsored travel and accommodation to attend a conference or to participate in an industry familiarisation tour. Such offers should generally be declined

## 502 Code of Conduct

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because of the potential for a conflict of interest. However, if attendance at the conference or the industry familiarisation tour is considered to be in the public interest then Uniting Housing may pay for the travel and accommodation instead.

### 4.18 Breaches of the Code of Conduct

Breaches of the Uniting Housing Code of Conduct may be considered to be misconduct and may be subject to disciplinary action, which may include termination of engagement or suspension of duties. Where a breach of the code equates to an allegation of criminal conduct, the matter will be reported to the Police. Breaches of the code may result in the Worker being expected to undergo additional training in their obligations under this code. Grievances will be handled as per organisational policy, or via the dispute resolution clause of the relevant Award or industrial tool. Uniting Housing aims to ensure that all reasonable steps will be taken to protect Workers when making any disclosures from any detrimental action in reprisal for making the disclosure. Workers must:

- a) report alleged breaches of the code to the Company Secretary unless the breach pertains to that person. In such instances the breach should then be reported to the Board Chairperson;
- b) not make vexatious or unsubstantiated claims; such claims may also be subject to disciplinary action.

## 5. Roles and responsibilities

Roles & Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Board is responsible for approving this policy, any changes to it and overseeing compliance with this policy</li> <li>• Via the Service Level Agreement, the Uniting Housing &amp; Property Division General Manager is responsible for:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ ensuring that work practices undertaken to deliver housing services and management on behalf of Uniting Housing, comply with this policy</li> <li>○ operationalising this policy with effective protocols and procedures</li> <li>○ reporting annually to the Board regarding adherence to approved policies and any required improvement plans</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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## 6. Relevant legislation & other documents

- a) Victorian Performance Standards for Registered Housing Agencies
- b) DHHS Human Services Standards (Victoria)
- c) Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)
- d) Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017 (Vic)
- e) ISO 9001:2008
- f) People & Culture Policy
- g) Fraud & Corruption control policy



## 502 Code of Conduct

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- h) Commitment to Vulnerable persons
- i) Vision Mission Values Statement
- j) Privacy policy
- k) OHS policy
- l) Whistle blowing policy
- m) Declaration of Interest and Gifts register
- n) Procurement policy
- o) Risk Management policy
- p) Information Security policy
- q) Safety screening policy

### Revision Record

Version	Date	Document Writer	Revision Description
2.0	20/1/2020	Company Secretary	Board endorsed

## 502 Code of Conduct

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### 7. Attachment: Code of Conduct Acknowledgement

#### Code of Conduct Acknowledgement

I acknowledge that:

- I have read, understood and will comply with the Uniting Housing Code of Conduct;
- I have resolved any questions or concerns about the content of the code with the Company Secretary or Board Chairperson prior to signing this document;
- I have a responsibility to immediately report any breach of this code to the Company Secretary or Board Chairperson;
- Uniting Housing reserves the right to vary this Code of Conduct at its discretion at any time. It may also be varied to take into account any changes to the law.
- I have received the support I require to understand this document and its intent

Signature:	
Name:	
Position:	
Unit:	
Date:	