

**Editorial Code of Conduct
Professional Conduct Policy
Giles Newspapers Pty Ltd
January 2019**

Note: these policies and all the other policies that govern your employment are located on the Great Southern Star newspaper website under “Policies”.

You must regularly check the online versions of this and the above-mentioned policies for updates.

The online version will always take precedence over a hardcopy.

Professional Conduct Policy

The policy of our publications across all platforms.

This policy applies to Giles Newspapers Pty Limited and its editorial employees in both print and digital media platforms.

Giles Group publications aim for the highest editorial and ethical standards.

Editorial employees and contributors should be open-minded, be fair and respect the truth.

To this end, all need to be familiar with the policy detailed in the following pages, to follow the rules they contain, and to apply their underlying principles.

1. Accuracy

Facts must be reported impartially, accurately and with integrity.

Clear distinction must be made between fact, conjecture and comment.

Try always to tell all sides of the story in any kind of dispute.

Do not knowingly withhold or suppress essential facts.

Journalists should not rely on only one source.

Be careful not to recycle an error from one reference source to another.

Check and check again.

Direct quotations should not be altered except to delete offensive language, protect against defamation, or to make minor changes for clarity.

Reports of new drugs or medical treatments must be considered with great caution. It is easy to raise false hopes or alarm among readers. Crosscheck all claims with responsible and neutral sources.

Photographs may be enhanced to improve reproduction, but must not be altered in a way which could mislead readers. Care must be taken to ensure accuracy in captions.

The editor must approve any alteration or manipulation of a digital photographic image, and the alteration must be explained in the caption before publication and archiving.

2. Mistakes

Serious factual errors should be admitted and corrected at the first opportunity, subject to legal advice where appropriate.

Individuals or organisations that have been criticised in Giles Group publications should be given a fair opportunity to respond.

No employee or contributor is allowed to commit the company to an admission of error, correction, or apology without reference to the editor.

Senior editorial staff and/or company lawyers must be consulted about the wording of corrections and clarifications to determine their suitability and whether an “offer of amends” is an appropriate response in settlement of a complaint.

Giles Newspapers Pty Ltd supports self regulation in the newspaper industry and participates in the activities of the Australian Press Council.

Editors are expected to publish all Council adjudications on complaints by the public in respect of their newspapers.

3. Misrepresentation

Do not use false names when representing a Giles publication.

Do not try to get information or photographs by deception.

4. Privacy

All individuals, including public figures, have a right to privacy.

Journalists have no general right to report the private behaviour of public figures unless public interest issues arise.

The right to privacy diminishes when the suitability of public figures to hold office or perform their duties is under scrutiny and such scrutiny is in the public interest.

“Public interest” is defined for this and other clauses as involving a matter capable of affecting the people at large so they might be legitimately interested in, or concerned about, what is going on, or what may happen to them or to others.

Unless it is in the public interest to do so, do not identify the family or friends of people accused of, or convicted of, a crime.

The publication of sensitive personal information — such as taxation details, Family Court records and health and welfare matters — may be prohibited by legislation.
Seek legal advice.

5. Covert activities

Journalists and photographers may at times have to operate surreptitiously to expose crime, significantly anti-social conduct, public deception or some other matter in the public interest.

All such operations must be approved in advance by the editor.

This approval will be given only where good cause exists to suspect crime or deception has taken place, and after all other means of gathering the facts have been exhausted.

The editorial executive must be satisfied that the importance of publishing the information sought outweighs any damage to trust and credibility which your newspaper might suffer by allowing employees to operate surreptitiously.

Where appropriate, the nature and reasons for operating covertly should be disclosed to readers.

Giles Newspapers Pty Ltd does not condone illegal acts by employees.

6. Confidential sources

The sources of information must be identified, wherever possible.

When an informant insists on anonymity, verification of the information offered must be sought from other, preferably attributable, sources.

A promise of confidentiality to a source must, of course, be honoured.

However, journalists must be aware of the possible consequences. For example, a judge may order the source to be identified.

Defiance of this order could lead to conviction for contempt of court, with the consequence of being imprisoned or being sanctioned with a heavy fine.

7. Harassment

Do not harass or try to intimidate people when seeking information or photographs.

Do not photograph people on their property without their consent unless the public interest in doing so is clear.

If asked to leave private property, do so promptly.

Do not persist in telephoning, pursuing, questioning, door-stopping or obstructing access after you have been asked by an authorised person to stop.

8. Discrimination

Do not make pejorative reference to a person's race, nationality, colour, religion, marital status, sex, sexual preferences, age, or physical or mental capacity.

No details of a person's race, nationality, colour, religion, marital status, sex, sexual preferences, age, or physical or mental incapacity should be included in a report unless they are relevant.

9. Grief and distress

Reporters and photographers must always behave with sensitivity and courtesy toward the public, and in particular towards those involved in tragic events.

No one should be put under pressure to be photographed or interviewed. Initial approaches might best be made through friends or relatives.

We should respect the wishes of the bereaved or grieving.

Do not go into non-public areas of hospitals, welfare institutions, funeral parlours, churches, etc, without identifying yourself or without permission of the people affected or their intermediaries.

Maintain sensitivity when recalling tragedy or crime.

Anniversaries can be distressing reminders for survivors.

10. Children

Extreme care should be taken that children are not prompted in interviews, or offered inducements to cooperate.

Do not identify children in crime and court reports without legal advice.

For legal reasons, children under the age of 18 must not normally be photographed or interviewed about their welfare unless a parent or guardian is present and has given permission.

Similarly, children must not be interviewed about their parents or siblings unless a parent or other legally responsible adult is present and has granted permission.

Do not approach children in schools without the permission of a school authority.

11. Suicide

Do not reveal graphic details of a suspected suicide.

Avoid making judgments about the method of death which might suggest suicide is an acceptable means of resolving problems, particularly among young people.

Where possible, include in such articles the contact number of support groups where people with problems may seek help.

12. Illegal drugs

Do not report recipes for drug manufacture details of distribution or descriptions of the use of other harmful substances unless justified by public safety considerations or at the request of authorities.

Do not suggest that illegal drug use or the misuse of illegal drugs is an acceptable means of resolving problems.

13. Weapons and threats

Do not report threats to use bombs or other weapons or threats of extortion unless public safety justifies it, or when the authorities request you to do so, or when it is necessary to explain severe and obvious public disruption caused by the authorities' reaction to such a threat.

Do not report details of the manufacture or methods of using explosives, ammunition, firearms, fireworks, crossbows, booby traps or any potentially lethal device.

14. Payment for information

As a general principle, payment must not be made for interviews or information.

In the event that a demand for payment or other form of reward or compensation is made, agreement must not be given without the editor's approval.

The same principle applies to payments to criminals and their families and associates, witnesses in criminal proceedings and their families and associates.

15. Personal gain

Employees must not request or accept any money, travel, goods, discounts, entertainment or inducements of any kind outside the normal scope of business hospitality.

Bribes are to be rejected promptly and the editor informed immediately.

Only the editor or a nominee is authorised to accept offers of free or discounted travel, accommodation etc on behalf of a publication.

The editor has the absolute right to decide whether to accept an offer, who should be assigned and whether a report is published as a consequence.

These conditions must be made clear to whoever made the offer.

16. Financial reporting

It is illegal for employees to make personal gain from financial information received in advance of general publication. It is illegal to pass this information to others.

Journalists must not write about shares, securities or companies in which they, their family or friends, have a financial interest without disclosing that interest to the editor.

A declaration of interest must be made if journalists have traded or intend to trade, directly or indirectly, in shares or securities about which they have written recently or intend to write soon.

Journalists should not write about prospectuses prior to their lodgment without confirming that regulations of the Australian Securities Commission are not breached.

17. Plagiarism

Plagiarism is theft. It will not be tolerated.

18. Interviews/Requests for information or documentation in third party litigation

In general, Giles Newspapers Pty Ltd expects employees and contributors to co-operate with the authorities in investigations. However, requests by police or other authorities for work-related interviews must be referred to the editor.

Requests for information/assistance in legal matters to which Giles Pty Ltd is not a party should be referred for legal advice.

Generally assistance should not be provided in the absence of a court order.

No employee of Giles Newspapers Pty Ltd should speak in that capacity to another media organisation or at a public event without permission of the editor.

19. Advertising

Editorial material created as a condition of placing an advertisement (i.e. for favourable consideration) must carry a clear label at the top of the page, or directly above an isolated item: "advertisement", "advertorial" or "advertising feature".

Where possible, news stories which inadvertently relate to an advertisement should not be carried on the same page.

20. Conflict of interest

A conflict of interest arises when personal interests or divided loyalties interfere with the ability to make sound, objective business decisions on behalf of Giles Newspapers Pty Ltd.

Employees are generally free to engage in personal financial and business transactions subject to the following limitations:

- No employee, officer, director or their family should give or receive improper benefits, such as kickbacks or bribes, as a result of their position at the company;

- All employees have a duty to avoid situations where their loyalties may be divided between the company's interests and their own;
- Employees should refrain from self dealing, such as steering company business to where they or their families will benefit improperly;
- Employees should even avoid the appearance that such a conflict may exist;
- Staff may join and participate in any lawful political or community organisations or activities but must avoid any potential conflict of interest with their employment, and notify the editor if such a potential exists;
- Employees should not conduct non company business in such a manner as to mislead others into believing that they are representing Giles Newspapers Pty Ltd

The editor must be made aware as soon as possible if a reporter is assigned to a story that presents a possible or real conflict of interest.

Any employee wishing to perform paid or unpaid work for a third party publication, radio or television outlet must refer to the editor for approval.

Contributors must comply with provisions relating to conflicts and must declare any real or potential conflict of interest arising from material submitted for publication and supervisors must do their utmost to ensure no conflict exists.

Any association which may have a bearing, or appear to have a bearing, on a contributor's view, must be identified with the published material.

Employees should never allow gifts or hospitality to place them in a situation where their objective judgment or compliance with the law might be questioned.

In particular:

- Employees should not provide or accept gifts or hospitality unless it is clearly appropriate in the context of a reasonable business relationship;
- Employees should never solicit gifts or hospitality. Gifts or hospitality to or from government or public officials is completely forbidden in many circumstances.

You should contact Giles Newspapers Pty Ltd's Legal Department if you may be placed in a situation that involves gifts or hospitality to or from government or public officials.

Failure to notify the editor of any real or potential conflict of interest may result in dismissal.

21. Confidential Information

We are all responsible for protecting the company's confidential information and we cannot:

- Disclose that information to third parties without proper authorisation to do so;
- Use the information for personal gain; or
- Use the information in any manner that is inconsistent with the company's interests.

If an employee has any doubt about whether certain information confidential or not do not disclose such information without first discussing with the newspaper group's owners.

Confidential information may include information or data about the company's planning, business strategy, projects, existing or potential customers, competitors or suppliers, financial results or operations, major contracts, commencement of major litigation, confidential personnel information and anything else which is not in the public domain.

These prohibitions extend to the confidential information of the company's suppliers, customers and third parties with whom the company does business.

Improper disclosure or use could destroy the value of such information to the company and substantially weaken the company's competitive position. Access to confidential information must be limited to authorised persons with a need to know that particular information.

Respect the confidences and sensitivities of your colleagues at all times.

23. Social Media and External Media Policies

Social media tools such as Twitter and Facebook are an increasingly important way for us to communicate with our readers in an interactive and personal way.

It is crucial, however, that when someone identifies themselves as a company employee, discusses their work or solicits information for a story, they behave in a way that is consistent with our company values.

24. Other Obligations

Do not bring the reputation of the company, your newspaper or colleagues into disrepute.

All employees are required to be neat and dressed appropriately for their particular job.

We do not spell out strict guidelines, because dress may be a matter of cultural and religious influence as well as individual taste.

We do expect, however, that staff will be groomed in a way which does not offend fellow employees, visitors to the office or any member of the public with whom they deal.

25. Breaches of policy

Group publications must regularly publish advice to readers on how to lodge a complaint about the conduct of an editorial employee or the content of a story.

Such complaints should be reported to relevant managers and supervisors as soon as possible.

Responses to complaints by an authorised officer of the company should be timely, subject to any legal considerations.
Complaints involving alleged breaches of this policy will be investigated by the managing editor of the newspaper concerned, or by an executive of equivalent status.
Proven breaches will be dealt with in accordance with the company's disciplinary procedures.

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