

Public Statements Procedure

1. Purpose

This procedure seeks to give workers an understanding of:

- The potential impacts of making public comments/statements
- Who can make authorised public statements
- Guidelines for making private public comment/statements
- How social media can increase exposure when making public comments/statements

This procedure operates in conjunction with the ICH *Code of Conduct* and *Social Media* policies.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees, Board members, volunteers, students, trainees and contractors. For the purposes of this policy, these persons shall be referred to as workers.

3. Definitions

Public comments/statements: include any public forums or media including but not limited to:

- Public speaking engagements
- Interviews
- Online posts and social media
- Correspondence with media
- Any other forums where the comment is intended for, or may be accessed by the community

Public comments/statements do not include advertising for ICH events, providing they are approved by the relevant Service Manager.

Authorised/Official Public Statements: are ones which a worker speaks on behalf of ICH (not as a private citizen), this may include using an ICH letterhead, technology (e.g. email) or where the worker represents themselves as offering comment on behalf of the organisation.

Media: includes any form of mass communication (broadcasting, publication or the internet) this can include print (e.g. magazines, newspapers, books, etc.), television/video, radio, social media or on online platforms (including news websites, social networking sites, blogs, chatrooms, podcasts).

4. Procedure

Inala Community House (ICH) is committed to upholding a strong and trusted reputation within the community. Workers are not permitted to make public statements on behalf of ICH, except where authorised by the Board of Directors or the Chief Executive Officer.

In a personal capacity, workers should be mindful of any representations or statements made of/about ICH, its activities, any persons involved with ICH or individual views which relate to services provided by ICH.

It is important however workers understand that public comments can potentially:

- Impact the reputation of ICH
- Result in a breach of confidentiality or privacy
- Impact upon the relationship with funding bodies (e.g. Department of Child Safety) and with government representatives (e.g. local, state and federal members)
- Create conflicts of interest

Principles which apply to any public comments made include:

- Professional, responsible and ethical communication
- Awareness of the diverse audience through social media and online platforms
- Protection of the confidential information of the organisation
- Upholding the reputation of ICH
- Maintaining relationships and not bringing into disrepute funding organisations or partnered agencies

Public statements must be made in accordance with the ICH *Code of Conduct*, in a professional manner which does not harass, vilify, intimidate or defame ICH, its workers, funding organisations or partnered agencies.

Some comments can be intended as private communication but become public. An example of this may be where an email is sent to another person (e.g. a friend) and they then share it by forwarding or publishing. This results in the same impact as if it had been shared by you.

Authorised Public Statements

The ICH *Code of Conduct* requires that all workers act in a professional and ethical manner, which upholds the values and principles of ICH and to not act in a way which is detrimental to ICH. When making public comments workers must ensure that this is consistent with this.

Public statements must be pre-authorised by the Board of Directors or the Chief Executive Officer.

Private Public Statements

ICH fully supports workers rights to express their views publicly on any matter of public interest as private citizens. It is important when making a private public statement that it is clear that these are the views of the worker and avoid anything which suggests that this relates to their position in ICH or that the worker represents ICH.

When making any public comments in a private capacity, the following guidelines should be implemented:

- That any comments are made in an unofficial capacity, providing that comments are lawful and it is made clear that these are your own views
- Appropriate language should be used
- It is not appropriate for comments to be, or could be perceived to be:
 - Being made on behalf of ICH, rather than an expression of a personal view
 - Compromising your capacity to fulfil your duties in an impartial manner

- So harsh or extreme in its criticism of the Government, a member of Parliament or government/party policies that you are no longer able to work professionally, efficiently or impartially
- Personal attacks or comments regarding other people
- Prejudicial to the integrity or good reputation of ICH or of a funding body
- So strong in criticism that it could disrupt the workplace or ICH's relationships with funding bodies or government representatives
- Personal attacks connected with your engagement with ICH
- Compromising public confidence in ICH, a funding body or another person
- Not to use information which is obtained or generated in connection with your employment
- Not to wear any identification or make comment which identifies you as an employee of ICH
- Not to use any ICH resources to make the public statement (e.g. ICH letterhead or email)

Social Media and Other Online Presences

Regarding personal social media and other online presences, workers need to bear in mind that if they choose to reveal or imply their employment with ICH on social media that this increases to possible exposure for themselves and ICH. Information which is posted to social media or other online domains can still be subject to disciplinary action.

Media Requests

Any worker who is contacted by a member of the media to provide information or comment, must refer the enquiry to the Chief Executive Officer. This is for multiple reasons such as:

- There may be legal reasons why ICH will decline to provide information (e.g. confidentiality/privacy, intellectual property)
- That it may not be deemed to be ethical to provide a comment
- That ICH may not be the appropriate body to comment
- That doing so may damage the reputation of ICH or of relationships with funding bodies or partnered agencies
- That doing so may pose a risk to a worker or client

This does not include where the information requested is about advertising for ICH events, providing that the worker is approved to do so by the relevant Service Manager and acting in accordance with this procedure and the ICH *Code of Conduct*.

Unsure

If you are unsure, contact your Manager or the CEO for advice.

Breaches

The guidelines included within this procedure are to help avoid any potential situations which could result in disciplinary action.

Breaches of this procedure may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

5. Review

This procedure shall be reviewed in every 3 years.

6. Related Documents

Policies

ICH Code of Conduct Policy

ICH Social Media Policy