



Managing
conflicts of
interest: A
guide for the
public sector



Photo acknowledgement:
Chris Tse

Managing conflicts of interest: A guide for the public sector

This is a good practice guide
published under section 21 of the
Public Audit Act 2001.

June 2020

ISBN 978-0-9951321-5-3

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Auditor-General's overview

E ngā mana, e ngā reo, e ngā karangarangatanga maha o te motu, tēnā koutou.

If you work in the public sector, it does not matter what your role is or how senior you are. In a small country like ours, there is a good chance you will have a conflict of interest at some point in your working life.

A conflict of interest is where the responsibilities you have as an employee or office holder in a public organisation are affected by some other interest you have in your private life. That other interest could be a relationship, a role in another organisation, or a business interest.

Having a conflict of interest does not necessarily mean you have done anything wrong. If the conflict is handled well, it does not have to be a problem. Conflicts can arise in many situations. Some are serious, some less so, and some are unavoidable. But, in any situation where activities are carried out in the public interest or paid for out of public funds, the public needs to be confident that decisions:

- are made impartially and for the right reasons; and
- are not influenced by personal interests or ulterior motives.

That means, if you are working in the public sector, you need to be able to:

- identify the different interests you have;
- recognise if you might have a conflict;
- understand how serious it is and what risks it gives rise to, for both you and the organisation you work for; and
- understand what to do about it.

That is what this guide is about – identifying interests and managing conflicts, so the public can be confident that people making decisions and spending public funds on their behalf are doing so in the public interest, not to benefit their family, friends, business associates, or themselves.

To manage conflicts of interest, there are usually both legal and ethical questions that need to be taken into account. Some public organisations are subject to specific legal requirements governing how conflicts are managed. Most will have policies or processes that people are required to comply with. This guide is not intended to replace any of these sector or organisation-specific legal or policy requirements.

Instead, this guide takes a principles-based approach, intended to complement those requirements. It outlines the basic rules that apply to different types of conflicts, points you in the direction of the rules that are likely to apply to you, and provides some principles and guidance on best practice to help you judge

how best to manage a conflict, when the rules, by themselves, do not provide an obvious answer. It also includes several scenarios to help show how these principles might be applied in practice.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JM Ryan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

John Ryan
Controller and Auditor-General

24 June 2020

Introduction

- 1.1 Every employee or office holder has several professional and personal interests and roles. Conflicts of interest sometimes cannot be avoided and can arise without anyone being at fault. They need not cause problems as long as they are promptly disclosed and well managed.
- 1.2 In this guide, we describe conflicts of interest in the public sector, and how to identify, disclose, and manage them. We do not lay down rules but instead suggest an approach for dealing with issues when they arise.¹ This guide represents our view of what constitutes good practice in the public sector.
- 1.3 This guide will be useful for everyone who works in the public sector. We also publish a separate good practice guide about the legal requirements under the Local Authorities (Members' Interests) Act 1968.²
- 1.4 There are several aspects to managing conflicts of interest effectively:
- Public organisations and employees and office holders need to understand what a “conflict of interest” is, and be aware of the different ways in which one can arise (see Parts 2 and 3).
 - Employees and office holders should identify and disclose a conflict of interest as soon as it arises (see Part 4).
 - In every instance, the public organisation (or, sometimes, the employee or office holder concerned) needs to consider what action (if any) is necessary to manage the conflict of interest. This might include publicly disclosing significant conflicts of interest in the interests of public transparency (see Part 4).
 - Public organisations should establish policies and procedures to help them and their employees to identify and deal with conflicts of interest (see Part 5).
 - Public organisations need to understand the main legal and ethical considerations that are likely to apply to managing conflicts of interest and the possible consequences of breaching the applicable rules (see Part 6).

Guiding principles

- 1.5 Public business should be conducted with a spirit of:
- integrity;
 - impartiality;
 - accountability;
 - trustworthiness;

1 For organisations in the State services, please also see the State Services Commission's *Model Standards on Conflicts of Interest*. They outline the State Services Commissioner's minimum expectations for staff and organisations in the State services to support effective reporting and management of conflicts of interest.

2 The Local Authorities (Members' Interests) Act 1968 applies to members of city councils, district councils, regional councils, community boards, and a range of other public bodies.

- respect; and
- responsiveness.

1.6 In our view, these principles should guide any decisions about conflicts of interest.

Our role with conflicts of interest

1.7 The Auditor-General does not have an explicit statutory role with regard to conflicts of interest.³

1.8 The Auditor-General cannot “rule” on whether someone has a conflict or whether it was lawful for them to participate in a particular matter. Nor can we take enforcement action against someone who might have acted unlawfully or inappropriately because of a conflict of interest. These are matters for the courts.

1.9 However, under the Public Audit Act 2001, the Auditor-General is the auditor of all public organisations and, as such, has an interest in supporting them to carry out their activities lawfully and in a way that inspires public confidence. The proper management of conflicts of interest is a fundamental part of maintaining public confidence in the public sector. Therefore, the Auditor-General has a strong interest in supporting good practice.

1.10 This guide is one of the ways we aim to support good practice in managing conflicts of interest in the public sector. Other ways we might look at conflicts of interest are:

- **As part of our annual audit work:** The Auditor-General appoints auditors to carry out annual audits of public organisations. Under section 15 of the Public Audit Act, auditors can look at an organisation’s systems and processes for managing conflicts of interest as part of the annual audit. Auditors also monitor some types of disclosures about conflicts of interest as part of the annual audit.
- **When carrying out an inquiry:** The Auditor-General has the power to examine concerns about conflicts of interest as part of an inquiry into a public organisation’s use of its resources under section 18 of the Public Audit Act.
- **When carrying out a performance audit:** The Auditor-General can examine a public organisation’s compliance with any statutory or internal policy requirements about conflicts of interest, in the course of carrying out a performance audit under section 16 of the Public Audit Act.

³ Except in the case of the Local Authorities (Members’ Interest) Act 1968, where the Auditor-General has statutory functions under the Act.

The nature of conflicts of interest

What is a conflict of interest?

2.1 A conflict of interest is any situation where your duties or responsibilities as an employee or office holder in a public organisation conflict, or could be seen to conflict, with some other interest you might have outside of work.

2.2 The other interest or duty might be:

- holding another public office;
- being a current or (recent) former advisor, director, or partner of another business or organisation;
- being a member of a club, society, or association;
- having a professional or legal obligation to someone else (such as being a trustee);
- having a beneficial interest in a trust;
- owning or occupying a piece of land;
- owning shares or some other investment or asset;
- having received a gift, hospitality, or other benefit from someone;⁴
- owing a debt to someone; or
- being a relative or close friend of someone who has one of these interests, or who could otherwise be personally affected by a decision of the public organisation.

Having an interest does not necessarily mean you have a conflict of interest

2.3 Having a personal interest, on its own, is not what causes a conflict. Everyone has multiple roles and interests at work, at home, in their extended families, or in the community. A potential conflict of interest arises only where your duties or responsibilities as an employee or office holder in a public organisation overlap with one of your other roles or interests.

2.4 For example, you are an elected member of a local council and also involved in running a business, on the committee of a local sports club, and a member of a voluntary organisation. Your involvement in the business, role on the committee, and membership of the voluntary organisation are all interests that you have as well as your role as an elected member of the council.

⁴ Here, issues about conflicts of interest overlap with the management of sensitive expenditure. See our good practice guide, *Controlling sensitive expenditure: Guidelines for public entities*.

- 2.5 These other interests do not necessarily mean you have any conflicts of interest. An interest becomes a potential conflict of interest only if it overlaps in some way with your role as an elected member. For example, your interest might result in a potential conflict of interest if:
- your business puts in a bid to provide goods or services to the council;
 - the sports club is located on land leased from the council; or
 - the voluntary organisation seeks funding from the council to help fund its activities.

Why might having a conflict of interest be a problem?

- 2.6 Having a conflict of interest does not mean you have done anything wrong, and it is not necessarily a problem if it is managed properly. Conflicts can arise in all sorts of situations, as the list above shows. Some conflicts are serious, some less so. Some are unavoidable, especially in a small country like ours.
- 2.7 However, in any situation where activities are paid for out of public funds or carried out in the public interest, the public needs to be confident that decisions:
- are made for the right reasons; and
 - are not influenced by personal interests or ulterior motives.
- 2.8 The risk with having a conflict of interest – at least, one that is not properly managed – is that you will be seen to be advancing your own interests or the interests of others you feel a sense of loyalty or obligation to, rather than the interests of your role as a public servant.
- 2.9 Even if you have no intention of acting improperly, and are confident that you can think and act impartially, **if it looks like** you might be influenced by personal interests or ulterior motives when making a decision, you risk undermining public confidence in the integrity of that decision. You can also potentially expose the organisation you work for to legal, commercial, political, or reputational risk.

Why managing conflicts is particularly important in the public sector

- 2.10 Conflicts of interest can arise in all walks of life, including the private sector. However, there are higher expectations about conflicts of interest in the public sector because it is public money that is being spent, and public powers that are being exercised.

- 2.11 Where activities are paid for out of public funds, or decisions are made exercising public powers, members of the public rightly expect the people making those decisions to act impartially, without any possibility that they could be influenced by favouritism or improper personal motives, or that public resources could be misused for private benefit.
- 2.12 Also, unlike private organisations, public organisations are subject to specific legal rules that require their decision-making processes to be procedurally fair. Any decision of a public organisation that is tainted by bias, or the appearance of bias, is potentially subject to legal challenge.
- 2.13 This means that conduct that might be allowed in the private sector is not necessarily acceptable in the public sector. For example, under the Companies Act 1993, company directors are required to disclose when they have a personal interest in a transaction, but might then be permitted to discuss and vote on that transaction, despite having an interest in it. Similarly, small businesses in the private sector often employ and contract with family members as a matter of course. Such practices might be unacceptable – or, at the very least, require more careful management – in a public organisation.

Conflicts of interest and corrupt conduct

- 2.14 Corrupt conduct can arise when a conflict of interest is intentionally concealed, understated, mismanaged, or abused.
- 2.15 Experience shows that many, if not most, forms of corrupt conduct involve a conflict of interest. It is also possible to engage in corrupt conduct to do with another person's conflict of interest.
- 2.16 Examples of conduct that could be corrupt include:
- concealing or failing to disclose a conflict of interest;
 - making false or understated declarations about a conflict of interest;
 - favouring another interest over public duty;
 - improperly influencing others to favour a personal interest;
 - misusing resources to favour a personal interest;
 - improperly accessing, using, or disclosing information about a conflict of interest;
 - acting improperly to favour another person's personal interests; and
 - improperly allowing others to conceal a conflict of interest.

3

Different types of conflicts of interest

- 3.1 The seriousness of a conflict, and the type of risks it gives rise to, for you personally and the organisation you work for, will vary depending on the nature of the conflict and the context in which it arises. Conflicts of interest can arise in a wide variety of ways. In all cases, the underlying concern is the same – that is, ensuring that decisions are made impartially, and managing the risk of bias, or the appearance of bias.
- 3.2 To work out how to manage a conflict, it can be helpful to categorise it as a:
- financial conflict;
 - non-financial conflict;
 - conflict of roles; or
 - predetermination.
- 3.3 The situation you are facing might not fall neatly into one category. There are also situations where you might have more than one type of conflict. But, if you are trying to figure out whether you have a conflict and, if so, what to do about it, analysing your situation by putting it in one of these four categories can be a useful starting point.
- 3.4 In addition to these four categories, you also need to consider potential conflicts created by the possession of official information. The Serious Fraud Office often sees among public sector employees a failure to appreciate that it can be an offence to use information acquired in an official capacity for the personal benefit of that official or another.⁵ As we noted earlier, public sector officials are often held to a higher standard than in the private sector and it is important that officials do not take advantage of information acquired in their official role to make a gain either for themselves or others.
- 3.5 In all situations, your conflict might be actual or perceived – that is, you might have an actual conflict, or there could be no conflict, but to an outside observer it looks like there is.
- 3.6 Members of the public do not often have access to all the relevant facts, and cannot know what is in your mind or what your motivations are. They can judge only by appearances and information in the public domain. That means perceived conflicts are often as risky as actual conflicts, and you need to take just as much care to identify and manage them.

Financial conflicts of interest

- 3.7 A financial conflict of interest is any situation where you stand to gain or lose financially from a decision you are asked to make.

- 3.8 Financial interests might be direct or indirect. There are also situations where you might be deemed to share the same financial interests as another person or organisation. For example, you might be deemed to share any financial interests your spouse or partner has, or those of any business you are involved in.
- 3.9 A financial interest need not involve cash changing hands directly. It could, for example, be an effect on the value of land or shares that you own, or the turnover of a business you are involved in.
- 3.10 Financial conflicts of interest are often treated more strictly than non-financial conflicts of interest. For example:
- Under the common law, any financial conflict of interest (except one that is trivial) automatically disqualifies a public official from participating in a decision.
 - The Local Authorities (Members' Interests) Act prohibits members of local authorities and office holders in other specified public organisations⁶ from discussing or voting on any matter in which they have a financial interest, unless their interest is "in common with the public".
- 3.11 If you have a financial conflict of interest:
- you should treat it seriously, even if it seems trivial to you; and
 - you need to make sure you are familiar with any specific rules that apply to the management of financial conflicts of interest in the organisation you work in.

Non-financial conflicts of interest

- 3.12 A non-financial conflict of interest is any situation where you are not affected financially by a decision but are affected in some other way that might make you biased or appear to be biased.
- 3.13 A non-financial conflict of interest might arise, for example, from a family relationship, friendship, or any other sort of personal relationship.
- 3.14 Non-financial conflicts can also arise if you are a member of, or involved with, an organisation outside of your work.
- 3.15 Under the common law, a non-financial conflict of interest does not automatically exclude you from participating in a decision. It will depend how serious the conflict is. That does not mean non-financial interests are always less serious than financial conflicts. However, because there is not an automatic assumption of bias, there is generally more room for judgement about how serious the conflict is and how it should be managed.

⁶ For a list of organisations, see our good practice guide, *Local Authorities (Members' Interests) Act 1968: A guide for members of local authorities on managing financial conflicts of interest*.

Interests of relatives and friends

- 3.16 Considering the interests of relatives and friends requires careful judgement. If they have an interest that overlaps with the duties of an employee or office holder, then there might be a conflict of interest.
- 3.17 Specific statutory rules might also apply. For example:
- for members of local authorities covered by the Local Authorities (Members' Interests) Act, the financial interests of a spouse, civil union partner, or de facto partner are regulated; and
 - for matters covered by the Crown Entities Act 2004, the interests of a spouse, civil union partner, de facto partner, child, or parent are regulated.
- 3.18 In general, for situations not covered by specific statutory rules, we consider that, at least, the interests of any dependants or relatives who live with the employee or office holder must be treated as effectively the same as if the interest was held by the employee or office holder. In other words, if interests held by these relatives overlap with an employee or office holder's official duties, there will be a conflict of interest.
- 3.19 For other relatives, it will depend on the closeness of the relationship and the degree to which the public organisation's decision or activity could directly or significantly affect them. (Part 4 covers assessing the seriousness of a conflict of interest.)
- 3.20 Close relationships can vary. A relationship could be close because of the directness of the blood or marriage link, or because of the amount of association. There are no clear rules but it will usually be wise not to participate if relatives are significantly affected.
- 3.21 Some cultures, including Māori culture, have a broad concept of family. In our view, a conflict of interest will not often arise where the connection is a common ancestor, such as another iwi or hapū member. Sometimes an iwi connection could create a conflict of interest in and of itself. For example, if the person is working for a public organisation on a Treaty settlement where they are likely to end up as a beneficiary, this might create a conflict of interest. In this situation, the interest is personal.
- 3.22 Questions of judgement and degree also arise when considering friends and other associates. However, in our view, it is unrealistic to expect the employee or office holder to have absolutely no connection with or knowledge of the person concerned. New Zealand is a small and interconnected society. Simply being acquainted with someone, having worked with them, or having had official dealings with them is not something we would consider to cause a problem. However, a longstanding, close, or recent association or dealing might do.

- 3.23 Care should also be taken with interests held by people who have funded the election campaigns of elected members.
- 3.24 Where the public organisation's decision or activity affects an organisation that a relative or friend works for, it could be reasonable to take into account the nature of their position. For example, it might be material whether they are a senior executive or owner, on the one hand, or whether they are a junior staff member who is not personally involved in the matter and who would not be personally affected by the decision, on the other.

Conflict of roles

- 3.25 A conflict of roles can arise in any situation where you are a decision-maker for two different organisations about the same matter.
- 3.26 In some ways, a conflict of roles is just another type of non-financial conflict. We have given it its own category because a conflict of roles is likely to prompt different issues than other types of conflicts. The question you need to consider is not so much whether your interests conflict, but whether the interests of the two organisations you work for do.
- 3.27 A conflict of roles is also more likely to prompt questions about conflicting duties. For example:
- If both organisations are involved in the same project or transaction, and you owe a duty of confidentiality to both, can you be effectively involved in making decisions for both organisations about that project or transaction?
 - Can you fulfil a fiduciary duty to one organisation (for example, as a company director or trustee) when deciding something if you owe a fiduciary duty, or some other sort of duty of loyalty, to the other organisation?
- 3.28 Sometimes you might be involved in a second organisation quite deliberately. You might have been appointed specifically to represent the first organisation or hold office in another organisation because of your position in the first organisation. For example, if you are an employee of a Crown entity, you might have been appointed as its representative on a community trust that the Crown entity funds.
- 3.29 In those situations, it might be consistent with your role to participate at meetings of the first organisation in some matters that concern the second organisation, especially if that second role gives you specialised knowledge that it would be useful to contribute. This might be legitimate – and mutually beneficial – because for many matters there will be no risk that you could advance any private interest, show partiality, or otherwise act in a way that was not in the first organisation's best interests.

- 3.30 However, you must be careful not to assume that this is always so. Conflicts of interest could still arise with some decisions. This is especially likely where you might be under a legal duty (for example, as a director or trustee) to act in the best interests of one organisation. For example, a conflict of interest might arise when one organisation is making a decision about funding the other, its continued existence, or on a formal submission it has made.
- 3.31 The main points to consider with a conflict of roles are that:
- you need to be clear in your own mind what your obligations are to each role or organisation;
 - you need to be confident that both organisations are clear about what your obligations are to each of them and, if necessary, have a protocol that explains this; and
 - you need to always be alert for situations where the interests of the two organisations might conflict, even if they generally do not.

Predetermination

- 3.32 Predetermination is any situation where you are making a decision about something and there is a risk that people will think you made up your mind before you considered all of the evidence. Suggestions of predetermination usually arise because of something you have previously said or done.
- 3.33 Technically, predetermination is not a form of conflict of interest. However, the concept of predetermination is derived from the common law on bias, so we have covered it in this guide. The underlying risk with predetermination is the same as for conflicts of interest – that is, the risk that you will “taint” a decision you are involved in making because you are biased or appear to be biased.
- 3.34 As a public sector employee or officeholder, you are entitled to have your own personal views. Indeed, you might often be expected to use your opinions or ideas in carrying out your work.
- 3.35 However, sometimes having strong views about a matter can create a risk of prejudice or predetermination. You might be treated as biased if your behaviour, beliefs, or what you say indicates that you made up your mind about a matter before it came to be heard or deliberated on – in other words, if you have a “closed mind” or fixed position and are not willing to fairly consider all relevant information and arguments.
- 3.36 The seriousness of the risk will depend on the context, such as what your role is and what sort of decision you are being asked to make.

- 3.37 For quasi-judicial decisions, decision-makers are held to an exacting standard of impartiality and objectivity. Quasi-judicial decisions are those that directly affect the legal rights, interests, and obligations of an individual or small group of individuals. Quasi-judicial decisions can be, for example, a decision to grant a permit, confer a specific benefit, or impose a punishment.
- 3.38 In other situations, it might nevertheless be acceptable for employees or officeholders to bring personal or previously formed views to decision-making – for example, when:
- discussing issues and exchanging ideas with members of the public;
 - developing a preliminary position, especially where a proposal is being consulted on or where the public organisation is expected to perform an advocacy role;
 - already holding – and perhaps having expressed – strong personal views about the matter, for decisions that are made by an elected or representative body and are political in nature or involve high-level policy-making;
 - promoting a particular view during debate in public hearings on a matter; and
 - drawing on your own knowledge or experience, especially for decisions that are entrusted to particular people because of their special expertise in the subject.
- 3.39 General personal factors, such as an employee’s or officer holder’s ethnicity, religion, national origin, age, political, or philosophical leanings, wealth, or professional background, will not usually constitute predetermination, unless they give rise to a strongly held personal belief that directly relates to the matter being considered.
- 3.40 When dealing with predetermination:
- You are expected to have an open mind, but that does not mean an empty mind.
 - Pay particular attention to the type of decision you are being asked to make. You need to be particularly careful about predetermination in situations where you are making decisions that will affect the legal rights, interests, and obligations of an individual or small group of individuals, as opposed to broad policy decisions that do not have an immediate effect on individuals.
 - Unlike many types of conflicts, the risks associated with predetermination are nearly always under your control. It is generally about managing what you do or say, so you do not later put yourself in a situation where your participation in a decision will put that decision at risk.

4

Dealing with conflicts of interest when they arise

- 4.1 There are two important aspects to dealing with conflicts of interest when they arise:
- identifying and disclosing the conflict of interest (primarily the responsibility of the employee or office holder concerned); and
 - deciding what action, if any, is necessary to best avoid or mitigate any effects of the conflict of interest (primarily the responsibility of the public organisation).

Identifying and disclosing a conflict of interest

- 4.2 Conflicts of interest can arise at any time. You might know from the outset, when you start in a role with a public organisation, that you have an outside interest that could result in a conflict of interest. Or you might take on a new role or appointment outside of work that could lead to a conflict at work. Or something might crop up, or your role at work might change, so that something that was not a conflict before becomes a potential conflict.
- 4.3 In short, everyone in the public sector needs to remain alert to the possibility of conflicts at all times.

Responsibility to identify and disclose conflicts of interest

- 4.4 The primary responsibility for identifying and disclosing conflicts of interest to the relevant people in a timely and effective manner rests with the person concerned.
- 4.5 This is because it is the individual person who will always have the fullest knowledge of their own affairs. They will be in the best position to realise whether and when something at work has a connection with another interest of theirs.
- 4.6 Managers and other senior personnel should remain generally alert for issues affecting other people that might create a problem. All public organisations need to be aware of any separate obligation they might have to disclose certain types of interests and potential conflicts (for example, under financial reporting standards).

Identifying conflicts of interest

- 4.7 In Parts 2 and 3, we discuss in detail the nature of conflicts of interest and the types of other interest that can give rise to a conflict of interest. The main question that must always be addressed is:

Whether an employee's or office holder's duties or responsibilities to a public organisation could be affected, or could be perceived to be affected, by some other interest or duty that the employee or office holder may have.

- 4.8 It is important to focus on the overlap between the two interests: that is, whether the person's other interest has something to do with the particular matter that is being considered or carried out by the public organisation.
- 4.9 It is better to err on the side of openness when deciding whether something should be disclosed. Many situations are not clear-cut. If you are not sure whether something constitutes a conflict of interest, it is safer and more transparent to disclose the interest anyway. The matter is then out in the open. Others with more expertise can judge whether the situation constitutes a conflict of interest, and whether the situation is serious enough to warrant any further action.
- 4.10 Disclosure promotes transparency and is always better than trying to manage the situation yourself.

Disclosing conflicts of interest internally

- 4.11 If a matter where a person has an interest arises at a formal meeting, the person should declare to the meeting that they have an interest in the matter before the matter is discussed. The declaration should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.
- 4.12 In other situations, the matter should be raised and discussed with a relevant person as soon as the potential for a conflict of interest is identified. For most staff, the relevant person will be their manager (or another designated person in the public organisation). For a chief executive, the relevant person might be the board chairperson, responsible Minister, or another senior person in the public organisation. Board members should make a disclosure to the chairperson or deputy chairperson.
- 4.13 There might be an applicable law or internal policy that requires a disclosure to be lodged in a register. It is always wise to record any disclosure in writing anyway.
- 4.14 If something significant changes about the official role or the other interest, or the nature of the connection between them, the person should make a further disclosure, in case it is necessary to reconsider any decisions about how to deal with the conflict of interest.

Disclosing conflicts of interest externally

- 4.15 A public organisation might be under an obligation to disclose some types of interests and potential conflicts of interest publicly.
- 4.16 For example, an organisation might be required to disclose some matters in its financial statements, to comply with relevant accounting and auditing standards:

PBE IPSAS 20 *Related Party Disclosures* (Public sector Standards), NZ IAS 24 *Related Party Disclosures* (For-profit Standards), and ISA (NZ) 550 *Related Parties*. Those standards require the disclosure of transactions with related parties. In short, a “related party” is someone who has the ability, directly or indirectly, to control or exercise significant influence over the other party.

- 4.17 Even if there is no legal requirement to publicly disclose an employee or officeholder’s interest or conflict of interest, we recommend that public organisations consider the benefits of doing so. We recognise it is unrealistic for a public organisation to publicly disclose all conflicts of interest it is required to manage, and obviously any public disclosure would need to be balanced against the individual’s right to privacy.
- 4.18 However, the value of public transparency should not be underestimated – particularly for those public organisations that spend substantial sums of public money through procurement or grant allocation processes, or in any situation where public trust and confidence is fundamental to that public organisation’s ability to continue functioning successfully.
- 4.19 Many of the complaints made to us about a conflict of interest could have been avoided if the organisation had been more open about the conflict that had arisen and been willing to explain publicly what it was doing about it.
- 4.20 Options public organisations might want to consider include establishing their own threshold for public disclosure of significant conflicts of interest or disclosing conflicts in the context of significant or high-profile projects or transactions. Also, or alternatively, it might choose to make its policies on dealing with conflicts of interest publicly available.

Deciding on further action

- 4.21 Simply declaring a conflict of interest is not usually enough. Once the conflict of interest has been identified and disclosed, the public organisation might need to take further steps to remove any possibility – or perception – of public funds or an official role being used for private benefit.
- 4.22 In our view, responsibility rests with those “at the top” of the organisation. Leaders and senior managers need to model behaviour to the highest standard. It is not enough to have clear policies and processes. These must be seen to be strictly observed and enforced by those in senior positions.
- 4.23 The public organisation should carefully consider what, if anything, needs to be done to adequately avoid or mitigate the effects of the conflict of interest.

Responsibility to decide next steps

- 4.24 Usually, it is the public organisation's responsibility to determine the appropriate next steps (and to direct the affected employee or office holder accordingly). It is a matter of risk management. The decision-maker will usually be the person's manager (or other relevant person in relation to disclosure), acting on behalf of the public organisation. The public organisation's chairperson, chief executive, legal advisors, human resources staff, and other managers might need to help make decisions or offer advice to decision-makers. For convenience, we refer to the decision being made by "the public organisation".
- 4.25 Sometimes the decision about what the person needs to do will be straightforward, because there might be a clear legal requirement or other written rule covering the situation. An example is where there are statutory rules about participating in meetings that apply to members of a governing body. The onus to be aware of the rule, and to comply with it, lies with the person concerned. The judgement is theirs to make.

Action that should be taken to avoid or mitigate

- 4.26 For each potential conflict, it is important for the public organisation to consider whether something more ought to be done after disclosure. In doing so, the organisation should have regard to the principles (see paragraph 1.5) and the risk of how outside observers might reasonably perceive the situation. It is not safe to assume that a disclosure, and no further action, is always adequate.
- 4.27 First, if any legal requirement applies, then compliance with that is critical and overriding. For example, where the situation involves a legal requirement about a board member participating in a meeting, the law will usually require the member to refrain from participating in discussions and voting on the matter. There is usually no scope to decide on some lesser mitigation option.
- 4.28 Secondly, the public organisation should consider whether any relevant policy of the organisation contains a clear rule covering the situation.
- 4.29 Thirdly, if no relevant legal requirement or policy applies (or after any such rule has been complied with), then the public organisation should also consider whether anything more needs to be done. This is where there might be scope for a range of options. This assessment is a matter of judgement. In especially difficult situations, it might be necessary to seek professional advice and/or consult other published sources of guidance.

4.30 In exercising judgement, the public organisation needs to assess carefully:

- the seriousness of the conflict of interest;
- the level of risk the conflict gives rise to; and
- the range of possible mitigation options.

Assess the seriousness of a conflict of interest

4.31 Several factors might need to be considered in assessing the seriousness of the conflict of interest. They include:

- the type or size of the person's other interest;
- the nature or significance of the particular decision or activity being carried out by the public organisation;
- the extent to which the person's other interest could specifically affect, or be affected by, the public organisation's decision or activity; and
- the nature or extent of the person's current or intended involvement in the public organisation's decision or activity.

4.32 Seriousness is a question of degree. It involves a spectrum of directness and significance – how close and how big. Directness (and its opposite, remoteness) is about how closely or specifically the two interests concern each other. Significance is about the magnitude of the potential effect of one on the other.

4.33 The public organisation might judge that the overlap of the two interests is so slight that it does not really constitute a conflict of interest. In other words, there is no realistic connection between the two interests, or any potential connection is so remote or insignificant that it could not reasonably be regarded as a conflict of interest.

4.34 However, it must be remembered that this judgement is not primarily about the risk that misconduct will occur. It is about the seriousness of the connection between the two interests.

4.35 Similarly, an interest might not be seen as serious if it is a generic interest held in common with the public. That is, the interest is substantially the same kind and size as the interest held by all members – or a large segment – of the public.⁷

Determining appropriate mitigation options

4.36 Judgements made about the seriousness of any conflict of interest will inform the suitable mitigation option. It might also be necessary to take into account the practicability of any options for avoiding or mitigating the conflict.

⁷ See our good practice guide, *Local Authorities (Members' Interests) Act 1968: A guide for members of local authorities on managing financial conflicts of interest*, for a discussion of the concept of "interest in common with the public" in the context of members of local authorities.

- 4.37 There is a broad range of options for avoiding or mitigating a conflict of interest. The options (listed roughly in order of lowest to highest severity) include:
- taking no action;
 - asking whether all affected parties will agree to the person's involvement;
 - seeking a formal exemption to allow participation (if such a legal power applies);
 - imposing additional oversight or review over the person;
 - withdrawing from discussing or voting on a particular item of business at a meeting, or taking some other steps to limit influence or decision-making powers (for example, they might not take part in decisions but could still provide advice);
 - exclusion from a committee or working group dealing with the issue;
 - re-assigning certain tasks or duties to another person;
 - agreement or direction not to do something;
 - withholding certain confidential information;
 - placing restrictions on access to information (including, if applicable, post-employment restrictions, such as restrictions under a restraint of trade agreement);
 - transferring the person (temporarily or permanently) to another position or project;
 - relinquishing the private interest;
 - refraining from having further dealings with a person or organisation; and
 - resignation or dismissal from one or other position or organisation.
- 4.38 If the public organisation determines that a situation does not really amount to a conflict of interest after all, or is too indirect or insignificant, it might formally record or declare the disclosure and assessment in some form but take no further action. However, it should not be assumed that this will always be enough. The risk to be assessed is not just the risk of actual misconduct by the person involved but the risk that the public organisation's capacity to make decisions lawfully and fairly might be compromised or its reputation damaged. In making this assessment, the public organisation needs to consider how the situation could reasonably appear to an outside observer.
- 4.39 It might sometimes be necessary for a person to stay involved in a matter despite having recognised a conflict of interest if the conflict is inevitable and unavoidable and the matter cannot reasonably be dealt with without the person's involvement. That should be rare (and other mitigation options might need to be considered, too). One example is where all the people involved have a conflict of interest.

- 4.40 Ensuring that the conflicted person is no longer involved in the public organisation's work on the particular matter, through withdrawal, removal, or reassignment, is the most typical mitigation option. Taking one of those steps will usually be enough to adequately manage a conflict of interest.
- 4.41 Occasionally a conflict of interest might be so significant or pervasive that the person will need to consider giving up one or other interest or role. However, these cases are likely to be uncommon. The other interest needs to be considered in relation to a particular matter coming before the public organisation, so it will not often be necessary to ask, in a general sense, whether a conflict of interest is so great that the person should not remain working for the public organisation at all.
- 4.42 However, giving up an interest or role might not always deal with a conflict of interest if it happens at a very late stage.⁸ In other words, sometimes it might be too late for the person to choose to withdraw from one role or interest in order to be able to carry on with the other one.
- 4.43 If circumstances change, a decision about whether there is a conflict of interest or how to manage it should be reviewed and might need to change.
- 4.44 Many situations are not clear-cut and a range of possible judgements could be reasonable. The decision about what to do in any particular case is an internal matter. It is for the public organisation to determine (except if there is a legal obligation on the affected person to determine). But, in the interests of openness and fairness (and to minimise the risk of the public organisation having to defend itself against an allegation of impropriety), it is always safer to be cautious. Once a conflict of interest is recognised, the most common response should be withdrawal or exclusion from considering the matter.
- 4.45 It is wise to make a written record about any decision.⁹ This might include details of the facts, who undertook the assessment, and how and what action was taken as a result. Sometimes risk management might be helped by also considering whether to make an announcement to certain other people, or even publicly, about the conflict of interest and how it has been dealt with.

⁸ See for example *Collinge v Kyd* [2005] 1 NZLR 847 and *Auckland Casino v Casino Control Authority* [1995] 1 NZLR 142.

⁹ The State Services Commission's *Model Standards on Conflicts of Interest* require State service agencies to keep formal documentation of mitigation plans, see page 4.

Policies and procedures for managing conflicts of interest

Policies and procedures

- 5.1 All public organisations should establish policies and procedures as a tool for helping them and their employees and office holders identify and deal with conflicts of interest.
- 5.2 Managing conflicts of interest can never be as simple as creating and enforcing a set of rules. Nevertheless, robust policies and procedures are a useful starting point. They are where people should look first when they are working out whether they have a conflict of interest and what they need do to about it.
- 5.3 Policies and procedures can provide clear rules for simple and predictable situations, and establish a process for dealing with the more difficult ones. They help reaffirm the public organisation's commitment to the principles associated with managing conflicts of interest, and encourage organisational transparency.

Focus on the public organisation's particular circumstances

- 5.4 In preparing its policies and procedures, a public organisation needs to take into account the nature of its own particular structure, functions and activities, and any applicable statutory requirements. It needs to consider what its operations are, what fields it operates in, and what sorts of problems or risks might typically arise. For example, does the public organisation do a lot of:
 - procurement and contracting;
 - allocating grants;
 - public consultation; or
 - quasi-judicial or regulatory decision-making?
- 5.5 A blanket policy or process will not necessarily work well for all these functions.
- 5.6 The public organisation might need to think carefully about who a policy should apply to. Some parts of the policy might be relevant only for board members or certain employees, such as those involved in any of the functions listed above. Some parts might not need to apply to all staff. It might also be prudent to require certain types of contractors or consultants to comply with the policy, even though they are not employees.

- 5.7 Some situations will be foreseeable and the answer straightforward. For those situations, clear rules could be established in a policy. For example, a public organisation might, depending on the nature of its operations, prohibit employees and office holders from:
- being involved in a decision to appoint or employ a relative;
 - conducting business on behalf of the organisation with a relative's company;
 - owning shares in or working for particular types of organisation that have dealings with or are in competition with the public organisation;
 - making submissions in a public consultation process (on matters that directly relate to the organisation's work);
 - deliberating on a public consultation process where the employee or office holder has made a personal submission;
 - accepting gifts in connection with their official role; or
 - influencing or participating in a decision to award grants or contracts where the employee or office holder is connected to a person or organisation that submitted an application or tender.

Periodic declarations of interests

- 5.8 One method many public organisations use is to require employees or office holders to regularly (for example, yearly) complete and submit a declaration listing specified personal interests. This is sometimes called an "interests register".¹⁰
- 5.9 A declaration in an interests register is not, in itself, a declaration of a conflict of interest. In most cases, it is simply a declaration that someone has an interest that could give rise to a conflict.
- 5.10 However, an interests register enables relevant managers to be aware of most relevant ongoing interests, and acts as a reminder to people of the need to be alert for conflicts of interest. The register, if reviewed and updated regularly, helps people to monitor situations that could give rise to a conflict of interest, and to identify conflicts of interest at an early stage.
- 5.11 Placing interests on record is also consistent with the principle of transparency. An interests register can be used to document any agreed mitigations, especially for predictable situations, so that there is a record, if needed later, that both the individual and the organisation have thought about the risks and taken appropriate steps to manage them.

¹⁰ See, for example, the interests registers required for Ministers and members of Parliament by the *Cabinet Manual* and the *Standing Orders of the House of Representatives* respectively.

What to cover in policies and procedures

- 5.12 Policies and procedures should:¹¹
- state principles or values that emphasise the organisation's commitment to addressing conflicts of interest and the importance of people in the organisation being alert for such situations;
 - establish rules for the most important and obvious actions that people must or must not take;
 - establish a mechanism (such as an interests register) for recording those types of ongoing interests that can commonly give rise to a conflict of interest and a procedure for putting this into effect and updating it regularly;
 - set out a process for identifying and disclosing instances of conflicts of interest as and when they arise, including a clear explanation of how someone should disclose a conflict of interest and to whom;
 - set out a process for managing conflicts of interest that arise, including who makes decisions and perhaps detailing the principles, criteria, or options that will be considered;
 - provide avenues for training and advice;
 - provide a mechanism for handling complaints or breaches of the policy; and
 - specify the potential consequences of non-compliance.
- 5.13 However, policies and procedures are not enough and cannot anticipate every situation. Also, the seriousness of some situations will be a question of degree and not amenable to a rule. Policies and procedures might need to allow for some flexibility for judgement in individual cases. A policy should not state or suggest that the specific situations it covers are an exhaustive list. Some situations will need to be the subject of discretionary judgements as and when they arise.

11 Some of the publications listed in Appendix 1 contain more detailed guidance on preparing and implementing policies and procedures. See, in particular, the State Services Commission's *Model Standards on Conflicts of Interest*, the Independent Commission Against Corruption's *Managing Conflicts of Interest in the Public Sector in NSW*; and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's *Managing Conflict of Interest in the Public Service: A Toolkit*.

6

What are the rules?

- 6.1 Rules and expectations about conflicts of interest might be derived from any or all of:
- legislation;
 - common (judge-made) law; and
 - general standards and expectations.

- 6.2 In this Part, we outline some of the main legal and ethical considerations that are likely to apply to managing conflicts of interest and the possible consequences of breaching the applicable rules.

Statutory rules

- 6.3 Some public organisations are subject to statutory rules that apply to managing conflicts of interest.
- 6.4 Statutory rules generally regulate conflicts of interest of members of an organisation's governing body, rather than the organisation's employees. If you are on the governing body of an organisation that is subject to one of these Acts, you need to be familiar with the rules that apply to conflicts under that Act.
- 6.5 Statutory rules commonly do one or more of the following:
- prohibit members from discussing and voting at meetings on matters in which they have an interest;
 - require members to disclose interests before appointment, in a register of interests and/or at relevant meetings;
 - prohibit members from having an interest in certain contracts with their organisation;
 - prohibit members from signing documents relating to matters in which they have an interest; and
 - provide mechanisms for seeking exemptions from the general rules.
- 6.6 Some important statutory rules can be found in the:
- Crown Entities Act 2004;
 - New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000;
 - Companies Act 1993;
 - Local Authorities (Members' Interests) Act 1968; and
 - Education Act 1989.
- 6.7 Appendix 2 sets out summaries of the relevant statutory provisions.

Common law rules

- 6.8 Conflicts of interest are also regulated under the common law, as part of the general requirement that all public decision-making must be procedurally fair, including being free from the taint of bias and predetermination.
- 6.9 The common law's rule against bias has two main goals:
- First, it ensures that the best decision is made based on relevant information and arguments, not ulterior motives or prejudices.
 - Secondly, it ensures that people affected by, or interested in, a decision have trust and confidence in the process – meaning they are more likely to accept a decision once it is made.
- 6.10 The rule against bias operates both to avoid actual bias and to avoid any appearance of bias. The principle is that justice should not only be done but it should also be seen to be done.
- 6.11 The courts usually approach bias by asking the following question:
- Would a fair-minded observer reasonably think that the decision-maker or member of the decision-making body might not bring an impartial mind to the decision, in the sense that they might unfairly treat someone's case with favour or disfavour?*¹²
- 6.12 Also, under the common law, a person who has a fiduciary obligation towards someone else (such as a trustee of a trust or director of a company) is not allowed to put themselves in a position where their official role conflicts with their personal interests.
- 6.13 The principles that have been developed through the common law are relevant to managing conflicts of interest, even where there is a statutory rule in place, because the common law is likely to influence how the statutory rule is interpreted.
- 6.14 Appendix 3 sets out a list of some New Zealand court cases that consider conflicts of interest.

General standards and expectations

- 6.15 As stated in Part 1, public business should be conducted with a spirit of:
- integrity;
 - impartiality;
 - accountability;
 - trustworthiness;
 - respect; and
 - responsiveness.

12 *Saxmere Company Ltd v Wool Board Disestablishment Company Ltd* [2010] 1 NZLR 35; [2010] 1 NZLR 76.

- 6.16 As well as legal requirements, all decisions about conflicts of interest need to be guided by ethical principles. A lack of integrity in relation to conflicts can impact the culture of an entire team. At an extreme end, the normalising and acceptance of conflicts can permeate throughout a team and facilitate criminal corruption.¹³
- 6.17 There is no single source of rules or expectations specifying what constitutes ethical behaviour for all situations or all public organisations. Any rules or expectations applying to a particular situation might come from a variety of sources, including:
- the organisation’s founding or constituting document;
 - the organisation’s code of conduct or relevant internal policies and procedures, such as those about procurement decisions;
 - other sets of mandatory requirements that apply to the public sector or a particular part of it (such as the *Code of Conduct for the State Services*, the *Cabinet Manual*, the State Services Commission’s *Board Appointment and Induction Guidelines*, or the *Government Procurement Rules*);
 - relevant clauses in an employment agreement or contract for services;
 - rules of conduct or codes of practice applying to members of a profession or industry;
 - general guidance or good practice guides (such as this one);
 - customary practice and behaviour in the public sector or a particular part of it;
 - commonplace understandings of the concepts of integrity, impartiality, accountability, trustworthiness, respect, and responsiveness; and
 - analogies drawn from legal rules that apply to similar situations.
- 6.18 Appendix 1 sets out a list of other useful sources of guidance.

Consequences if the rules or expectations are breached

- 6.19 A poorly managed conflict of interest can have consequences for both you and the organisation you work for.
- 6.20 If you are a member of a governing body, breaching a statutory rule might constitute grounds for your removal from office. It might constitute an offence. Sometimes, the law provides that a transaction of the public organisation might be able to be cancelled. Some matters might adversely affect the public organisation’s audit report.

¹³ *R v Borlase & Noone* [2016] NZHC 2970. In this case, the court found that there were adequate conflicts of interest policies, but they were not appropriately observed. This led to “the insidious corruption of officials” noted by Fitzgerald J at [131].

- 6.21 If an organisation's decision is tainted by bias, the courts may declare the decision invalid or may prevent a person from exercising a power. The risk, delay, and expense in defending a decision against a legal challenge can be significant.
- 6.22 More often, if a conflict of interest is not handled well, there is a risk that you, your managers, and the organisation you work for might become the subject of public criticism by politicians, the media, or members of the public. A regulatory agency may conduct a formal inquiry into the public organisation. If you are an employee, the organisation might have grounds for taking disciplinary action against you.
- 6.23 A public scandal could be severely damaging to the public organisation's reputation and could lead to people losing their jobs.

7

Conflicts of interest in everyday life

- 7.1 In this Part, we show how conflicts of interest can arise in our everyday lives and provide guidance about the matters that should be considered:
- Scenario 1: Funding for a club
 - Scenario 2: Family connection to a tenderer for a contract
 - Scenario 3: Employment of a relative
 - Scenario 4: Public statements suggesting predetermination
 - Scenario 5: Decision affecting land
 - Scenario 6: Gifts and hospitality
 - Scenario 7: Making a public submission in a private capacity
 - Scenario 8: Mixing public and private roles
 - Scenario 9: Personal dealings with a tenderer for a contract
 - Scenario 10: Duties to two different organisations
 - Scenario 11: Professional connection to a tenderer.
- 7.2 The scenarios are intended to show the range of situations that can occur and the issues that might need to be considered in assessing their seriousness and deciding how to manage them. They are examples, not rules. In reality, sometimes a small difference in context or detail can make a critical difference. People will have to use their own judgement.

Scenario 1: Funding for a club

- 7.3 Sam is a grants officer for a Crown entity that funds environmental projects in the community. In her role, she does the initial assessment of applications and writes reports for the committee that will consider and decide on each funding round. She also monitors the use of the funding.
- 7.4 Sam is also a member of a small local residents' association. The association has applied for funding to clean up a local stream and plant native shrubs.
- 7.5 Normally, this application would be one that Sam would deal with in her work.
- 7.6 There is a conflict of interest here. Someone could reasonably allege that Sam's likely desire for her association to be successful in its bid might mean that she will not be completely impartial in the way she analyses this application (and the other applications that are competing for the same pool of money). The decision to be made is specifically about the residents' association, and probably affects its funding in a significant way.
- 7.7 Sam should tell her manager about her personal connection to this application. Sam's manager should consider the nature of Sam's role in processing these sorts

of applications, whether her position has a significant influence on decision-making, and whether someone else in the organisation could work on the particular application.

- 7.8 It might be prudent for Sam's manager to ensure that all of the applications for this particular set of funding (including the applications from others) are processed by someone else. If the manager takes this view, it might also be preferable that the other person is not someone Sam manages. If the application from Sam's association is successful, Sam might also need to be excluded from administering that grant.
- 7.9 Alternatively, it could be that no steps are warranted because Sam's role is a low-level administrative one and all the substantive analysis is done by others. Another possibility is that the above steps are impracticable, because Sam is the only person in the organisation who can do the work. In that case, some other option (such as carrying out an additional peer review of her work on the matter) might have to be used.
- 7.10 In this scenario, there is a conflict of interest even though Sam is not one of the leaders of the residents' association, did not prepare the application, does not personally have a financial interest in the matter, and believes she could still consider all applications fairly and professionally. The association is small, so Sam is likely to know its leaders well and work closely with them. However, the situation might be different if the association was a large nationwide organisation like Rotary, and the application was from a different branch of that organisation.

Scenario 2: Family connection to a tenderer for a contract

- 7.11 Hoani is a project manager for a district health board (DHB). The DHB contracts out some functions to private providers. As part of his role, Hoani is running a tender process to find a new provider of certain health services.
- 7.12 Hoani's brother-in-law, who he knows well, is the managing director and a significant shareholder of one of the private companies that is tendering for the contract.
- 7.13 There is a conflict of interest here. It is not a financial conflict of interest, because Hoani is not involved in the tendering company and is not financially dependent on his brother-in-law. But the family connection to the company is a reasonably close one, and the decision to be made by the DHB directly relates to the company. Hoani is likely to have feelings of loyalty to his brother-in-law (or at least this would be a likely perception).
- 7.14 Hoani should tell his manager about his personal connection to the tendering company, and the manager should get someone else to manage this tender

process. It might also be prudent to take steps to ensure that Hoani does not have access to information about the other tenders or any confidential information about this tender process.

- 7.15 It matters that Hoani's relative has an important role at the tendering company. The approach might be different if the relative was in a much more junior position and was not personally involved in the company's tender, especially if the company was a large one. The approach might also be different if the person involved was a distant relative whom Hoani had met only a few times in his life. Assessing the closeness of a personal connection to someone (or the appearance of such closeness) requires careful judgement.

Scenario 3: Employment of a relative

- 7.16 Stephanie is the principal of a secondary school in a small town. She takes a leading role in hiring staff.
- 7.17 A vacancy has arisen for the position of finance manager and Stephanie's husband is interested in applying for the position.
- 7.18 Stephanie has a conflict of interest here. The school needs to employ staff on merit, and must avoid perceptions of undue influence or preferential treatment in appointment decisions.
- 7.19 Stephanie needs to tell the chairperson of the school's board of trustees about the situation. The board should ensure that this appointment process is handled entirely by others, and that Stephanie has no involvement in the process. Because of Stephanie's own position, the board needs to take extra care to ensure that the process is truly transparent and competitive, so that all suitably qualified people are able to apply and be fairly considered, and that there can be no reasonable suggestion that Stephanie might have influenced the decision from behind the scenes.
- 7.20 But managing the appointment is not the only type of conflict of interest that needs to be considered carefully by the school. Issues are also likely to arise in the ongoing working relationship, where there are matters that directly affect or involve both Stephanie and her husband.
- 7.21 It is a fact of life that there will be times when two people who are related – or who are in a personal relationship – will work for the same organisation. That is not usually improper in itself. Indeed, it would often be wrong for someone to be disadvantaged simply because of who they are related to, especially in a large organisation where the two people do not work closely together each day.

- 7.22 However, sometimes – and depending on the nature of the position – appointing someone who is a relative could cause difficulties, even where a fair process has been followed. This is because it can create a risk of a lack of independence, rigour, and professionalism in ongoing decision-making. In a public organisation, it would usually be unwise for relatives to hold two of the most senior positions, or to hold positions that are in a direct reporting relationship.
- 7.23 In Stephanie’s husband’s situation, the school’s board should consider whether it would be able to manage the frequent and significant conflicts of interest that would be likely to arise if Stephanie’s husband were to be appointed. The two roles are senior ones and likely to involve a direct reporting relationship (or at least a lot of working closely together on managing the school’s finances).
- 7.24 It can be difficult to decide the fairest course of action in these situations. Here, the board might well decide not to appoint the husband because it would be too difficult and complicated to manage the likely ongoing conflicts of interest.

Scenario 4: Public statements suggesting predetermination

- 7.25 Ruth is an elected member of a district council. She sits on the council’s planning hearings committee, which considers and decides on resource consent applications.
- 7.26 During the last election campaign, Ruth pledged to oppose an ice-skating rink that a developer hoped to build in town. One of her published campaign pledges was “Ruth will sink the rink”. Later, she declared in the local newspaper that the proposal would succeed “over my dead body”. The developer has now applied to the council for resource consent to build the rink, and the application is about to be considered by the planning hearings committee.
- 7.27 Ruth’s previous comments are likely to mean that she is biased. Even if she is not biased, there will certainly be a strong public perception that she is. If she takes part in decisions about the resource consent application, the developer could argue that it has not had a fair and impartial hearing, because one of the decision-makers had a predetermined view. The council’s decision could be open to legal challenge on the grounds of bias.
- 7.28 Ruth should stand down from the planning hearings committee when it considers this application. (If she refused to do so, and the council was concerned about the legal risk to its decision that her involvement would cause, the council might be able to resolve to remove her from the committee.)
- 7.29 Although local body politicians can be expected to take office with pre-existing views and policies on a wide range of matters, their role sometimes requires them

to act judicially. When acting in that capacity, they should take extra care not to express views in a way that suggests their mind is firmly made up about such a matter before having heard all views, or that their position is so fixed that they are unwilling to fairly consider the views of others, or that they are not prepared to be persuaded by further evidence or argument.

- 7.30 The type of function being exercised is relevant to whether the line has been crossed. In Ruth's case, a strict standard needs to be applied because the council is acting in a regulatory capacity, and because a resource consent grants the holder a legal right. The council needs to follow a fair process and make its decision on lawful grounds that comply with the Resource Management Act 1991, because it is making a decision that could be appealed to the Environment Court or be subject to judicial review by the High Court.

Scenario 5: Decision affecting land

- 7.31 Tom is a civil engineer and works for a State-owned enterprise (SOE) that is responsible for a national infrastructure network of gas pipes. The SOE is planning to build a major pipeline to increase supply capacity from a refinery to a large city.
- 7.32 The pipeline has to cross a distance of 300 kilometres, and the SOE has come up with several different options for the route of the pipeline, which the SOE will now consider in more detail. The SOE has to acquire land – compulsorily if necessary – along its chosen route. The project is opposed by many people who live along the possible routes, who fear the pipeline will adversely affect the natural environment and devalue their remaining land. Tom has worked on a number of areas of the project, and has now been appointed to the Route Options Working Group that will assess the route options and make a recommendation to the board.
- 7.33 Tom is also part-owner of a farm that lies directly in the path of one of the route options.
- 7.34 Tom has a conflict of interest here. He has a personal stake in the decision about which route to choose, because his land could be affected. Although the working group does not make the final decision, it has an important role in analysing the route options and making a recommendation.
- 7.35 Tom needs to tell his manager that he has an interest in a property affected by one of the options. Tom's role will have to be considered carefully. It might be that Tom does not mind whether the pipeline ends up crossing his land – he might not share any of the concerns of the project's opponents. He might believe that he could contribute conscientiously to the working group to help it arrive at the

best technical answer. But his manager should bear in mind the risk that, if Tom's personal connection becomes publicly known, others might easily think that it could affect his views or actions.

- 7.36 His manager might have to remove him from the working group and assign him to other tasks. (There might be other aspects of the project that Tom could work on, which have no connection to the question of which route to choose.) It might also be wise to ensure that Tom does not have access to confidential information about the decision before it is made public, in case he is considering selling his land.
- 7.37 Alternatively, Tom's expertise might be indispensable to the project, or he might have a small part in the overall process. Some other options might therefore need to be considered (such as only partly limiting his role, or imposing extra supervision).

Scenario 6: Gifts and hospitality

- 7.38 Rawiri works in the corporate services division of a government department. As part of his role, he manages the department's contractual relationship with its rental car provider. The arrangement with this supplier has been in place for several years, so the department has decided to re-tender the contract. Rawiri has told the current provider that he will soon be inviting expressions of interest for a new contract.
- 7.39 Rawiri has regular relationship management meetings with the current provider. At a recent meeting, the provider offered to fly him to another city to inspect a new fleet of cars that will shortly be available, and said that Rawiri could have complimentary corporate box tickets to a rugby test match that happened to be on that night, and stay on for the weekend in a downtown hotel.
- 7.40 This situation creates risks at any time, but especially given the imminent tender process. Rawiri might not be seen as impartial if he is involved in choosing the new supplier. A competitor could allege that Rawiri is being given an inducement or reward in the implicit expectation that he will look more favourably on the current provider in the coming tender round (or that he will receive further gifts if the current provider is successful).
- 7.41 Rawiri should discuss the offer with his manager, and carefully consider the department's policy on gifts and hospitality.¹⁴ Given the circumstances, it would not be appropriate to accept the offer of the sports tickets and hotel accommodation. With the offer to be flown to another city to inspect the new fleet of cars, careful consideration should be given to whether business reasons

¹⁴ Most organisations will have an internal policy that sets out in detail what is or is not acceptable in this area. See also our publication *Controlling sensitive expenditure: Guidelines for public entities* (available at oag.parliament.nz), and the State Services Commission's 2018 publication *Chief Executive Gifts, Benefits and Expenses* (available at ssc.govt.nz).

can justify the visit. (If it goes ahead, the public organisation might decide to offer to pay the cost of it.) If other forms of gift or hospitality have already been accepted, the appropriateness of Rawiri having a role in the coming tender process might need to be reconsidered, too.

- 7.42 This does not mean that gifts must always be refused. It is reasonable to consider the value or nature of the gift and extent of personal benefit (for example, it might be acceptable to accept a gift that is inexpensive and widely distributed). The context and reason or occasion for the gift is relevant, too. For an organisation that operates in a more commercial environment, some types of gift or hospitality might be seen as a necessary element in maintaining relationships with stakeholders and clients. However, in Rawiri's case, the risk is higher because of the proximity to the coming tender round where a strict and fair process will need to be followed and be seen to be followed (and because the justification for at least some elements of the offer appears dubious).

Scenario 7: Making a public submission in a private capacity

- 7.43 Ken is an elected member of a city council. The council is proposing to adopt a new bylaw on the location of brothels. As it is required to carry out a formal public consultation process on its draft bylaw, the council has invited written submissions and will hold a public hearing where submitters can make an oral presentation to a council committee. The adoption of the bylaw will be decided by a vote of the full council.
- 7.44 Ken feels strongly about the draft bylaw, and wishes to lodge a submission.
- 7.45 This situation might create a conflict of interest for Ken.
- 7.46 Some public organisations will have a code of conduct or policy that prohibits their members or officials from making public submissions to the organisation in a private capacity.¹⁵
- 7.47 Assuming that Ken will not be breaching the council's code of conduct, he will be entitled to exercise his democratic right to make a submission, like any other private citizen. But, if he does so, he should not participate in the council's decision on whether to adopt the draft bylaw; nor should he sit on the committee that hears and considers the submissions. Otherwise, his behaviour could indicate predetermination.
- 7.48 Ken would create the perception that he is attempting to act as both an interested party and a decision-maker on the same matter or, in other words, acting as a

¹⁵ In particular, senior officials – or officials who work in policy roles – in the public service need to take extra care to maintain their political neutrality.

judge in his own cause. The council's decision could be open to legal challenge on the ground of bias.

Scenario 8: Mixing public and private roles

- 7.49 Antonia is a senior scientist working for a Crown research institute (CRI). The CRI has developed a new product that has significant revenue-earning potential, and Antonia has worked on the product as part of her role in the CRI. However, the CRI needs help in manufacturing and marketing the product on a large scale, so plans to enter into a joint venture with a private company. The CRI is considering appointing Antonia as one of its representatives on the governing body of the joint venture.
- 7.50 Coincidentally, Antonia is also a shareholder in the private company that will be the CRI's joint venture partner (although she had no role in the CRI's selection of it).
- 7.51 The situation creates a conflict of interest for Antonia. She stands to benefit from the financial success of the private company. The fact that there might be no direct disadvantage to the CRI (because the joint venture partners are working together, hopefully for their mutual benefit) does not remove the conflict of interest. Her interests in both the CRI and the private company could create confusion about her role and primary loyalty. She could be accused of using her official position in a way that advances her own private interests.
- 7.52 Antonia needs to tell her manager. It will probably be necessary for Antonia not to be given any major role in governing or managing the joint venture while she has an interest in the private company.
- 7.53 Antonia's manager might also need to think carefully about what other work, if any, it is appropriate for Antonia to do on the project in her capacity as a CRI employee. This decision might not be clear-cut. Antonia might be the best person in the CRI to carry out certain tasks, but the risk is that she could be regarded as spending a large part of her time as an employee of a public organisation, and using the CRI's resources, to carry out work that has a significant element of private benefit for her.
- 7.54 Antonia's manager might judge that some involvement in the project is acceptable (or even necessary), but it might also be desirable to confine this. For example, Antonia's role could be changed so that she does not have the ability to influence decisions about how the joint venture and project are run. Alternatively, Antonia might be asked to give up one of her roles – that of employee or that of shareholder.

- 7.55 If circumstances changed to a point where the CRI and the private company became direct competitors with each other, then Antonia's situation might become even more difficult (especially if she remains in a senior position at the CRI, or is still involved in this particular area of work). In that case, it might become necessary for Antonia's manager to insist on divestment of one or other role – either that she relinquish her private interest or leave her job.¹⁶

Scenario 9: Personal dealings with a tenderer for a contract

- 7.56 Sandra is a consultant who specialises in project management. Her services have been engaged by a government department to help it carry out a new building project. As part of this role, Sandra has been asked to analyse the tenders for the construction contract and provide advice to the department's tender evaluation panel.
- 7.57 Sandra has a lot of personal knowledge about one of the tenderers for the construction contract. She used that firm to build her own house last year, and she is currently using it to carry out structural alterations on several investment properties that she owns. Because of this, she knows the directors of the company very well, and has a high regard for their work.
- 7.58 This situation might create a conflict of interest for Sandra. She is expected to impartially and professionally assess each of the tenders, yet she could be regarded as being too close to one of the tenderers.
- 7.59 In Sandra's case, it is probably unwise for her to play a role in selecting the tenderer. (This might or might not require ending the consultancy arrangement altogether, depending on what else Sandra has been engaged to do.) Her dealings with the firm are recent and significant. The risk is that, if this firm wins the contract, Sandra's personal connections with it might allow someone to allege that the department's decision is tainted by favouritism.
- 7.60 These sorts of situations are not always clear-cut. Particularly in small or specialised industries, people often have had some degree of personal knowledge of, or previous dealings with, other people or organisations that they have to make decisions about. That is not necessarily wrong. Indeed, they will often be chosen for this role precisely because of their experience or expert knowledge, and that might include general impressions about the reputation or competence of others. So, sometimes, these sorts of connections might be judged to be too remote or insignificant. For instance, in this case, the response would probably be different if the firm's private work for Sandra had been a single, smaller job carried out several years ago.

¹⁶ If the private company regularly carries on business in the same general industry as the CRI, the CRI might have an internal policy prohibiting Antonia from being involved in such a company anyway.

- 7.61 To take another similar example, careful judgement would also be necessary if the connection was instead that the tendering firm was run by a friend or acquaintance of Sandra. For example, it might be improper for Sandra to be involved in assessing the tenders if the firm was run by a friend she had known for many years and who had attended her wedding. By contrast, there might not be any problem if Sandra simply knew the person in a casual way through membership of the same sports club.
- 7.62 Further careful judgements might be necessary if Sandra had worked for the firm. For instance, the situation might be problematic if she had been a full-time employee in the last year, or was also currently providing significant consultancy advice to the firm on another matter. On the other hand, it might not be problematic if she had worked for the firm several years ago, or if she had provided only occasional pieces of consultancy advice in the past.
- 7.63 This scenario also shows that public organisations need to think about whether and how to manage conflicts of interest that arise for someone who is not a member or employee, but is instead a consultant or contractor. Sandra's role is important to the department and affects an important decision it has to make, and so can expose the department to legal and political risk. She should be required to agree to abide by the relevant conflict of interest policy for staff. The departmental manager who oversees her work should ensure that she understands the policy, and should monitor her in the same way as an employee.

Scenario 10: Duties to two different organisations

- 7.64 Jean-Paul is a member of the council of a tertiary education institution (TEI). The TEI has some contracting arrangements with private organisations to help to deliver some educational courses. One of those arrangements is with a charitable trust, under which the trust is funded by the TEI to prepare, administer, and teach the course on behalf of the TEI. However, the TEI is now about to decide whether to discontinue this arrangement.
- 7.65 Jean-Paul also happens to be one of the trustees of the charitable trust.
- 7.66 Jean-Paul has a conflict of interest in this decision. He might not be affected personally by the decision, but the trust will be, and he is closely associated with the trust. (The conflict of interest might be particularly acute if the course is a significant source of the trust's funding and ongoing viability.)
- 7.67 Also, as a member of the governing body of the TEI, Jean-Paul has a duty to act in the best interests of the TEI, but, as a trustee, he also has a duty to act in the best interests of the trust. In this scenario, the best outcome for one organisation might not be the best outcome for the other, and so it might be impossible for Jean-Paul to faithfully give effect to his obligations to both organisations.

- 7.68 Jean-Paul should declare a conflict of interest at relevant meetings of the TEI's council, and refrain from discussing or voting on the TEI's decision. It might be wise for him not to be provided with confidential information about the matter. Jean-Paul might also need to consider whether he has a conflict of interest in the matter at meetings of the trust.

Scenario 11: Professional connection to a tenderer

- 7.69 Viliami works for a large multi-disciplinary professional services firm. Viliami, through his firm, has been engaged by an SOE to help it choose a contractor to manage a major land development project. Viliami is the person who will provide expert advice to the panel that considers tenders.
- 7.70 Another division of Viliami's firm wishes to submit a tender for the project.
- 7.71 There is a conflict of interest here. Viliami will be providing advice about a matter that affects his own firm. Viliami does not personally have two conflicting roles, but his firm does, and that creates a problem for him.
- 7.72 In some situations involving organisational connections, different individuals in the organisation can be managed by insisting on a separation of roles and information. Because this process is not always entirely satisfactory, it is best reserved for situations when the connection is almost inevitable or the risk is very low. In this scenario, the connection is fairly direct, even though Viliami will not be one of the individuals managing the project. Another tenderer might object that he is unlikely to be impartial. The risk of challenge could be high, especially if the project is worth a lot of money.
- 7.73 Viliami should discuss the matter with the relevant manager in the SOE. If his firm's tender is to be considered, it is likely that Viliami will not be able to continue with his role. Alternatively, when it first engaged Viliami's services, the SOE could have insisted on a condition that his firm would not be permitted to tender for the project.

Appendix 1

Other sources of guidance

Some of the material listed here comes from other countries. Although it is useful, the overseas material has been written for an environment that might have different legal rules or public expectations.

New Zealand

- State Services Commission (2007), *Code of Conduct for the State Services*, Wellington (available at www.ssc.govt.nz).
- State Services Commission (2019), *Conflicts of Interest*, Wellington (available at www.ssc.govt.nz).
- State Services Commission (2015), *Board Appointment and Induction Guidelines*, Wellington (available at www.ssc.govt.nz).
- Cabinet Office (2017), *Cabinet Manual*, Wellington, paragraphs 2.53-2.81 (available at www.dpmc.govt.nz).
- Controller and Auditor-General (2020), *Local Authorities (Members' Interests) Act 1968: A guide for members of local authorities on managing financial conflicts of interest*, Wellington (available at www.oag.parliament.nz).
- House of Representatives (2017), *Standing Orders of the House of Representatives*, Wellington, Standing Orders 163-166 and Appendix B (available at www.parliament.nz).

Australia

- Australian Public Service Commission (2017), *Values and Code of Conduct in Practice*, Canberra (available at www.apsc.gov.au).
- Independent Commission Against Corruption (2019), *Managing Conflicts of Interest in the Public Sector in NSW*, Sydney/Brisbane (available at www.icac.nsw.gov.au).
- Independent Commission Against Corruption/Crime and Misconduct Commission (2004), *Managing Conflicts of Interest in the Public Sector: Guidelines*, Sydney/Brisbane (available at www.integrity.qld.gov.au).
- Independent Commission Against Corruption/Crime and Misconduct Commission (2004), *Managing Conflicts of Interest in the Public Sector: Toolkit*, Sydney/Brisbane (available at www.integrity.qld.gov.au).
- Integrity Coordinating Group (2011), *Conflict of interest guidelines*, Perth (available at www.opssc.wa.gov.au).
- New South Wales Ombudsman (2017), *Recognising and managing conflict of interests*, Sydney (available at www.ombo.nsw.gov.au).

Canada

- Government of Canada (2011), *Values and Ethics Code for the Public Service*, Ottawa (available at www.tbs-sct.gc.ca).
- Government of Canada (2015), *Apparent Conflicts of Interest*, Ottawa (available at www.tbs-sct.gc.ca).

OECD

- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2003), *OECD Guidelines for Managing Conflict of Interest in the Public Service*, Paris (available at www.oecd.org).
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2005), *Managing Conflict of Interest in the Public Service: A Toolkit*, Paris (available at www.oecd.org).

Appendix 2

Some important statutory rules about conflicts of interest

The descriptions that follow provide a summary of some important statutory provisions, and enable a comparison between them. They are necessarily brief and general in nature, and involve some paraphrasing. They are not a comprehensive statement of the relevant law. Readers wanting to apply the rules to a particular situation should refer to the wording of the relevant statute or seek legal advice.

The Acts discussed in this Appendix are the:

- Crown Entities Act 2004;
- New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000;
- Companies Act 1993;
- Local Authorities (Members' Interests) Act 1968; and
- Education Act 1989.

Crown Entities Act 2004

The relevant provisions in this Act apply to members of boards of statutory entities (as that term is defined in the Act), except for district health boards.¹⁷

Before appointment, a prospective member must disclose to the Minister the nature and extent of all interests that they have, or are likely to have, in matters relating to the organisation.

A member who is “interested in a matter” relating to the organisation must disclose the nature and value (or extent) of the interest. The disclosure must be made in the interests register, and to the chairperson (or deputy or Minister, in some cases). Standing disclosures (disclosures with ongoing effect) may be made. The member must not vote or take part in any discussion or decision of the board or any committee relating to the matter, nor otherwise participate in an activity of the organisation that relates to the matter, nor sign related documents.

A member is “interested” in a matter if they (or their spouse, civil union partner, de facto partner, child or parent) might derive a financial benefit from it; or if they may have a financial interest in (or are a partner, director, officer, board member or trustee of) a person to whom the matter relates; or if they are otherwise directly or indirectly interested in the matter. Certain exceptions apply, including where the member is a member or officer of a subsidiary, or where the interest is so remote or insignificant that it cannot reasonably be regarded as likely to influence them in carrying out their responsibilities.

¹⁷ See sections 7, 10, 31, 53, 59, and 62-72.

The board must notify the Minister of a failure to comply with these provisions, and the member might be removed from office. In some cases, the organisation may be able to cancel a transaction that was entered into in breach of the conflict of interest rules.

The chairperson (or deputy or Minister, in some cases) may grant written permission for one or more members to act despite their interest in a matter. Such permission must be disclosed in the organisation's annual report.

For more information about these provisions, see the State Services Commission's 2015 publication *Board Appointment and Induction Guidelines*.

New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000

The relevant provisions in this Act apply to members of boards of district health boards (DHBs).¹⁸

Before appointment or election, a prospective member must disclose to the Minister or electoral officer, and in the interests register, all conflicts of interest that they have, or are likely to have, in matters relating to the DHB. A person who fails to disclose a material conflict of interest before accepting nomination as a candidate for election is disqualified from membership.

A member who is "interested" in a transaction of the DHB must disclose the nature of the interest to the board. The disclosure must be recorded in the minutes and in the interests register. The member must not vote or take part in any deliberation or decision of the board relating to the transaction, nor sign related documents. (The definition of being "interested in a transaction" is similar to the definition of being "interested in a matter" under the Crown Entities Act. One difference is that it excludes an interest in a party that is – or is owned by – a publicly owned health and disability organisation.)

A member who fails to comply with these provisions might be removed from office.

The other members of the board may decide to permit the member to participate in the board's deliberations (but not its decision) about the transaction. Certain matters about the permission must be recorded in the minutes.

The Minister may waive or modify the prohibition on participation for particular members or transactions or classes of transactions. A copy of any such waiver or modification must be presented to the House of Representatives.

¹⁸ See sections 6, 21, and 29, clauses 6 and 17 of Schedule 2, and clauses 36-37 of Schedule 3. In addition, section 31 of the Crown Entities Act 2004 applies to appointed members. Sections 53 and 59 of that Act also apply to members.

Companies Act 1993

This Act applies to company directors.¹⁹

A director who is interested in a transaction or proposed transaction with the company must disclose the nature and value (or extent) of the interest (unless the transaction is between the director and the company and is in the ordinary course of business on usual terms and conditions). The disclosure must be made in the interests register and to the board. Standing disclosures may be made.

A director is “interested” in a transaction if they:

- are party to it or may derive a material financial benefit from it;
- have a material financial interest in another party to it;
- are a director, officer, trustee, parent, child, spouse, or civil union partner or de facto partner of another party to it (or person who may derive a material financial benefit from it); or
- are otherwise directly or indirectly materially interested in the transaction.

Certain exceptions apply, including in relation to subsidiaries and remuneration.

It is an offence for a director to fail to comply with these provisions. In some cases, the company might be able to cancel a transaction in which a director was interested.

Subject to the constitution of the company, a director who is interested in a transaction may vote on a matter relating to it (and do other things relating to it in their capacity as a director).²⁰

Local Authorities (Members’ Interests) Act 1968

This Act applies to members of the governing bodies of city councils, district councils, regional councils, community boards, and a range of other public bodies. It also applies to members of their committees.

A person is disqualified from being a member of the local authority (or a committee) if they are concerned or interested in contracts with the authority under which the total payments made, or to be made, by or on behalf of the authority exceed \$25,000 in any financial year.

It is an offence for the person to act as a member of the local authority while disqualified.

¹⁹ See sections 139-144. In relation to Crown entity companies, see also section 90 of the Crown Entities Act 2004 about disclosures before appointment.

²⁰ However, this provision does not override the duty under section 131 to act in good faith and in the best interests of the company: see *Hedley v Albany Power Centre (No. 2)* (2006) 9 NZCLC 264,095.

The Auditor-General may grant prior approval and, in limited cases, retrospective approval, of a member's interest in contracts, which has the effect of suspending the contracting rule in relation to that case.

A member of the local authority (or a committee) must not vote on, or take part in the discussion of, a matter before the authority in which they have a financial interest, other than an interest in common with the public (the non-participation rule). Certain exceptions apply. When the matter is raised at a meeting, the member must declare that they have a financial interest in it and the minutes must record the fact of the disclosure and abstention.

It is an offence for a member to breach the non-participation rule and, if convicted, they automatically vacate office.

The Auditor-General may grant an exemption or declaration, in a limited range of situations, which allows a member to participate in a matter in which they have a financial interest.

In some cases, a member who is associated with a company is deemed to share any interests of that company. A member can also have a deemed interest through their spouse, civil union partner or de facto partner.

For more information about this Act, see our 2020 publication *Local Authorities (Members' Interests) Act 1968: A guide for members of local authorities on managing financial conflicts of interest* (available at oag.parliament.nz).

Education Act 1989

The relevant provisions in this Act apply to members of school boards of trustees,²¹ and TEI councils²².

Before appointment or election, a prospective school board trustee must confirm that they are eligible to be a trustee.

A person is disqualified from being a trustee of the board (or member of a committee) if they are concerned or interested in contracts with the board under which the total payments made, or to be made, by or on behalf of the board exceed a specified amount (currently \$25,000) in any financial year.

In some cases, a trustee who is associated with a company is deemed to share any interests of that company.

The Secretary for Education may grant approval of a contract, which has the effect of suspending the contracting rule in relation to that case.

²¹ See sections 103, 103A, and 103B, and clause 40 of Schedule 6.

²² See sections 174 and 175.

A trustee must be excluded from any meeting of the board while it discusses, considers, or decides on a matter in which they have a financial interest or any interest that might reasonably be regarded as likely to influence them in carrying out their duties and responsibilities. However, they may attend to give evidence, make submissions, or answer questions.

Members of TEI councils are required to disclose their financial interests in any matters being considered by the council, and cannot participate in discussions or decisions on the matter unless the council decides otherwise. The council may dismiss a member who, without reasonable excuse, breaches that provision.

Appendix 3

Leading New Zealand court cases that consider conflicts of interest

- *Auckland Casino v Casino Control Authority* [1995] 1 NZLR 142 (CA)
- *Back Country Helicopters v Minister of Conservation* [2013] NZHC 982; [2013] NZAR 1474
- *Calvert & Co v Dunedin City Council* [1993] 2 NZLR 460 (HC)
- *Collinge v Kyd* [2005] 1 NZLR 847 (HC)
- *Diagnostic Medlab v Auckland District Health Board* [2007] 2 NZLR 832 (CA)
- *Enterprise Miramar Peninsula Inc v Wellington City Council* [2018] NZCA 541; [2019] 2 NZLR 501
- *Erris Promotions v Commissioner of Inland Revenue* (2003) 16 PRNZ 1014 (CA)
- *Friends of Turitea Reserve Society Inc v Palmerston North City Council* [2008] 2 NZLR 661 (HC)
- *Howe v Keown* [2011] NZAR 764 (HC)
- *Man O'War Station v Auckland City Council (No 1)* [2002] 3 NZLR 577 (PC)
- *Meadowvale Stud Farm v Stratford County Council* [1979] 1 NZLR 342 (HC)
- *Muir v Commissioner of Inland Revenue* [2007] 3 NZLR 495 (CA)
- *NZI Financial Corporation v NZ Kiwifruit Authority* [1986] 1 NZLR 159 (HC)
- *Otago University Students Association v University of Otago* [2009] 2 NZLR 38 (HC)
- *Pratt Contractors v Transit New Zealand* [2005] 2 NZLR 433 (PC)
- *R v Borlase & Noone* [2016] NZHC 2970
- *Riverside Casino v Moxon* [2001] 2 NZLR 78 (CA)
- *Save Chamberlain Park Inc v Auckland Council* [2018] NZHC 1462
- *Saxmere Company Ltd v Wool Board Disestablishment Company Ltd* [2010] 1 NZLR 35; [2010] 1 NZLR 76 (SC).

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