



Enforceable and International Codes of Practice

To be listed as a PRIA Registered Consultancies Group, an owner and/or most senior executive (principal) must already hold a full PRIA membership (MPRIA) or be a Fellow of the institute (FPRIA). Consultancy offices in different states and territories will only be recognised if the most senior executive in that local office is a full MPRIA or FPRIA member. This allows our codes of ethics and practice to be enforceable.

The PRIA Code of Ethics binds all consultants of a Registered Consultancy. To ensure professional standards within consultancy, RCG members are also bound by PRIA's Consultancy Code of Practice encompassing client relations, fees and business practice.

In addition, the Registered Consultancies Group is a member of the International Communication Consultancies Organisation (ICCO). As such, the global ethics defined in the Stockholm Charter and the Charter for Media Transparency apply to all PRIA RCG member consultancies.

Public Relations Institute of Australia Registered Consultancy Code of Practice:

General Standards - A Registered Consultancy:

1. Accepts a positive duty to observe the highest standards in its business practice and in the practice of public relations; promote the benefits of good public relations practice in all dealings; and improve the general understanding of professional public relations practice.
2. Undertakes to observe this code of practice, and any other article or amendment which shall be incorporated into it.
3. Adheres to the highest standards of accuracy and truth, avoiding extravagant claims and unfair comparisons and gives credit for ideas and words borrowed from others.

Client Relations - A Registered Consultancy:

1. Safeguards the confidences of both present and former clients. It shall not disclose or use these confidences to the disadvantage or prejudice of such clients or to the financial advantage of the Registered Consultancy, unless the client has released such information for public use, or has given specific permission for its disclosure, except upon the order of a court of law.
2. Through its principals and staff collectively or individually, shall not misuse information regarding its clients' business for financial or other gain.
3. Shall be free to represent its capabilities and services to any potential client, either on its own initiative or at the behest of the prospective client, provided that in so doing it does not seek to break any existing contract or detract from the reputation or capabilities of any consultancy already serving that client.
4. Shall not represent conflicting interests.
5. Shall represent competing interests only with the consent of all parties.

Employees - A Registered Consultancy:

1. Makes compliance with this Code of Practice and the PRIA Code of Ethics a condition for all its consultants.
2. Understands that if it knowingly causes or permits a member of its staff to act in a manner inconsistent with the Code it is party to such action and shall itself be deemed to be in breach of it.
3. Shall not directly invite any employee of a client advised by consultancy to consider alternative employment (an advertisement in the press is not considered to be an invitation to any particular person). A client may give express permission prior to an offer being made.

Fees and Income - A Registered Consultancy:

1. Shall not guarantee the achievement of results which are beyond the consultancy's direct capacity to achieve or prevent.
2. Shall be free to accept fees, commissions or other valuable considerations from persons other than a client, only provided relevant arrangements are disclosed to the client.
3. Shall not knowingly pay fees or give personal commissions which lead to unethical behaviour on the part of others.
4. Shall be free to negotiate with clients terms that take into account factors other than hours worked and seniority of staff involved, as long as they do not conflict with PRIA's code of ethics. These special factors have regard to all circumstances of the specific situation and level of service required.
5. Shall inform a client of any shareholding or financial interest held by the consultancy or any of its principals, shareholders or employees, in any business whose services it recommends or uses on behalf of a client.
6. Is able, at its discretion, to seek recompense when detailed creative pitches are required whether or not the consultancy is retained.

Public Relations Institute of Australia (PRIA) Code of Ethics

PRIA is a professional body serving the interests of its members. PRIA is mindful of the responsibility which public relations professionals owe to the community as well as to their clients and employers.

PRIA requires members to adhere to the highest standards of ethical practice and professional competence. All members are duty-bound to act responsibly and to be accountable for their actions.

The following code of ethics binds all members of PRIA:

1. Members shall deal fairly and honestly with their employers, clients and prospective clients, with their fellow workers including superiors and subordinates, with public officials, the communication media, the general public and with fellow members of PRIA.
2. Members shall avoid conduct or practices likely to bring discredit upon themselves, the Institute, their employers or clients.
3. Members shall not knowingly disseminate false or misleading information and shall take care to avoid doing so inadvertently.
4. With the exception of the requirements of Clause 9 members shall safeguard the confidences of both present and former employers and clients, including confidential information about employers' or clients' business affairs, technical methods or processes, except upon the order of a court of competent jurisdiction.
5. No member shall represent conflicting interests nor, without the consent of the parties concerned, represent competing interests.
6. Members shall refrain from proposing or agreeing that their consultancy fees or other remuneration be contingent entirely on the achievement of specified results.
7. Members shall inform their employers or clients if circumstances arise in which their judgment or the disinterested character of their services may be questioned by reason of personal relationships or business or financial interests.
8. Members practising as consultants shall seek payment only for services specifically commissioned.
9. Members shall be prepared to identify the source of funding of any public communication they initiate or for which they act as a conduit.
10. Members shall, in advertising and marketing their skills and services and in soliciting professional assignments, avoid false, misleading or exaggerated claims and shall refrain from comment or action that may injure the professional reputation, practice or services of a fellow member.
11. Members shall inform the Board of the Institute and/or the relevant State/Territory Council(s) of the Institute of evidence purporting to show that a member has been guilty of, or could be charged with, conduct constituting a breach of this Code.
12. No member shall intentionally injure the professional reputation or practice of another member.
13. Members shall help to improve the general body of knowledge of the profession by exchanging information and experience with fellow members.
14. Members shall act in accord with the aims of the Institute, its regulations and policies.
15. Members shall not misrepresent their status through misuse of title, grading, or the designation FPRIA, MPRIA or APRIA.

Stockholm Charter

All trade associations affiliated to ICCO and their member agencies have agreed to conform to the Stockholm Charter. This document was adopted in 2003 and replaced the Rome Charter, originally adopted by ICCO in 1986. The Stockholm Charter lays out a code of professional standards that aim to define our industry. The Charter comprises the following:

The International Communications Consultancy Organisation (ICCO) Professional Charter

Public Relations consultancies are professional service firms that help clients influence opinions, attitudes and behaviour. Along with this influence comes responsibility to our clients, our people, our profession and society at large.

1. **Objective counsel and advocacy:** PR consultancies may not have interests that might compromise their role as independent consultants. They should approach their clients with objectivity in order to help the client adopt the optimum communications strategy and behaviour.
2. **Society:** An open society, freedom of speech and a free press create the context for the profession of PR. Consultants operate within the scope of this open society. They comply with its rules and they work with clients that share the same approach.
3. **Confidentiality:** Trust is at the heart of the relationship between a client and a PR consultancy. Information that has been provided in confidence by a client and that is not publicly known should not be shared with other parties without the consent of the client.
4. **Integrity of information:** PR consultancies should not knowingly mislead an audience about factual information or about the interests a client represents. Consultancies must make their best efforts to strive for accuracy.
5. **Delivering promises:** Consultancies must work with clients to establish clear expectations in advance about the output of their efforts. They must define specific goals and then work to deliver on their promises. Consultancies must not offer guarantees which are not supportable or which compromise the integrity of the channels of communication.
6. **Conflicts:** Consultancies may represent clients with conflicting interests. Work may not start for a conflicting interest without the current client first being offered the opportunity to exercise the rights under any contract between them and the consultancy.
7. **Representation:** Consultancies may refuse or accept an assignment based on the personal opinions of the firm's management or the organisation's focus.
8. **Governance and Business Practices:** Public relations consultancies are committed to ethical behaviour and implementation of best business practices in dealing with all audiences.

Media Transparency:

In July 2005, ICCO formally adopted the IPRA Charter on Media Transparency. PR consultancies affiliated to ICCO through their member trade associations expect editorial providers to observe the following:

1. **Editorial:** Editorial appears as a result of the editorial judgement of the journalists involved and not as a result of any payment in cash or in kind or barter by a third party.
2. **Identification:** Editorial which appears as a result of a payment in cash or in kind or barter by a third party will be clearly identified as advertising or a paid promotion.
3. **Solicitation:** There should be no suggestion by any journalist or member of staff of an editorial provider that editorial can be obtained in any way other than through editorial merit.
4. **Sampling:** Third parties may provide samples or loans of products or services to journalists where it is necessary for such journalists to test, use, taste or sample the product or service in order to articulate an objective opinion about the product or service. The length of time required for sampling should be agreed in advance and all loaned products or services should be returned after sampling. All resulting published reports should state clearly that the product or service was provided for the purpose of the test.
5. **Policy statement:** Editorial providers should prepare a policy statement regarding the receipt of gifts or discounted products and services from third parties by their journalists and other staff. Journalists and other staff should be required to read and sign acceptance of the policy. The policy should be available for public inspection.

Definitions:

- Editorial means print or electronic publication: radio, television, web or other transmission.
- Journalist means the person creating the editorial.