

# Western Sydney Law Students' Association (WSLSA) Code of Conduct

Approved: 14 July 2025

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## 1. Purpose

The Code of Conduct outlines the mandatory standards of behaviour and accountability for all WSLSA Committee, including Executive Office Bearers, Directors, Officers, Subcommittee members, and Ordinary Committee Members. It establishes a framework for respectful, collaborative, and professional conduct in service of the Association's mission to serve the broader law student community.

By accepting a role in the WSLSA, you agree to comply with this Code and uphold the values of the Association.

## 2. Scope

This Code applies to:

- All elected and appointed members of the WSLSA Executive, Directors, Officers, Subcommittee members, and Ordinary Committee Members; and
- All Association-related activities, whether on or off campus, and in all communication channels used for Association purposes (including meetings, email, social media, and messaging platforms); and
- All WSLSA activities, including meetings, events, digital communications, and collaborations with the School of Law, sponsors, and external partners.

## 3. Core Values

All WSLSA members must uphold the following values:

- **Integrity:** Act with honesty, transparency, and good faith in all dealings.
- **Respect:** Treat all individuals with dignity and courtesy.
- **Inclusion:** Proactively foster equity, diversity, and a welcoming environment.
- **Professionalism:** Represent WSLSA in a manner befitting a future legal professional.
- **Accountability:** Take ownership of your actions and decisions.
- **Transparency:** Ensure open and honest communication, particularly regarding finances and decision-making.
- **Collaboration:** Work constructively with others, recognising that we are all volunteers striving for shared goals.
- **Leadership:** Uphold the highest standards of student leadership in all conduct and decision-making.

## 4. Conduct in Roles

### 4.1 Role Responsibilities

- Committee members are primarily responsible for the tasks within their portfolio.
- You may request assistance from other committee members, but no member is bound to perform duties outside their portfolio unless they agree, or the Executive approves.
- Administrative, financial, or logistical matters (e.g., room bookings, reimbursements) must be raised as requests, not directives, and managed through the appropriate portfolio holder.

### 4.2 Authority and Approval

- The Treasurer is responsible for the management and approval of WSLSA finances, including budget preparation, expense approvals, sponsorship income, and compliance with financial reporting requirements.
- The Treasurer also acts as the Public Officer of the Association, responsible for ensuring the Association meets its statutory obligations with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC), NSW Fair Trading, and other regulatory bodies.
- It is the responsibility of all Committee members to provide accurate and timely information to enable the Treasurer to fulfil their role as Public Officer.
- If the Treasurer is unavailable, financial decisions may be made in the following order of authority:
  1. President;
  2. Vice-President;
  3. Secretary.
- All financial decisions must align with the approved budget and financial policies of the Association.

### 4.3 Role Handover

- Members are responsible for ensuring a smooth transition when they vacate their role, including the transfer of documents, passwords, and ongoing tasks.
- A formal handover process should be conducted where possible to support continuity of operations.

## 5. Teamwork and Communication

### 5.1 Respectful Collaboration

- Encourage a culture of mutual support and respect, not hierarchy.
- Disagreements should be addressed respectfully and constructively.
- Public or private criticism of another member's work is unacceptable.
- Raise issues privately or through the President or Vice-President. If the President or Vice-President are unavailable or implicated in the concern, the matter should be raised with the Secretary.

## 5.2 Timely Communication

- Members must raise potential problems or delays as soon as they become known, so that the Committee can work collaboratively on timely solutions.
- Inform the Executive if you are unable to meet a deadline or attend an event.

## 5.3 Email Access

- Members must maintain active access to their committee email at all times and resolve access issues promptly.

# 6. Volunteer Nature of Service

- WSLSA is a volunteer-run organisation. Members cannot compel others to undertake tasks beyond their portfolio.
- Assistance requests should be framed respectfully and fulfilled voluntarily, unless agreed upon in advance for shared responsibilities.

# 7. Subcommittees

Subcommittees, including the Competitions Subcommittee, exercise leadership within their portfolio areas and are accountable to the Executive Committee of the WSLSA. While subcommittees have operational autonomy, their actions must align with the Association's mission, values, and governance frameworks.

Subcommittees must:

- Follow the same conduct standards as the Executive and Committee;
- Respect their internal role boundaries (e.g., Subcommittee President, Vice-President, Secretary) as determined by their members;
- Understand that the President of a subcommittee does not hold the same authority as the President of the WSLSA. The subcommittee President leads only within the scope of the subcommittee's portfolio;
- Escalate any matters beyond their portfolio's scope (such as Association-wide decisions, finances, or governance) to the Executive Committee;
- Regularly report to the Executive Committee through their Subcommittee President or Secretary;
- Have the discretion to create additional subcommittee roles to meet operational needs, subject to Executive approval.

The Executive Committee respects the independence of subcommittees in their operational areas and will only override subcommittee decisions where necessary to protect the Association's governance, finances, or reputation, or where the decision affects the Association as a whole. **Subcommittees are otherwise encouraged to run their portfolios with autonomy, exercising their own discretion and leadership in their areas of responsibility.** This approach promotes mutual respect and cohesion between the Executive Committee and subcommittees, with clear boundaries for both.

## 8. Financial and Resource Management

### 8.1 Financial Responsibility

- No spending of WSLSA funds may occur without written Treasurer and Executive approval.
- Reimbursements must follow the Association's financial procedures and be documented.
- All Committee members must understand and comply with the Association's financial policies when managing activities in their portfolio.

### 8.2 Resource Usage

- Access to School of Law or university resources must be requested through the Secretary or Vice-President and used responsibly.

### 8.3 Compliance with Regulatory Obligations

- The Treasurer, as the Public Officer, must ensure that:
  - Annual returns and reports are lodged with the ACNC and NSW Fair Trading;
  - The Association's contact details and office bearers are kept up to date with relevant regulators;
  - Financial reporting obligations are met within the required timeframes.
- All Committee members must assist the Treasurer by:
  - Providing timely information about changes to their contact details or roles;
  - Submitting any documentation required for reporting purposes;
  - Complying with record-keeping and financial management processes.

Failure to fulfil these obligations may place the Association's charitable status at risk and is considered a serious breach of this Code.

## 9. Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest

### 9.1 Confidentiality

- Members must protect WSLSA information and access it only when required for their role.
- Do not disclose confidential matters without Executive authorisation.
- Confidential information includes financial data, sponsorship arrangements, member information, and any sensitive discussions regarding governance or personnel matters.

### 9.2 Conflict of Interest

- Declare any personal, academic, or financial conflicts of interest when they arise.
- Committee decisions must be made in the best interests of the Association, not personal interests.

## 10. Conduct and Behaviour

All members must behave professionally and ethically at all times, both within the Association and when representing it externally. This includes interactions with other committee members, subcommittee members, general members, sponsors, university staff, and the wider legal community.

Misconduct – including harassment, bullying, or disruptive behaviour – is grounds for disciplinary action. Discriminatory behaviour of any kind is strictly prohibited, including but not limited to discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, sex, sexual orientation, disability, religion, age, national origin, or socio-economic status. All members must contribute to a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment for all participants.

## 11. Addressing Breaches of the Code

### 11.1 Scope

This section applies to committee members and subcommittee members, distinct from the disciplinary process for ordinary Association members under Clause 11 of the Constitution.

### 11.2 Reporting Process

- Breaches should be reported to the President or Vice-President.
- If the President is implicated, the report should go to the Vice-President and Secretary.
- Reporting in good faith is protected from retaliation.

### 11.3 Preliminary Resolution

- Minor issues should first be addressed through informal discussions facilitated by the President or Vice-President.
- Serious or repeated issues will proceed to formal action.

### 11.4 Formal Disciplinary Process

1. **Notice:** Written notice of the breach will be given, with 7 days to respond.
2. **Investigation:** Conducted by the President, Vice-President, and Secretary, or an appointed independent panel if conflicts exist.
3. **Determination:** Outcomes may include-
  - No action;
  - Verbal or written warning;
  - Removal from a role;
  - Temporary suspension from the Committee;
  - Removal from the Committee (per Clause 19 of the Constitution).
4. **Outcome Notification:** Outcomes will be provided in writing, with a summary reported to the Executive (excluding personal details).

## 11.5 Appeals

- Committee members may submit a written appeal to the Executive within 7 days of the outcome.
- Appeals will be reviewed promptly, and where possible, by Executive members not involved in the original decision.
- The Executive's decision on the appeal is final, subject to any further review available at an Annual or Special General Meeting in accordance with the Constitution.

## 12. Alignment with the Constitution

- Disciplinary processes for general members of WSLSA follow Clause 11 of the Constitution.
- This Code governs conduct within the Committee and Subcommittees.

## 13. Annual Review

The Code will be reviewed annually by the Executive Committee to ensure it remains effective and fit for purpose.

## 14. Member Acknowledgement

By accepting a role in the WSLSA, members acknowledge that they have read, understood, and agree to comply with this Code of Conduct.

## 14. Signature of Agreement

All committee and subcommittee members must sign below to confirm their agreement to uphold this Code of Conduct throughout their term.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_