

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP POLICY

Version 1: 20 May 2025

1. POLICY STATEMENT

- a. An intimate personal relationship between Participants poses various potential risks to the individuals involved, to other athletes and stakeholders, to performance outcomes, and to winter sport. The breakdown of such a relationship can prove particularly detrimental for all involved, both directly and indirectly.
- b. It is not the responsibility of the OWIA to manage personal relationships, but it is the responsibility of the OWIA to manage risk, wellbeing, and conflicts of interest.
- c. Except where an unmanageable conflict of interest is created, OWIA does not prohibit consensual personal relationships between Participants. At the same time, the OWIA aims to ensure that:
 - prior to commencing a personal relationship, individuals carefully consider the risks of doing so (whether potential, actual, or perceived);
 - any intimate personal relationship that poses a conflict of interest is avoided unless OWIA first agrees to implement measures to appropriately manage the conflict; and
 - the risk posed by an intimate personal relationship between Participants is minimised.

2. POLICY OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this policy is to minimise the wellbeing, cultural, performance, and legal risks posed by intimate personal relationships within the Olympic Winter Institute of Australia (OWIA), whether between athletes, between personnel, between athletes and coaches/personnel, or involving other relevant individuals. This enables OWIA to provide relevant support and implement positive controls that foster a safe, inclusive and professional environment. These measures are designed to protect individuals' wellbeing, uphold team cohesion, and ensure the integrity, performance and success of the team.

3. THE POLICY APPLIES TO

All OWIA personnel (including all permanent, temporary, and casual employees, and all contractors), as well as all athletes (collectively, 'Participants').

4. DEFINITIONS

- a. For the purpose of this policy, 'personal relationship' means one between consenting adults of any gender or sexual orientation that is intimate, sexual, or romantic in nature. They include, but are not limited to, relationships between spouses as well as de facto and life partners.
- b. Family relationships that may raise conflict-of-interest issues are also covered by this policy.

5. REQUIREMENT TO DECLARE

- a. While OWIA has no desire to intrude upon the privacy of Participants or interfere in personal matters, declaring an intimate relationship when it commences is essential in the interests of:
 - professionalism and integrity;
 - the mitigation of risk;
 - the management of conflicts of interest (whether potential, actual, or perceived); and
 - the welfare of those involved in the relationship and the people they share the environment with.



The requirement to declare also has important practical and/or logistical implications (for example, around the making of appropriate travel arrangements). The OWIA is particularly concerned that appropriate support is always available to Participants, and this can only be ensured when a declaration is made in a timely manner.

The requirement to declare becomes acutely important in instances of power imbalance, particularly in cases where the 'senior' party in the relationship is reluctant to declare it and exerts pressure on the other person to conceal its existence. Such a scenario is entirely inconsistent with athlete wellbeing.

b. Who is obliged to declare?

Participants who commence a personal relationship are required to declare the relationship with their respective Manager, the OWIA CEO, or OWIA People & Performance Manager. Both Participants involved in the personal relationship are required to separately declare it.

c. When should a declaration be made?

Following its commencement, a relationship, including a former relationship, should be declared as soon as practicable so any controls can be put in place to protect the culture and performance of the team.

OWIA appreciates that there can be a degree of uncertainty about whether, and when, a relationship exists. If in doubt, Participants should err on the side of declaring the relationship.

d. OWIA response

OWIA will treat all declarations made professionally and respectfully.

The OWIA's initial response to a declaration of a personal relationship will be to consult with the Participants it involves, developing practical strategies to manage or avoid conflicts of interest. Where a conflict of interest cannot be managed or avoided, and is sufficiently serious, OWIA may issue a direction to the Participants.

e. Who will be advised?

Every declaration of a personal relationship between Participants will be handled professionally and respectfully. The existence of the relationship will only be revealed to individuals who, in OWIA's estimation, reasonably need to be aware of it. For example, if a personal relationship between athletes in the same team environment is declared, there would exist a reasonable need for the team's coach and management to be made aware of it.

f. Failure to declare a reportable personal relationship

Where a personal relationship is declarable under the terms of this policy, failure to declare can result in disciplinary action.

g. Examples of requirements to declare

- i. Elizabeth, an established member of an OWIA Sport Program team, is married with two children. At the Snow Australia awards night she is observed in a passionate embrace with Angus, a 21-year-old in the development group. Asked about it the next day by the People & Performance Manager, both parties state that it was a spontaneous and consensual 'one-off thing'.

Although a 'one-off thing', there is the potential for a conflict of interest and this situation should be declared so that appropriate support for the individuals and controls can be put in place.

- ii. Gemma and Rose are categorised athletes in an OWIA Sport Program. For some time, they - and some of their teammates - have been aware of a mutual attraction. Increasingly distracted by this, Gemma asks Rose out on a series of dates to discuss the situation; it is soon established that they wish to commence a relationship, only hesitating because Rose



thinks 'some of the coaches might flip out'.

Although they have never been physically intimate and are not convinced a full-fledged relationship will be practical, Gemma and Rose determine that the situation is declarable; the women separately approach the designated person at the OWIA and relate their news. The constructive counselling that each athlete receives enables them to move forward in their relationship, cognisant of the risks entailed in doing so.

6. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

a. **Obligation to avoid a relationship until controls are implemented**

Any personal relationship that creates a conflict of interest, whether that conflict is actual, potential, or perceived, must be avoided unless and until controls are implemented by OWIA to manage the conflict-of-interest risk.

Conflicts of interest are of particular concern when the involved Participants have a direct hierarchical relationship. While a personal relationship between a coach and an athlete is the most obvious example, any situation in which one party is in a position to make or influence decisions that directly affect the other party will constitute a conflict-of-interest risk.

b. **Types of conflict of interest**

Three conflict-of-interest types are relevant to this policy:

- Actual: a direct conflict between a person's professional responsibilities and their personal interests;
- Potential: a foreseeable conflict of interest in the future;
- Perceived: a party to the relationship or a third party may reasonably perceive that a conflict of interest exists.

c. **Failure to avoid a personal relationship that creates a conflict of interest**

Participants have an obligation to work with OWIA in implementing controls and practical recommendations to ensure that any wellbeing, cultural, performance or legal conflicts of interest can be best managed.

Failure to avoid a 'conflict-creating' personal relationship until such time as appropriate controls have been implemented to manage conflict-of-interest risks can result in disciplinary action.

d. **Examples of conflict of interest**

i. **Actual**

Josh, who was divorced two years ago, is head coach of a Sport Program team. He and Lucy, a newly categorised athlete in his training group, have had a consensual sexual relationship for three weeks and are planning to move in together in Josh's apartment.

As things stand, the relationship creates an actual conflict of interest due to the direct hierarchical relationship between Josh and Lucy. It should be immediately declared in order that the OWIA can consider whether controls can be implemented to manage this conflict of interest.

ii. **Potential**

Sarah is a Sport Program coach who has been in a relationship for two years with Jane, an athlete who is not yet on contract with OWIA. Jane has a great season and will likely be put forward for an OWIA contract next year.

The relationship should be declared before Jane's application for an OWIA contract is considered. This is due to the clear potential for a conflict of interest to occur; namely, a scenario whereby Sarah can



influence selection outcomes in Jane's favour. Disclosing the relationship promotes transparency, allows the selection process to be managed, and protects both Participants.

iii. **Perceived**

Rob and Leigh are married. Rob is a manager in the Men's HP program; Leigh is a manager in the Women's HP program. Emily, a support physiotherapist who has a difficult relationship with Leigh, has applied to be lead physiotherapist for the Men's program. Given that Rob will be on the recruitment panel for this important role, Emily is fearful that Leigh will use her influence over Rob to prevent her appointment.

Although the personal relationship between Rob and Leigh was declared long ago, new controls should be implemented around the current scenario to manage the perceived conflict of interest stemming from Rob's involvement in Emily's application process. The most obvious and straightforward control might be that Rob removes himself from the recruitment panel.

7. ESCALATING CONCERNS

- a. Participants who are concerned about a past, present or emerging personal relationship within the program, whether their own or another's, are encouraged to discuss the matter with OWIA's National Integrity Manager or the OWIA People & Performance Manager.

The National Integrity Manager or the People & Performance Manager can assist with navigating options, including the complaints process or other avenues for seeking out additional guidance. Note: if raising the matter with the National Integrity Manager or the People & Performance Manager is not feasible or appropriate for any reason, OWIA's CEO should be contacted as stipulated in the policy, the National Integrity Framework or other relevant policies.

b. **Report a complaint to OWIA or Sports Integrity Australia (SIA)**

After discussing the complaint process with the with OWIA National Integrity Manager or the People & Performance Manager, a Participant may opt to lodge a formal complaint with OWIA or Sports Integrity Australia (SIA). In some cases, a Participant may proceed directly to reporting the matter to SIA.

Reports to SIA must relate to breaches of one of the National Integrity Framework (NIF) policies:

- [Member Protection Policy](#)
- [Safeguarding Children & Young People Policy](#)
- [Improper Use of Drugs & Medicine Policy](#)
- [Competition Manipulation and Sports Gambling Policy](#)
- [Complaints, Disputes & Discipline Policy](#)

Further information about making a complaint and the processes can be found in *OWIA's Complaints, Disputes and Discipline Policy* which can be found [here](#). Sports Integrity Australia and its processes can be found [here](#).

8. PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

a. **AIS Mental Health Referral Network**

The AIS also offers a Mental Health Referral Network (MHRN) support line to provide free and confidential support for yourself or to refer another person. The AIS MHRN is an expert group of psychologists and mental health clinicians who understand the pressures and complexity of life in a high-performance setting. More information on what to expect when contacting the AIS MHRN can be found [here](#).

AIS Mental Health Referral Network contact details:



- +61 2 6214 1130 (Monday to Friday - 9am to 5pm AEDT)
- mentalhealth@sportaus.gov.au

b. Lifeline/Kids Help Line

If you are concerned about yourself or another person and it is an urgent matter, please contact Lifeline on 13 11 14 (C – Kids Help Line).

Kids Helpline is Australia’s only free, private and confidential 24/7 phone and online counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25.

- 1800 55 1800
- www.kidshelpline.com.au

c. Emergency 000

If you or another person's safety and welfare are in immediate danger, please immediately contact 000.

9. BREACHES

A breach of the Personal Relationships Policy will be a breach of the applicable OWIA Athlete Contract, Employment or Contractor Agreement, and can result in disciplinary action.

10. CHANGES TO THIS POLICY

The OWIA reserves the right to change this Policy at any time. Changes are effective upon posting on the website. You should periodically visit the website www.owia.org to review the current terms of the Personal Relationship Policy.

11. DOCUMENT HISTORY

Version	Adopted by OWIA Board	Content reviewed / purpose
One	20 May 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Policy developed