Conflict of Interest Policy

The Lasting Sparke Scholarship Fund

1. Purpose of This Policy

This Conflict of Interest Policy ensures that all decisions made by **The Lasting Sparke Scholarship Fund** ("the Foundation") are impartial, transparent, and aligned with the Foundation's charitable purpose. It provides clear guidance for identifying, disclosing, and managing actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest across all Foundation activities, including scholarship selection, governance, partnerships, and financial decisions.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Directors
- Committee members
- Employees
- Volunteers
- Contractors
- Any individual involved in scholarship assessment, financial decision-making, or governance activities

3. Definition of a Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest occurs when an individual's personal, professional, or financial interests **could improperly influence**, or be perceived to influence, their decision-making on behalf of the Foundation.

Conflicts may be:

Actual

A real conflict exists now.

Potential

A conflict may arise in the future.

Perceived

A reasonable person might believe a conflict exists, even if it does not.

Examples include:

- Family or close personal relationships with scholarship applicants
- Financial interests in organisations seeking funding or contracts
- Board members serving on related boards or committees
- Personal benefit from Foundation decisions
- Professional relationships that may bias judgement

4. Principles

The Foundation is committed to:

- **Integrity** — decisions must be made in the best interests of the Foundation
- **Transparency** — conflicts must be openly declared and documented
- **Fairness** — scholarship and funding decisions must be free from undue influence
- **Accountability** — all individuals must comply with this policy
- **Trust** — maintaining confidence of donors, partners, and the community

5. Responsibilities

5.1 Directors and Committee Members

Must:

- Disclose conflicts promptly
- Abstain from discussions and decisions where a conflict exists
- Ensure scholarship decisions remain independent and fair
- Uphold the Foundation's values and reputation

5.2 Employees, Volunteers, and Contractors

Must:

- Identify and disclose conflicts to their manager or the CEO
- Follow directions for managing or removing the conflict
- Maintain confidentiality and act ethically

5.3 CEO / Executive Officer

Responsible for:

- Maintaining the conflict of interest register
- Ensuring conflicts are managed appropriately
- Reporting significant conflicts to the Board

6. Disclosure Requirements

Conflicts must be disclosed:

- At the start of each Board or committee meeting
- When joining the Foundation
- Whenever circumstances change
- Immediately upon becoming aware of a conflict

Disclosures must be recorded in:

- The **Conflict of Interest Register**

- Meeting minutes (where relevant)

7. Managing Conflicts of Interest

Once disclosed, conflicts will be managed in accordance with the **Conflict of Interest – Disclosure & Management Procedure** contained in **Annexure 1.**

8. Scholarship-Specific Requirements

Given the Foundation's purpose, scholarship decisions require heightened protection.

Individuals must **not** participate in scholarship assessment if:

- They know the applicant personally
- They have a family or professional relationship with the applicant
- They stand to benefit from the applicant receiving or not receiving a scholarship
- Their involvement could reasonably be perceived as biased

All scholarship conflicts must be documented and managed before assessment begins.

9. Breaches of This Policy

Failure to disclose or appropriately manage a conflict may result in:

- Removal from committees
- Disciplinary action
- Termination of employment or volunteer engagement
- Reporting to regulatory bodies (if required)

10. Record Keeping

The Foundation will maintain:

- A **Conflict of Interest Register**
- Meeting minutes documenting disclosures and management actions
- Annual reviews of conflicts and mitigation strategies

11. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed **annually** or as required to ensure compliance with best-practice governance standards and regulatory obligations.

12. Adoption

This Conflict of Interest Policy is adopted by the Board of **The Lasting Sparke Scholarship Fund** on the date recorded in the Board minutes.

Annexure 1

Conflict of Interest – Disclosure & Management Procedure

The Lasting Sparke Scholarship Fund

This procedure outlines the step-by-step process for identifying, disclosing, recording, and managing conflicts of interest to ensure all decisions remain impartial, transparent, and aligned with the Foundation's charitable purpose.

1. Identification of a Conflict

A conflict may be **actual, potential, or perceived**. Individuals must actively consider whether any personal, professional, or financial interests could influence — or appear to influence — their judgement.

Examples include relationships with scholarship applicants, financial interests in partner organisations, or roles on related boards.

2. Immediate Disclosure

Conflicts must be disclosed **as soon as they arise**, including:

- At the start of each Board or committee meeting
- When joining the Foundation
- When circumstances change
- When an individual becomes aware of a new conflict

Disclosures must be made to:

- The **Chair** (for Directors and committee members)
- If Applicable - The **CEO/Executive Officer** (for staff, volunteers, contractors)

3. Recording the Conflict

All disclosures must be entered into:

- The **Conflict of Interest Register**, maintained by the CEO/Executive Officer
- Meeting minutes (if disclosed during a meeting)

The record must include:

- Name of the individual
- Nature of the conflict
- Whether it is actual, potential, or perceived
- Date of disclosure
- Management action taken

4. Assessment of the Conflict

The Chair (or CEO for staff/volunteers) will assess:

- The seriousness of the conflict
- The likelihood it could influence decision-making
- Whether it could reasonably be perceived as bias
- Whether the individual can continue participating in discussions or decisions

If required, the Chair may consult the Board or an independent advisor.

5. Management Actions

Depending on the nature and severity of the conflict, one or more of the following actions will be taken:

5.1 Abstention (Default Action)

The individual:

- Leaves the room during discussion
- Does not vote
- Does not influence decision-making

This is the standard approach for scholarship decisions.

5.2 Restriction

The individual may:

- Receive limited information
- Be excluded from specific activities or communications

5.3 Removal

The individual steps down from:

- A role
- A committee
- A responsibility that creates the conflict

5.4 Independent Oversight

An independent assessor or committee member may be appointed to ensure impartiality.

5.5 No Action

Only appropriate when the conflict is minor and does not affect decision-making. This must be documented and justified.

6. Scholarship-Specific Requirements

Because the Foundation's purpose centres on supporting children through education, scholarship decisions require heightened protection.

Individuals **must not** participate in scholarship assessment if:

- They know the applicant personally
- They have a family or professional relationship with the applicant
- They stand to benefit from the applicant receiving or not receiving a scholarship
- Their involvement could reasonably be perceived as biased

All scholarship conflicts must be resolved **before** assessment begins.

7. Communication of the Decision

The Chair or CEO will inform the individual of:

- The conflict assessment
- The management action required
- Any restrictions or changes to their role

This communication must be documented.

8. Monitoring & Review

The CEO/Executive Officer will:

- Review the Conflict of Interest Register quarterly
- Ensure management actions remain appropriate
- Report significant conflicts to the Board
- Ensure compliance with ACNC governance standards

9. Breaches of Procedure

Failure to disclose or comply with management actions may result in:

- Removal from committees
- Disciplinary action
- Termination of employment or volunteer engagement
- Reporting to regulatory bodies (if required)

10. Annual Declaration

All Directors and committee members must complete an **annual conflict of interest declaration**, confirming:

- Any ongoing conflicts
- Any new conflicts
- That they understand and will comply with this procedure