



# Living Evidence for Australian Pregnancy and Postnatal care (LEAPP) Guidelines

## Conflict of Interest Procedure

Version 1.0

July 2023

---

### [LEAPP Guidelines Group](#)

Australian Living Evidence Consortium  
School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine  
Monash University  
Level 4, 553 St Kilda Road  
Melbourne, VIC 3004  
[admin.alec@monash.edu](mailto:admin.alec@monash.edu)

# Conflicts of Interest

## Summary

As a contributor to our guidelines, it is important that we are aware of any possible situations where you, or an entity you're associated with, may stand to gain financially or otherwise from the content of our guidelines, and you may therefore be conflicted in your ability to be objective.

A conflict of interest does not necessarily exclude you from contributing. However, to ensure the independence and integrity of our guidelines, you must disclose all relevant interests from the previous five (5) years so that any potential areas of conflict can be managed.

The accompanying Declaration of Interest (DOI) form outlines possible areas of conflict, as well as the opportunity to declare any other conflicts that are not mentioned. We ask that you read each point in the form carefully and advise us of anything that may be relevant.

The form is to be returned prior to contributing to any group discussion regarding guideline content. Please allow time for any identified conflicts to be assessed and managed before the group next convenes.

Once the form is returned, if there is a conflict, our Conflict Management Committee (CMC) will determine the best path forward. This is often a simple and pragmatic solution such as not commenting during group discussions on particular topics.

We encourage conversation and transparency regarding conflicts. If there is any uncertainty, this should be raised with a member of our team or the group chair.

## 1. Scope of this procedure

The Conflicts of Interest (COI) procedure applies to all individuals who participate in the decision-making process in relation to the development of our guidelines. This includes, but is not limited to: members of the Steering Committee, Guideline Leadership Group, Panels, Consumers, the Executive and Project Teams, the Evidence Team, the Expert Advisory Group and Peer Reviewers.

## 2. Recruitment of members to the guidelines

The process of recruitment is initially via an Expression of Interest (EOI) process, with information being sent to partner organisations, as well as other relevant organisations and individuals, encouraging them to forward the EOI to their wider networks. Members are then chosen based on the selection criteria as outlined in the TOR. At all points, consideration is given to ensuring diversity within the groups.

The Steering Committee is chaired by a representative of one of the member organisations (independent of the lead organisations). The GLG is co-chaired by representatives of the lead organisations, with the Senior Clinical Fellows functioning as the deputy co-chairs for both the Steering Committee and the GLG. The Guideline Panels are chaired by the relevant Senior Clinical Fellow.

As per NHMRC guidance, the appointed chairs should have no financial conflicts of interest and, as much as possible, should also be free of non-financial interests.

### **3. Identifying conflicts of interest**

Any individual who participates in the decision making process related to our guidelines is required to complete a 'Declarations of Interest' (DOI) form. The completed DOI form will be reviewed by members of our team who will then notify the Conflict Management Committee (CMC) if potential conflicts are identified. The CMC are individuals with expert knowledge of COI management. The chair of the CMC will make the final decision as to whether a conflict of interest requires the development of a management plan.

### **4. Defining a conflict**

The NHMRC Act 1992 defines a conflict of interest as 'any direct or indirect pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest'. Some examples of individuals deemed to have significant conflicts:

- They were members of advisory boards for corporations whose products or services were related to the guideline topics.
- They had a commercial or other interest in the guideline.
- They received grants, whether single or multiple, from entities that had commercial interests in the clinical guideline topic to the cumulative value of \$5000 or more per annum.
- They received funding for consulting and presenting at conferences, to the cumulative value of \$5000 or more per annum, from entities that had commercial interest in the clinical guideline topic.

As per the [NHMRC website](#), 'while pecuniary (financial) interests are fundamentally problematic and can undermine confidence in a guideline, many non-financial interests may not be problematic and could reasonably be viewed as essential components of character, personality and life experience.'

'Bias from personal and intellectual interests can be addressed by other means, such as reaching group consensus in decision making. A balance of different personal and intellectual interests is important to make sure the group can engage in healthy, informed discussion and debate.'

### **5. Management of conflicts of interest**

Based on an assessment of the individuals' conflicts, a judgement will be made regarding that individual's level of participation. A substantial conflict of interest, such as ongoing payments from a private company with links to the topic, will require the individual to cease their involvement in the guidelines. Whereas, for example, a one-off \$500 honorarium from a company not directly related to the guideline content may be permitted. Individuals who have conflicts relating to specific sections within a guideline (e.g. the individuals' spouse is employed by the manufacturer of a particular medical device) may be required to leave the room or video call, omitting themselves from the decision making process for that topic. Any disagreements regarding a CMC ruling should be raised with a member of our team. This will then be reviewed by the CMC and a decision made as to whether to uphold the decision.

If an individual has knowingly misled the group regarding a conflict of interest, that individual will be removed from the guideline development group.

## **6. Publicly accessible information**

It is essential that the COI process is transparent and publicly accessible. Our guidelines include a publicly accessible statement that lists, where applicable, each person's name, profession or discipline, organisational affiliation, role in the guideline development, their interests related to the guideline topic as outlined on their DOI form, whether they have any conflicts of interest and how those conflicts are being managed. We may at times also provide this information when our guidelines are released for public consultation. If this raises privacy concerns for your particular situation, please talk to a member of our team before you begin your involvement.

All sources of funding for the development, publication and dissemination of our guidelines will also be stated publicly, as well as a list of organisations formally endorsing the guideline.

## **7. Updating the form**

Disclosure of interests is an ongoing process. Members are required to proactively inform our team and group chairs about any new and relevant interests as they arise. We encourage you to speak to the chairs, email a team member or request a new DOI form when needed.

More information can be found here:

[nhmrc.gov.au/guidelinesforguidelines/plan/identifying-and-managing-conflicts-interest](https://nhmrc.gov.au/guidelinesforguidelines/plan/identifying-and-managing-conflicts-interest)

For any questions please contact:

### [LEAPP Guidelines Group](#)

Australian Living Evidence Consortium  
School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine  
Monash University  
Level 4, 553 St Kilda Road  
Melbourne, VIC 3004  
[admin.alec@monash.edu](mailto:admin.alec@monash.edu)

