

## **Editorial Standards – Western Plains App**

Respect for truth and the public's right to information are fundamental principles of journalism. Journalists search, disclose, record, question, entertain and comment. They inform citizens and animate democracy. They scrutinise power, but also exercise it, and should be responsible and accountable.

The Western Plains App aims for the highest editorial and ethical standards. Editorial employees and contributors should be open-minded, be fair and respect the truth and the rights of others. To this end, all need to be familiar with the policy detailed in the following pages, to follow the rules they contain, and to apply their underlying principles.

This policy applies to all Western Plains App employees. It applies to all editorial content on the Western Plains App and its associated website.

### **1. Accuracy**

**1.1** Facts must be reported impartially, accurately and with integrity.

**1.2** Clear distinction must be made between fact, conjecture and comment.

**1.3** Try always to tell all sides of the story in any kind of dispute.

**1.4** Do not knowingly withhold or suppress essential facts.

**1.5** Direct quotations should not be altered except to delete offensive language, protect against defamation, or to make minor changes for clarity.

**1.6** Photographs may be enhanced to improve reproduction but must not be altered in a way which could mislead readers. Care must be taken to ensure accuracy in captions. Image credit must be accurately included when required.

### **2. Mistakes**

**2.1** Serious factual errors should be admitted and corrected at the first opportunity, subject to legal advice where appropriate.

**2.2** Individuals or organisations that have been criticised in any part of the Western Plains App should be given a fair opportunity to respond.

**2.3** No employee or contributor is allowed to commit the company to an admission of error, correction, or apology without authorisation by the Publisher.

### **3. Misrepresentation**

**3.1** Do not use false names when representing the Western Plains App.

**3.2** Do not try to get information or photographs by deception.

### **4. Privacy**

**4.1** All individuals, including public figures, have a right to privacy. Journalists have no general right to report the private behaviour of public figures unless public interest issues arise. The right to privacy diminishes when the suitability of public figures to hold office or perform their duties is under scrutiny and such scrutiny is in the public interest. “Public interest” is defined for this and other clauses as involving a matter capable of affecting the people at large so they might be legitimately interested in, or concerned about, what is going on, or what may happen to them or to others.

**4.2** Unless it is in the public interest to do so, do not identify the family or friends of people accused of, or convicted of, a crime.

## **5. Confidential sources**

**5.1** The sources of information must be identified, wherever possible. When an informant insists on anonymity, verification of the information offered must be sought from other, preferably attributable, sources.

**5.2** A promise of confidentiality to a source must, of course, be honoured. However, journalists must be aware of the possible consequences.

## **6. Harassment**

**6.1** Do not harass or try to intimidate people when seeking information or photographs.

**6.2** Do not photograph people on their property without their consent unless the public interest in doing so is clear.

**6.3** If asked to leave private property, do so promptly.

**6.4** Do not persist in telephoning, pursuing, questioning, door-stopping or obstructing access after you have been asked by an authorised person to stop.

## **7. Discrimination**

**7.1** Do not make pejorative reference to a person’s race, nationality, colour, religion, marital status, sex, sexual preferences, age, or physical or mental capacity.

**7.2** No details of a person’s race, nationality, colour, religion, marital status, sex, sexual preferences, age, or physical or mental incapacity should be included in a report unless they are relevant.

## **8. Grief and distress**

**8.1** Reporters and photographers must always behave with sensitivity and courtesy toward the public, and in particular towards those involved in tragic events. No one should be put under pressure to be photographed or interviewed. Initial approaches might best be made through friends or relatives. We should always respect the wishes of the bereaved or grieving.

**8.2** Do not go into non-public areas of hospitals, welfare institutions, funeral parlours, churches, etc, without identifying yourself or without permission of the people affected or their intermediaries.

**8.3** Maintain sensitivity when recalling tragedy or crime. Anniversaries can be distressing reminders for survivors.

**8.4** Do not reveal graphic details of a suspected suicide. Avoid making judgments about the method of death which might suggest suicide is an acceptable means of resolving problems, particularly among young people. Where possible, include in such articles the contact number of support groups where people with problems may seek help.

## **9. Children**

**9.1** Extreme care should be taken that children are not prompted in interviews or offered inducements to cooperate.

**9.2** For legal reasons, children under the age of 18 must not normally be photographed or interviewed unless a parent or guardian is present and has given permission.

**9.3** Do not approach children in schools without the permission of a school authority.

## **10. Public Safety**

**10.1** Do not report recipes for drug manufacture, details of distribution or descriptions of the use of other harmful substances.

**10.2** Do not suggest that illegal drug use or the misuse of illegal drugs is an acceptable means of resolving problems.

**10.3** Do not report threats to use bombs or other weapons or threats of extortion unless public safety justifies it, or when the authorities request you to do so, or when it is necessary to explain severe and obvious public disruption caused by the authorities' reaction to such a threat.

**10.4** Do not report details of the manufacture or methods of using explosives, ammunition, firearms, fireworks, crossbows, booby traps or any potentially lethal device.

## **11. Payment for information**

**11.1** As a general principle, payment must not be made for interviews or information. In the event that a demand for payment or other form of reward or compensation is made, agreement must not be given without the Publisher's approval.

**11.2** Employees must not request or accept any money, travel, goods, discounts, entertainment or inducements of any kind outside the normal scope of business hospitality.

**11.3** Bribes are to be rejected promptly and the Publisher informed immediately.

## **12. Financial reporting**

**12.1** It is illegal for employees to make personal gain from financial information received in advance of general publication. It is illegal to pass this information to others.

**12.2** Journalists must not write about shares, securities or companies in which they, their family or friends, have a financial interest without disclosing that interest to the Publisher.

## **13. Plagiarism**

**13.1** Plagiarism is theft. It will not be tolerated.

## **14. Conflict of interest**

**14.1** A conflict of interest arises when personal interests or divided loyalties interfere with the ability to make sound, objective business decisions on behalf of the Western Plains App.

**14.2** The Publisher must be made aware as soon as possible if a reporter is assigned to a story that presents a possible or real conflict of interest.

**14.4** Contributors must comply with provisions relating to conflicts and must declare any real or potential conflict of interest arising from material submitted for publication. Any association which may have a bearing, or appear to have a bearing, on a contributor's view, must be identified with the published material.

**14.5** Employees should never allow gifts or hospitality to place them in a situation where their objective judgment or compliance with the law might be questioned.

## **15. Confidential Information**

**15.1** We are all responsible for protecting the company's confidential information and we cannot:

- Disclose that information to third parties without proper authorisation to do so;
- Use the information for personal gain; or
- Use the information in any manner that is inconsistent with the company's interests.

**15.2** Confidential information may include information or data about the company's planning, business strategy, projects, existing or potential customers, competitors or suppliers, financial results or operations, major contracts, commencement of major litigation, confidential personnel information and anything else which is not in the public domain. Improper disclosure or use could destroy the value of such information to the company and substantially weaken the company's competitive position.

**15.3** Access to confidential information must be limited to authorised persons with a need to know that particular information.

**15.4** Respect the confidences and sensitivities of your colleagues at all times.

## **16. Social Media**

**16.1** Social media tools such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are an increasingly important way for us to communicate with our subscribers in an interactive and personal way. It is crucial, however, that when someone identifies themselves as a company employee, discusses their work or solicits information for a story, they behave in a way that is consistent with our company values.

## **17. Other Obligations**

**17.1** Do not bring the reputation of the company or colleagues into disrepute.

**17.2** All employees are required to be neat and dressed appropriately for their particular job. We do not spell out strict guidelines, because dress may be a matter of cultural and religious influence as well as individual taste. We do expect, however, that staff will be groomed in a way which does not offend fellow employees, visitors to the office or any member of the public with whom they deal.

## **18. Breaches of policy**

**18.1** The Western Plains App must regularly publish advice to subscribers on how to lodge a complaint about the conduct of an editorial employee or the content of a story.

**18.2** Complaints involving alleged breaches of this policy will be investigated by the Publisher.

**18.3** Proven breaches will be dealt with in accordance with the company's disciplinary procedures.