

WHISTLEBLOWER POLICY

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Next Review Date:	September 2026
<p>This is a reviewed policy for Rural Press Pty Ltd and its related bodies corporate group of companies (together the “Company”), therefore replacing any prior versions.</p>	

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

1.1 Rural Press Pty Ltd trading as Australian Community Media and related bodies corporate* (**ACM**) are committed to high standards of conduct and to good corporate governance. ACM encourages individuals to report concerns of wrongdoing so that ACM can ensure high standards of conduct, as described in ACM’s Code of Conduct, are maintained.

1.2 You may feel apprehensive about raising your concerns due to fears of detrimental treatment or because your manager is the subject of your concerns. This policy sets out how you can report conduct (**Reportable Matters**) and confirms ACM’s commitment to protecting your identity and protecting you from suffering any detrimental treatment where you have made a report on conduct under this policy.

1.3 This policy sets out how Whistleblowers can raise Reportable Matters and how ACM will receive and handle Reportable Matters and protect Whistleblowers. ACM encourages those who are aware of wrongdoing to speak up. This policy is available to ACM employees and its officers via the company's intranet and to the public via ACM’s website at <https://www.acmadcentre.com.au/>

This policy does not apply to complaints concerning Personal Work-Related Grievances (which are set out in section 3.2 of this policy).

1.4 This policy and related procedures form part of the ACM’s risk management system and corporate governance framework

1.5 To receive the protections afforded to a Whistleblower, an individual must meet the criteria in sections 2 to 4 below.

2. WHO IS THE WHISTLEBLOWER?

An eligible **Whistleblower** is an individual who is, or has been:

- (a) an ACM officer, including a company secretary or director;
- (b) an ACM employee, including fixed-term or temporary employees, interns and secondees;
- (c) an ACM supplier of goods or services (whether paid or not);
- (d) an employee of an ACM supplier (whether paid or not), including contractors and consultants;
- (e) a relative of an individual referred to in (a) to (d) above; or
- (f) a dependent of an individual referred to in (a) to (d) above, or of such an individual’s spouse.

3. WHAT IS THE REPORTABLE MATTER?

3.1 A **Reportable Matter** is one in which a Whistleblower has reasonable grounds to suspect that:

- (a) ACM, an officer or employee has engaged in conduct that is an offence or contravention under any of the following legislation:
 - (i) the Corporations Act 2001;
 - (ii) the Australian Securities and Investments Commission Act 2001;
 - (iii) the Banking Act 1959;
 - (iv) the Financial Sector (Collection of Data) Act 2001;
 - (v) the Insurance Act 1973;
 - (vi) the Life Insurance Act 1995;
 - (vii) the National Consumer Credit Protection Act 2009;
 - (viii) the Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act 1993; or
 - (ix) or any other law of the Commonwealth in which an offence is punishable by imprisonment for a period of 12 months or more;
- (b) ACM, an officer or employee has engaged in conduct that represents a danger to the public or the financial system; or
- (c) there has been misconduct or an improper state of affairs or circumstances in relation to ACM, which may include illegal conduct (such as theft), fraud, money laundering, offering or accepting a bribe, or failure to comply with legal or regulatory requirements.

A Reportable Matter does not necessarily have to involve a breach of a particular law.

3.2 Reports that are solely related to Personal Work-Related Grievances are not covered by this policy and do not qualify for protection. These grievances will be handled in accordance with ACM's usual internal processes and should be reported to the People & Culture team or your manager. Examples of Personal Work-Related Grievances include:

- (a) an interpersonal conflict between the individual and another employee;
- (b) a decision relating to the engagement, transfer or promotion of the individual;
- (c) a decision relating to the terms and conditions of engagement of the individual; and
- (d) a decision to suspend or terminate the engagement of the individual, or otherwise discipline the individual.

A Personal Work-Related Grievance may still qualify for protection if it also includes information about a Reportable Matter outlined in section 3.1 above or if the Whistleblower suffers from or is threatened with Detriment as outlined in section 5.2 of this policy.

3.3 Reports of wrongdoing that do not fall under section 3.1 above do not qualify for whistleblower protection. However, even if a Reportable Matter turns out to be incorrect, an individual can still qualify for protection.

4. WHO IS THE RECIPIENT?

4.1 To receive the protections afforded to a Whistleblower, a Reportable Matter must be made directly to a Recipient. A Recipient is:

- (a) Stopline, a company external to ACM, which has been appointed to receive reports under this policy confidentially;
- (b) an officer of ACM, including a board director;
- (c) the ACM CEO or a person who makes, or participates in making, decisions that affect the whole, or a substantial part, of ACM's business;
- (d) the ACM Head of People and Culture;
- (e) an auditor or a member of the auditor's team conducting an audit of ACM;
- (f) an actuary of ACM;

- (g) the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA);
- (h) the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC); or
- (i) a prescribed Commonwealth authority.

4.2 If an individual makes a disclosure of information to a legal practitioner for the purpose of obtaining legal advice or legal representation in relation to the whistleblower protection legislation that individual will also qualify for protection under this policy. Public interest or emergency disclosures can also be made to a journalist or parliamentarian under certain circumstances and qualify for protection if previously made to ASIC, APRA or another prescribed Commonwealth body.

4.3 If a Reportable Matter is made to an individual or entity other than those referred to in sections 4.1 and 4.2 above, ACM may not be able to protect the Whistleblower.

5. SUPPORT AND PROTECTIONS AVAILABLE TO WHISTLEBLOWERS

Confidentiality of a Whistleblower's identity and protection from detrimental treatment

5.1 ACM is committed to supporting Whistleblowers in a number of ways, including, protecting the identity of the Whistleblower by redacting all personal information disclosed as part of a Reportable Matter, using gender neutral language to refer to a Whistleblower, limiting access to information to those directly involved in investigating a Reportable Matter and using Stopline where appropriate. For current ACM employees ACM may also:

- (a) offer a Whistleblower a leave of absence while a matter is investigated;
- (b) relocate the Whistleblower to a different work group or department or allow them to perform their duties from another location; and
- (c) provide independent professional counselling through ACM's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for any distress caused by the matters which lead to the reporting of a Reportable Matter.

5.2 ACM will also protect Whistleblowers from Detriment, which includes ensuring that a Whistleblower is not subject to any of the following:

- (a) dismissal from his or her employment;
- (b) injury in relation to his or her employment;
- (c) alteration of his or her position or duties to his or her disadvantage;
- (d) discrimination between other employees;
- (e) harassment or intimidation;
- (f) harm or injury, including psychological harm;
- (g) damage to his or her property, reputation, business or financial position; and
- (h) any other damage to the Whistleblower.

5.3 Detriment does not include moving a Whistleblower to another work group or department to protect them or managing a Whistleblower's work performance in accordance with ACM's internal processes.

5.4 The following actions may constitute criminal and/or civil offences resulting in penalties and/or imprisonment:

- (a) if a Recipient (other than ASIC, APRA or a legal practitioner) discloses the identity of a Whistleblower, or any information that is likely to lead to the identification of a Whistleblower, without the Whistleblower's consent; and
- (b) for a person to threaten or cause Detriment to a Whistleblower because they reported or propose to report a Reportable Matter.

A Whistleblower may seek compensation or other remedies if they suffer loss, damage or injury because

they report a Reportable Matter and ACM failed to take reasonable precautions and exercise due diligence to prevent the Detriment.

Legal immunity

5.5 A Whistleblower will be protected from civil, criminal or administrative liability (including disciplinary action by ACM) when reporting a Reportable Matter, excluding any misconduct an individual may have engaged in. In addition, ACM will not enforce a contractual or other remedy, or exercise a contractual or other right, against a Whistleblower on the basis of a Reportable Matter.

6. HOW TO REPORT A REPORTABLE MATTER

6.1 ACM encourages Whistleblowers to report a Reportable Matter directly to a Recipient by phone, email or in person. Individuals may also report a Reportable Matter at any time, including outside of business hours to Stopleveline by:

- Stopleveline Portal: <https://austcommunitymedia.stoplevelinereport.com/>
- Phone – 1300 30 45 50
- Email – austcommunitymedia@stopleveline.com.au
- Post – Australian Community Media c/o Stopleveline, PO Box 403, Diamond Creek, VIC 3089, Australia
- Search for Stopleveline in the iTunes App Store or Google Play to download the free app.

6.2 A Reportable Matter will be treated confidentially and securely and if requested, will be anonymous. If a Reportable Matter is made anonymously it will still be protected. An individual may choose to remain anonymous or use a pseudonym while making a report, over the course of any investigation and after an investigation is finalised. An individual may also refuse to answer questions they feel could reveal their identity. However, although a Whistleblower is not required to disclose their identity, it may make it more difficult for ACM to undertake an investigation or address the conduct if the Whistleblower remains anonymous. ACM encourages a Whistleblower who wishes to remain anonymous to maintain ongoing two-way communication with ACM so it can ask follow-up questions or provide feedback.

7. HOW ACM WILL HANDLE AND INVESTIGATE REPORTABLE MATTERS

7.1 ACM will assess all Reportable Matters reported under this policy as soon as practicable after the matter has been reported and determine whether it qualifies for protection. If ACM thinks it is necessary, it may engage an external investigator or expert to conduct a formal investigation. All investigations will be conducted in a fair, independent and timely manner.

7.2 Where appropriate (and if the identity of the Whistleblower is known), ACM will provide regular updates to the Whistleblower regarding the investigation's progress and/or outcome, subject to considerations of confidentiality and the privacy of any persons mentioned in the Reportable Matter. The investigation process and the frequency of updates may vary depending on the nature of the Reportable Matter.

7.3 The findings from an investigation will be documented and reported in writing and provided to those responsible for oversight of this policy while preserving confidentiality. This documentation and reporting of any findings will depend on the nature of the Reportable Matter and there may be circumstances where it may not be appropriate to provide details of the outcome to the Whistleblower.

7.4 Without a Whistleblower's consent, ACM cannot disclose information that is likely to lead to the Whistleblower's identity as part of an investigation unless:

- (a) the information does not include the Whistleblower's identity;
- (b) ACM removes the information relating to the Whistleblower's identity or other information likely to lead to their identification; and
- (c) it is reasonably necessary for investigating the Reportable Matter.

7.5 It may be necessary for ACM to report the Reportable Matter to the police or a statutory body or government department.

8. Review of this policy

ACM will monitor, review, and update this policy and any associated processes and procedures to ensure it meets its objectives.

9. FURTHER INFORMATION

If an individual wants to obtain additional information before reporting a Reportable Matter under this policy, understand the criteria for making a public interest or an emergency disclosure, seek compensation or other remedies after reporting a Reportable Matter, or believe they have suffered a Detriment, they should seek independent legal advice or contact ASIC, APRA or the ATO.

If an individual wishes to complain about a breach of confidentiality they should contact ACM's CEO or ASIC, APRA or the ATO.

Appendix A details the ACM Group companies covered by this policy.



Tony Kendall
Managing Director

Appendix A:

ACM GROUP COMPANIES COVERED BY THIS POLICY

PART A - COMPANY

RURAL PRESS PTY LIMITED

PART B - WHOLLY OWNED SUBSIDIARIES

RURAL PRESS PRINTING PTY LIMITED
RURAL PRESS PRINTING (VICTORIA) PTY LIMITED
REGIONAL PUBLISHERS PTY LTD
QUEENSLAND COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS PTY. LTD.
REGIONAL PUBLISHERS (WESTERN VICTORIA) PTY. LIMITED
RURAL PRESS REGIONAL MEDIA (W.A.) PTY LIMITED
MOUNTAIN PRESS PTY LTD
REGIONAL PRINTERS PTY LIMITED
REGIONAL PUBLISHERS (VICTORIA) PTY. LIMITED
ACM REGIONAL MEDIA (TASMANIA) PTY LIMITED
THE FEDERAL CAPITAL PRESS OF AUSTRALIA PTY. LIMITED
S.A. REGIONAL MEDIA PTY. LIMITED
ACM REGIONAL PRINTERS PTY LIMITED
PORT STEPHENS PUBLISHERS PTY LTD
RURAL PRESS QUEENSLAND PTY. LTD.
AGRICULTURAL PUBLISHERS PTY. LIMITED
STOCK JOURNAL PUBLISHERS PTY. LTD.
WESTERN AUSTRALIAN PRIMARY INDUSTRY PRESS PTY LTD
NEWCASTLE NEWSPAPERS PTY LTD
ACM COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS PTY. LIMITED
ILLAWARRA NEWSPAPER HOLDINGS PTY LTD
COUNTRYCARS.COM.AU PTY LTD
ACM PRINT COMPANY PTY LTD
A.C.N. 101 806 302 PTY LIMITED

PART C - NON-GROUP COMPANIES

CREATIVE HOUSE PUBLICATIONS PTY LTD