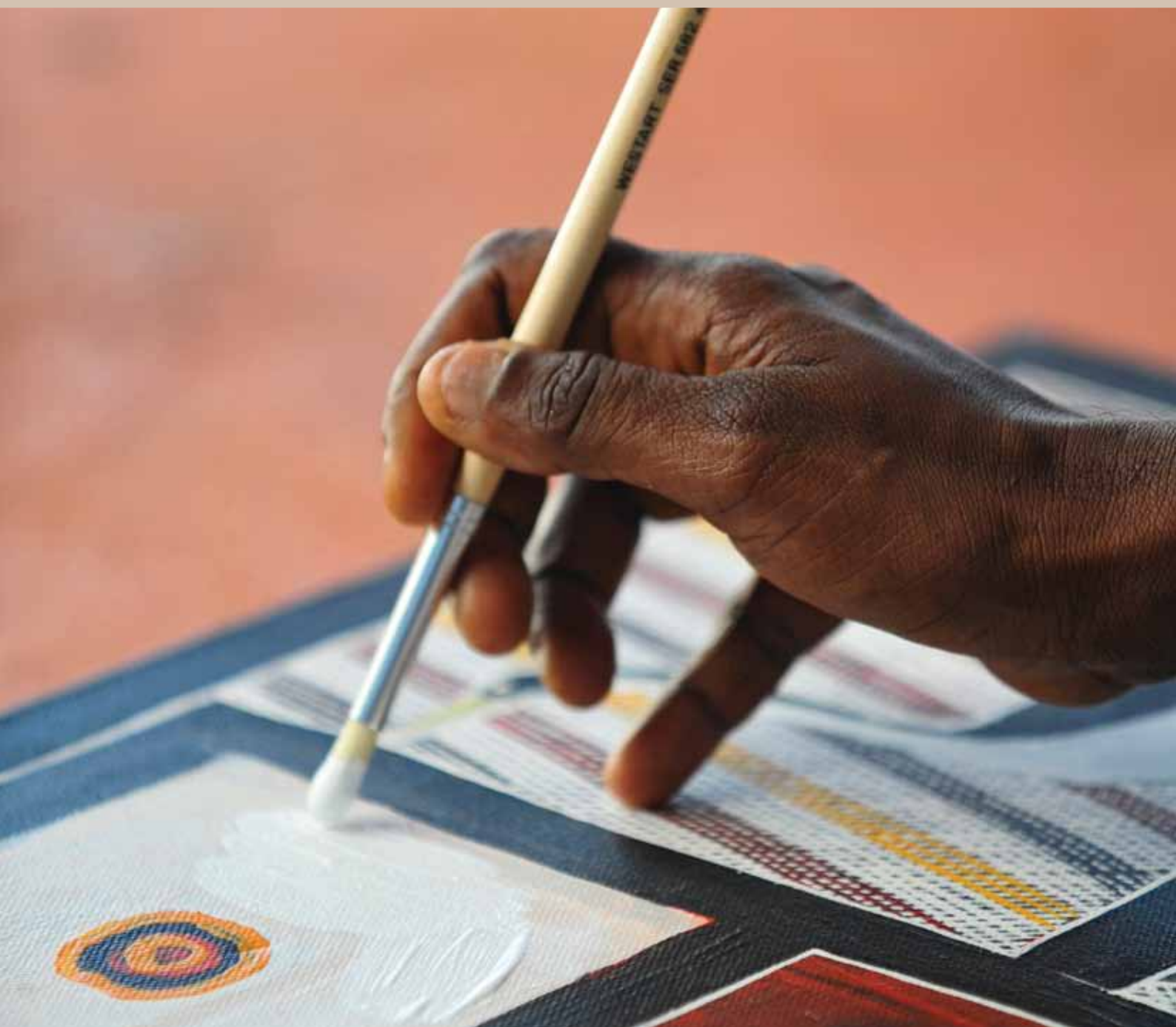




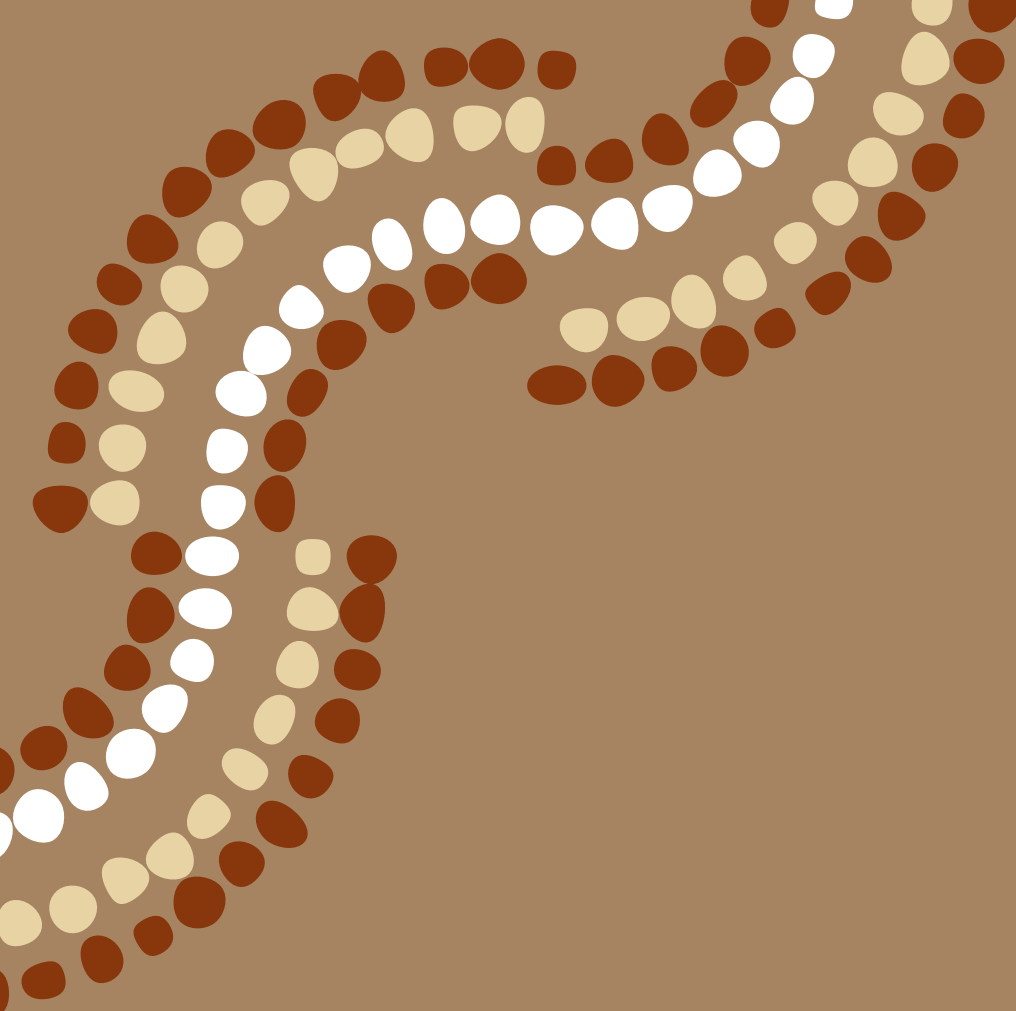
RAHC
REMOTE AREA HEALTH CORPS

Code of Conduct



As adopted June 2010

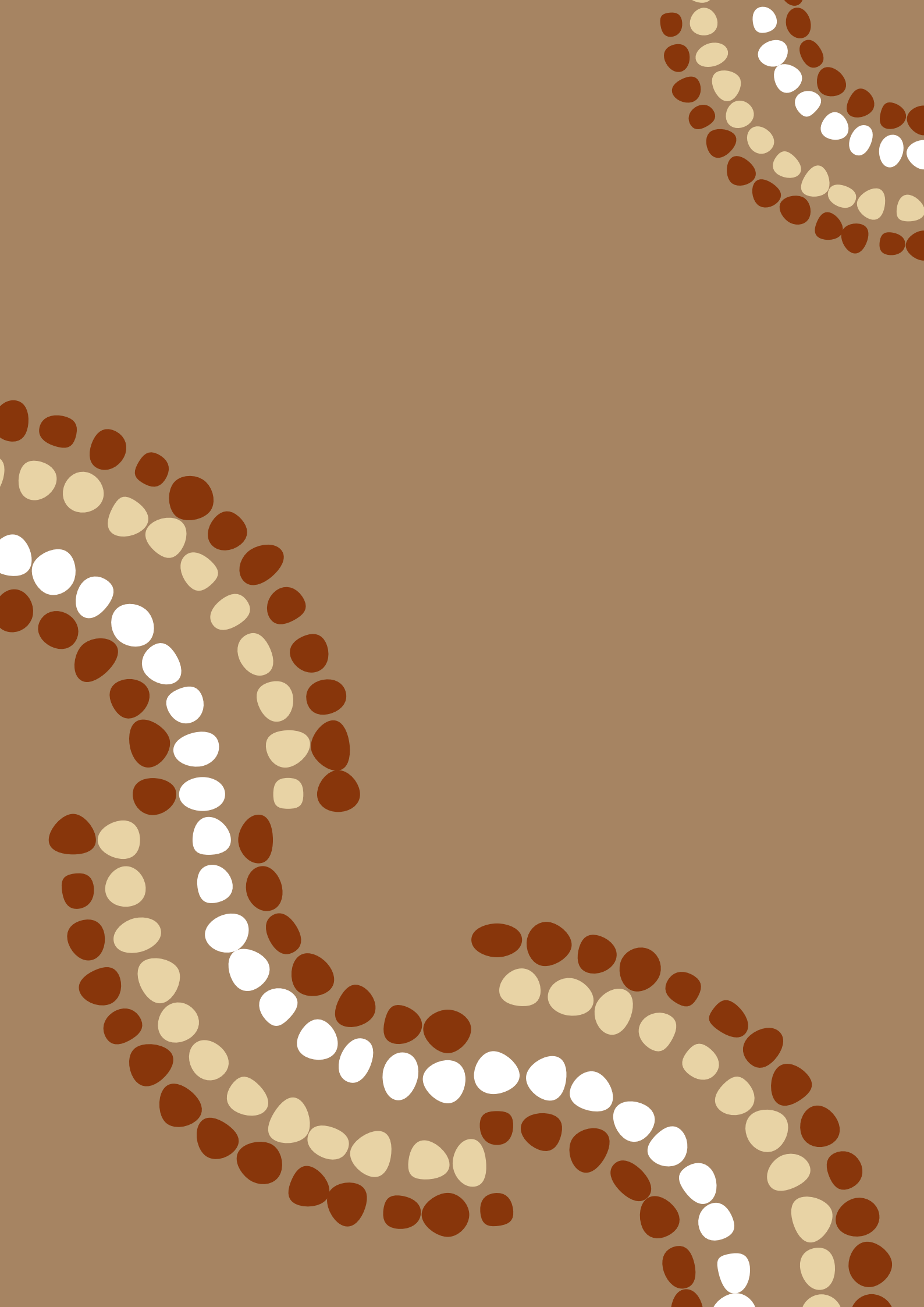
Funded by the Australian Government



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1. Introduction

The Remote Area Health Corps (RAHC) has been established to provide health professionals for expanded and strengthened primary health services in the Northern Territory (NT). RAHC aims to recruit and support health professionals in short-term, paid placements that arise from the specific requests of Aboriginal Medical Services (AMS) and the NT Department of Health (NT DoH). Health professionals, predominantly urban-based, will work as part of a small team and alongside the long-term staff of the health service. These are challenging environments for those new to remote work and RAHC aims to support health professionals and the service to achieve the maximum value from the placement.

All RAHC personnel are expected to work in accordance with the principles and expectations of this Code of Conduct.

This Code of Conduct is broadly consistent with those that most health professionals would use in any workplace but also recognises the unique and challenging environments in which RAHC professionals will work. The code of conduct applies to all personnel associated with RAHC – employee or contractor – and aims to provide clear guidance on the standards that RAHC has for all personnel representing the organisation.

We ask you to read this document carefully and to acknowledge your acceptance of the Code by signing the last page.

We invite you to use your time in doing this as a basis for reviewing your own expectations and ambitions for your time with RAHC. We expect that the principles and guidelines outlined in this Code should support you to achieve the most from this experience.

At RAHC we believe that the opportunity to provide service and work with Australia's Indigenous people is a great privilege. We wish you well and stand ready to support you in your work so as to ensure this opportunity delivers the best possible health outcomes for those we seek to support and serve.



Lisa Studdert
General Manager

2. Overview

RAHC requires that the delivery of all health services and personal and professional interactions are conducted:

- legally
- to the highest ethical standards
- with respect for all people
- with honesty
- with integrity.

This Code of Conduct is based on these principles.

Working Environment

RAHC aims to support and be part of an environment that values ethical behaviour, ongoing improvement and employee participation in that process. We welcome your feedback and input on this code of conduct and insights you obtain from particular situations that you may experience.

In particular, individuals working for RAHC may work in communities where there is, or has been, some instability. Accordingly, RAHC does not want any personnel placing themselves in a situation which may instigate tension or violence or which may threaten the safety or security of any RAHC personnel, or indeed any other community member.

RAHC aims to deal with any adverse situations as soon as possible and seeks to work with all parties to achieve appropriate outcomes.

The Code of Conduct assumes that any local laws are relevant and apply to your place of work and your own conduct.

Please contact a RAHC staff member if you are uncertain how to act or have any concerns.

Ethical Behaviours

Ethics are the principles by which our actions are judged to be good, bad, right or wrong. It is not only a matter of obeying the law, or adhering to rules, regulations or policies. Ethics go beyond the law to include how we make decisions as to what is the right thing to do.

In deciding whether a particular action is ethical you are asked to consider:

- Is the action you are going to undertake consistent with your own personal standards of right or wrong?
- Is your action going to be considered by others as being ethical and morally correct?
- Will your action place you and/or others in a compromising position or endanger the safety of others?
- Is the action consistent with your professional group's standards of ethical practice?
- How easily could you justify your actions if you were called upon to do so?
- Are you prepared for your actions to be made public and placed under review?

Actions which are considered unethical include but are not limited to, use of obscene language, dress which is considered inappropriate to the environment and culture in which you work, drug or alcohol abuse, engaging in relations with a colleague that hinders either one's ability to perform their role, or engaging in inappropriate relations with members of the local community.

All RAHC representatives must respect the values and beliefs of the environment in which they work. All personnel should behave in a manner that is considered ethical and law abiding.

If the General Manager or their delegated representative deems your actions to be unethical or inappropriate you will face disciplinary action up to and including removal from the community where you are working and termination of the placement.



Frequently Asked Questions

Why does RAHC have a Code of Conduct?

A Code of Conduct sets standards and provides information to assist in the understanding of the ethical values and standards of behaviour that apply in daily professional activities.

These standards are fundamental to building a partnership of trust between RAHC, the community and a range of stakeholders across health-service and industry related partners and Government.

These standards must be adhered to by all RAHC employees.

Who does the Code apply to?

This Code applies to all RAHC staff, contracted health professionals, other contractors, consultants and anyone who exercises power, represents and/or controls resources for, or on behalf of, RAHC.

What happens if the Code is not followed?

If the Code is not followed, performance feedback will take place with the outcomes ranging from counselling to termination, depending on the severity of the breach.

What do I do if I'm not sure?

We encourage you to discuss any aspect of the Code that you are not sure of with a RAHC staff member. Where there are uncertainties related to health care delivery, you should discuss these with the health centre or program manager in the first instance.

What do I do if I see someone else not following the Code?

If you believe someone you work with is not following the Code, we ask you to discuss the situation with either the person themselves, your supervisor at the centre or a RAHC staff member. The spirit of the Code will enable you to discuss these issues without fear or risk of retribution.

3. Code of conduct

Confidentiality

The obligations of confidentiality set out in this Code of Conduct apply to you as an employee or contractor of RAHC, and extend indefinitely beyond the end of your employment with RAHC.

- You will not, either during or after your employment with RAHC, use or disclose confidential information or otherwise seek to exploit or elicit confidential information without the prior written consent of RAHC. You agree to prevent the use or disclosure of confidential information unless the information lawfully comes into the public domain through no fault of your own, or you are required to disclose the information by RAHC or by law.
 - Confidential Information includes all oral, written, or conceptual information that comes from RAHC or its clients, such as records, documents, accounts, plans, designs, creative concepts specifications, correspondence, letters and papers of every description **as well as clinical information that in any way can identify the individual or community where you work.** It also includes electronically recorded data, all copies or extracts relating to the affairs, transactions or business of RAHC or any of its clients and the centres in which you work or which may come into your possession during your employment with RAHC.
- You will respect the privacy of colleagues, clients and community members and refrain from unnecessary and gratuitous dialogue on the behaviours or circumstances of others. This applies to the place of work, the local community and/or other organisations and networks.
- You acknowledge that, due to the nature of the duties and responsibilities of your employment with RAHC, you have access to knowledge and documents that will be confidential and agree to preserve the private and confidential nature of such information with vigilance and diligence.
- You will immediately notify RAHC of any use or disclosure by you of confidential information under the terms of this Code of Conduct or use by others that you become aware of.
- You will keep RAHC fully and effectually indemnified in relation to all actions, claims and demands of whatever nature arising out of a breach of your obligations of confidence.
- You will not disclose to any external parties inappropriate information regarding the decisions or practices of the health centre or other setting in which you work. If you are uncertain about actions or comments you should consult a RAHC staff member.
- You should disclose to RAHC any academic or research studies you are undertaking, or plan to undertake, that involve any data gathered during, or as a result of, your placement. Specific proposals should be discussed with, and cleared by, RAHC, the relevant health centre manager and community leaders, as well as a nationally-recognised research ethics review panel.

Disclosure of Information

You may receive information or provide information to RAHC that is necessary for the organisation's interests as long as it does not breach any laws, regulations or RAHC policies. Further disclosure of that information external to RAHC should only be made with the specific authorisation of RAHC and/or the information source. Also refer to section on Confidentiality.

If you are unsure about whether it is appropriate to disclose information, seek the permission of your supervisor at the centre or program. There may be different policies for dealing with different groups, such as the public, government officials, consultants and the media. Responsibility for ensuring that any disclosure is appropriate remains with the relevant supervisor at the community level or, in the case this is not applicable, with the RAHC General Manager.

Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest exists where loyalties are divided. You have a potential conflict of interest if, in the course of your work, any decision you make provides any improper gain or benefit to yourself or a third party.

Any situation potentially involving direct or indirect conflict of interest should be avoided unless consent is given in writing by the RAHC General Manager.

It is difficult to formulate an all-embracing set of guidelines regarding potential conflicts of interest. Specific questions regarding situations not clearly covered must be determined on a case by case basis. The principles to consider are:

- your capacity to influence dealings that RAHC or the health service/centre may have with a third party;
- the improper personal benefit that may flow to you or a relative, friend or other third party through the exercise of that influence; and
- whether the activity is fraudulent, corrupt or is otherwise an irregular transaction.

Where you believe you may have a conflict of interest or a potential conflict of interest, you must notify your supervisor at the community level and the RAHC General Manager.

In specific circumstances RAHC may ask for a declaration of any actual or potential conflicts of interest from you as it may relate to a specific activity you are working on. This declaration will be kept on your RAHC personnel file until we are notified by you that the association with the potential conflict no longer exists.

Extreme care should be taken to ensure that active participation in any outside business does not create a potential conflict of interest, whether or not that involvement is on a part-time or freelance basis, and/or as a supplier or client.



If you are an employee or contractor, and propose to engage in outside business activities, you should assess those activities in terms of the following guidelines to determine whether a conflict exists with your RAHC commitments:

- Where your participation in outside business activities interferes with your ability to satisfactorily perform assigned work a conflict of interest will exist.
- Where you actively participate in business activity for an outside company you may not render service to the RAHC on that company's behalf.

Discrimination

RAHC is committed to providing all employees with equal opportunity. RAHC employees/contractors will abide by this policy and any policy that exists at the community, centre or other setting in which they are working.

Discrimination or harassment based on race, colour, religion, gender, age, sexuality, marital status, disability or other factors unrelated to legitimate professional or business interests will not be tolerated.

You are entitled to your personal preferences in private or political matters. No pressure will be placed on anyone to influence those preferences and no approval or disapproval should be shown by anyone in their RAHC role of anybody's private or political preferences or activities.

Property and Equipment

Health centre or program property and equipment, including goods, money or intellectual property must only be used for the purpose of enabling you to perform your duties.

On assignment, you may have access to property and equipment in the form of, but not limited to, phones, computers, email,

internet and voicemail that are provided to enhance your ability to perform your services/duties. This equipment is not be used for personal gain or any other purpose including, but not limited to:

- copying of computer software programs, regardless of whether or not the programs are protected by copyright
- falsification or improper use of corporate cards, expense accounts, petty cash funds or other similar accounts.

An employee found to be utilising equipment for personal use or for purposes that are considered unreasonable or illegal will face disciplinary action up to and including removal from the community where you are working and termination of the placement.

Property and equipment belonging to the health centre, program or RAHC is not to be removed from the premises without written authorisation. If removal is necessary, then approval must be obtained from the health centre manager (or RAHC management).

If you are in control of any RAHC or health centre property and equipment, particularly cash or other valuables, you are personally accountable for them. If an item is lost, stolen or misplaced while under your control, it must be reported to the relevant manager as soon as possible.

We ask all personnel to take particular care with items such as mobile or satellite phones which, for example, should not be left in a visible position within an unoccupied vehicle.

You will be held liable for the replacement cost of lost equipment items should they be lost through careless or irresponsible actions.

RAHC health professionals are responsible for leaving the accommodation they occupy in a reasonable condition and as clean as practicably possible.

3. Code of conduct (continued)

Personal Conduct

Your personal conduct should be fully consistent with this Code of Conduct. You should deal fairly and honestly with RAHC staff, workplace colleagues, community members or other stakeholders you come into contact with during your engagement under RAHC.

All contacts should be handled professionally and courteously.

You should report to work as required and when an absence is unavoidable, promptly notify the appropriate person of the reason.

Any conduct that is intimidating or offensive to RAHC or health centre clients, colleagues, suppliers, contractors, the public or other employees will not be tolerated.

You should exercise discretion in all actions and consideration for the effective working of a small team in a small community. You should refrain from making gratuitous remarks and airing personal opinions about the personal and professional conduct of colleagues, community members, community governance structures and other professional or community-based networks or structures.

Where you have concerns about the actions of others that you believe affect the conduct of your work or the proper operations of the workplace in terms of proper care delivery, you should raise these in a professional manner with the relevant health centre manager or community leader. If you are uncertain how to act then you should consult a RAHC staff member.

RAHC clients, health centre managers or other stakeholders are entitled to raise concerns about individual actions that are unnecessarily disruptive or unprofessional in the respective workplace or community setting. These concerns will be dealt with in a transparent and fair way, with all parties consulted and counselled about a course of action that will likely lead to the best outcome for the RAHC employee/contractor, clients and community members.

All complaints or grievances will be managed through the relevant procedures and systems. In the first instance these should be the procedures of the health centre or program in which you are working. Where this is not possible, you may use the RAHC incident and/or complaint reporting procedures.

Working Environment

You are entitled to a safe, healthy and productive working environment.

Alcohol and Drugs

The abuse of prescription drugs and/or alcohol or the use or possession of illicit drugs is not acceptable.

The possession of alcohol that violates local laws is unacceptable.

The consumption of alcohol or other substances that affect your ability to perform your role, or affect the ability of other employees to perform their roles, or that compromise workplace safety, is unacceptable.

Personnel on duty or on call should not be under the influence of, or suffering the effects of, drug or alcohol consumption.

Where the use of prescription drugs affects your ability to perform your role, you must discuss this with the centre or program manager and/or RAHC management as appropriate. You will not be required to reveal the details of your prescription drug use, only the potential impact on your professional duties. You may discuss the details of your condition confidentially with the RAHC Medical Director prior to revealing your circumstances to RAHC or other management, provided this does not unreasonably delay your advice to relevant managers. The relevant manager may, at his/her discretion, request that you step down from duties until such time as you are not under the influence of such drugs.

Violent or Aggressive Behaviour and Bullying

RAHC will not tolerate violence in the workplace, threats of violence or bullying against any member of a workplace team, stakeholder or a patient/client.

If any RAHC employee believes that their personal safety is at imminent risk they have the right to withdraw from an area.

Personnel should report all incidents of violent or aggressive behaviour to the centre or program and a RAHC staff member.

Should a RAHC employee threaten violence or aggression, or engage in bullying behaviour, they will be disciplined and/or removed from the community where they are working and have their placement terminated.

Internet and Email Use

Internet Use: When using the internet in a centre or other official premises you should:

- not download, view or distribute material which could be considered offensive or illegal, such as pornographic or racist material;
- take care not to infringe copyright when downloading material, or forwarding it to others;
- not attempt to gain unauthorised access to information – otherwise known as hacking;
- not use, or allow someone else to use, any computer system or software to defraud or obtain money or service of value by false pretences, promises or representations;
- not order goods or services for personal use, or enter into any other personal contract, via the internet unless authorised to do so (RAHC will not accept liability for any such contract formed);
- not destroy, alter or prevent access to, or otherwise interfere with information on a computer, unless authorised to do so; and
- not download large files which will slow the system unless permitted to do so for work purposes.

Email Use: All personnel have a responsibility to ensure the same courtesy and consideration applies to writing and sending emails as would apply to writing a memo or letter. When writing emails from a community and/or centre or other official computer, you should not:

- send obscene, offensive or damaging material;
- send threatening material, or material intended to frighten or harass;
- send defamatory material;
- send emails to friends, family or colleagues that have culturally offensive comments, or opinions regarding the community, centre or program management where you are working;
- infringe copyright;
- send unsolicited advertising or similar activities; and/or
- send chain emails.

Commitment to Work

All RAHC employees are required at all times to adhere to the duty hours and on-call commitments **specified by the health centre or program** in which they are appointed to work.

Duty Hours

- All personnel are required to be present at the health facility for the specified rostered hours. The rostered hours will vary depending upon the role an individual is engaged to perform. A roster should be provided upon arrival at the Health Centre.
- While on assignment you report to the centre or program manager. It is at the manager's discretion to approve an absence from the facility at a specified rostered time.

On Call

- Personnel on call must be contactable at all times and must be able to respond to an emergency call-out within the time frames specified.
- If an individual on call receives a call-out they must be present at the health facility within the time frames specified by the health centre manager unless doing so presents an unreasonable risk of personal injury.

Clinical or Other Incidents

Any RAHC employee or contractor involved in an incident of any kind should follow the action and reporting procedures set out by the centre or program under which you are working. If the health service manager is unable to provide appropriate guidance, the employee should refer to alternate sources such as the Department of Health (DoH) Atlas or contact a RAHC staff member for advice. A RAHC staff member must also be notified at the earliest possible time, and in situations involving possible insurance claims, no more than 48 hours from the time of the incident. All reports forwarded to the RAHC will be managed in accordance to the RAHC Privacy Policy.

Leaving RAHC

On finishing a placement with the RAHC you must return any RAHC or health centre property and equipment and items containing business information. This includes intellectual property that may have been created while working with or for the RAHC.



4. Declaration of Acceptance

I, _____, hereby declare that I have read, understood and will adhere to the RAHC Code of Conduct at all times.

Signature _____ Date _____

I, _____, have witnessed this declaration.

Signature _____ Date _____

Please complete and sign this page, tear it out of the booklet and return it to RAHC via:

Mail 

Remote Area Health Corps
Reply Paid 83081
DEAKIN ACT 2600

(Postage paid address – no stamp required)

OR

Email 

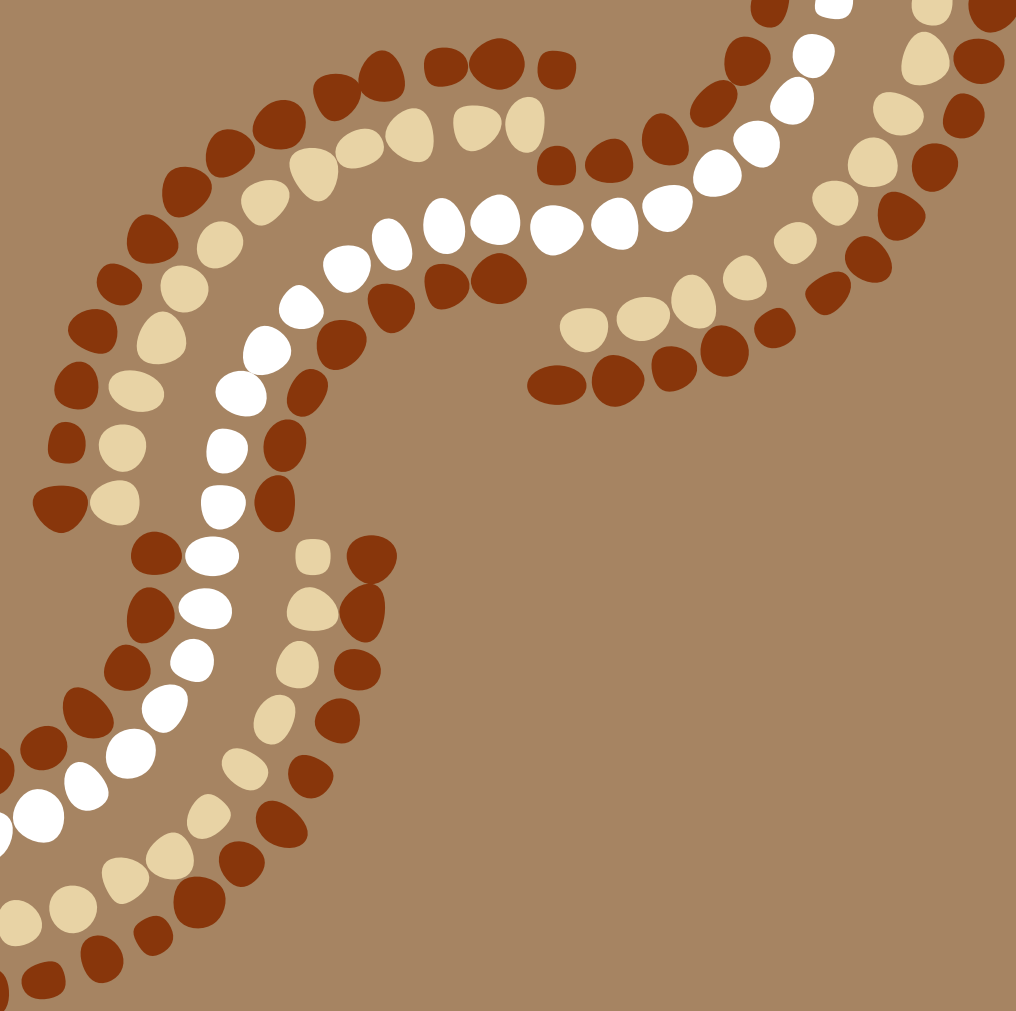
enquiries@rahc.com.au

OR

Fax 

(02) 6203 9598





For more information please
call 1300 MY RAHC
or visit rahc.com.au