



Central Highlands Association of Neighbourhood Houses

Sector Relationships Policy

Document Control

Policy Title:	Sector Relationships		
Policy Number:	MAN010	Version Number:	V1
Date Ratified:	Oct 28, 2025	Review Date:	Oct 2028

Relevant standards, legislation and other documents:

- Victorian Human Rights Charter
- OHS Psychosocial Hazards Legislation

Definitions: (define key terms)	
CHANH	Central Highlands Association of Neighbourhood Houses
DFFH	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
Members	Neighbourhood Houses (represented by managers and committees of management) funded by DFFH within the Central Highlands area
Board	Board of Governance, elected individuals responsible for the governance of the organisation
Staff	Any person employed by CHANH or volunteering at CHANH
Executive Team	CHANH President, Treasurer and Secretary

Our commitment to positive sector relationships

Central Highlands Association of Neighbourhood Houses

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CHANH is committed to fostering a strong, ethical, and collaborative network that supports the sustainability and effectiveness of Neighbourhood Houses across the region. This policy affirms CHANH's role as a connector, capacity-builder, and advocate for best practice in community engagement, sector development, and stakeholder collaboration.

In all its relationships—with member organisations, key stakeholders, and community members—CHANH upholds the principles of respect, autonomy, transparency, and inclusion. CHANH does not assume operational or legal responsibility for member organisations but provides support that strengthens their capacity to lead and serve their communities effectively.

This policy also recognises the value of lived experience in shaping meaningful, responsive services. CHANH is committed to promoting co-design, ethical engagement, and psychosocial safety in all aspects of its work.

Through this policy, CHANH ensures that its operations are guided by clear boundaries, shared values, and a commitment to the collective wellbeing and success of the neighbourhood house sector.

Definitions

Member Organisation: A Neighbourhood House affiliated with CHANH and receives support through the network.

Key Stakeholder: Any external organisation or body with a vested interest in the work of CHANH or its members, including but not limited to NHVic, DFFH, and local government authorities.

Boundary: A professional limit that defines the appropriate roles, responsibilities, and behaviours of CHANH staff and representatives in relation to members, stakeholders, and community members.

Psychosocial Safety: The protection of mental, emotional, and social wellbeing in the workplace, particularly in environments that may be high-stress, hostile, or emotionally demanding.

Risk Transfer: The shifting of responsibility or liability from one party to another, which CHANH avoids unless explicitly agreed upon and documented.

Purpose

This policy defines the principles and responsibilities that guide CHANH's relationships with member organisations, stakeholders, and community members.

Owner

This policy is the responsibility of the Board.

Application

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, contractors, and members of CHANH.

Policy Principles

In general, CHANH prioritises sector relationships and influence in order of members, key stakeholder and other networks, except where funding requirements require otherwise.

1. Member Relationships

CHANH is committed to strengthening and supporting its member organisations by fostering capacity building, sharing valuable information, and contributing to the development of the broader sector. This is central to CHANH Purpose, Culture and Values, and is implemented via Strategies and Annual Planning,

CHANH also plays a valuable role in providing assistance and advice to houses through transitional periods, such as changes to staff, direction or governance approaches.

CHANH avoids assuming operational or legal responsibility for the activities of its members, unless specifically delegated and/or contracted.

CHANH upholds and respects the autonomy of member organisations, recognizing and supporting their unique governance structures and decision-making processes.

2. Stakeholder Relationships

CHANH works in alignment with the strategic objectives of key stakeholders, including Neighbourhood Houses Victoria (NHVic), the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH), and local government partners. In doing so, CHANH is committed to avoiding duplication and ensuring the efficient use of resources by fostering collaboration and supporting shared initiatives.

While CHANH can play a valuable role in facilitating connections between member organisations and stakeholders, it does not act as a representative unless formally authorised by all affected members.

3. Network Relationships

CHANH values the innovation, approach and diversity of the 15 other neighbourhood house networks across Victoria.

CHANH recognises that the delivery of network activities is governed locally by each network, according to their needs and interpretation of the NHCP guidelines. Activities, resources and strategies developed by CHANH can be freely shared with other networks to benefit the sector.

Where possible, CHANH values the opportunity to work in partnership on initiatives which benefit members and the sector.

CHANH benefits from understanding the activities, resources and strategies used by other networks, and can implement initiatives developed elsewhere where they meet the needs of CHANH members. CHANH is not required to adopt initiatives developed elsewhere unless directed by members or sector stakeholders (eg DFFH).

Procedures

1. Support for Members

- CHANH provides general guidance, capacity-building support, and referrals to appropriate services.
- Ensure CHANH staff are trained in risk awareness, boundary setting, and psychosocial safety.
- Respond to member request for support and advice.
- Operate strictly within their professional skillset and role description.
- Avoid offering HR, legal or financial advice unless qualified, insured and authorized to do so.
- Refrain from making commitments or decisions on behalf of member organisations.
- Report any situation where boundaries may have been or are at risk of being overstepped.
- Prioritise personal safety and psychosocial wellbeing, especially in potentially hostile or high-stress environments.
 - Staff are not required to engage with hostile member organisations and may terminate provision of support in writing where the circumstances pose a threat to staff wellbeing and safety.
 - Staff working in challenging environments will have access to debriefing, supervision, and mental health support.
- Maintain Risk and Liability Management:
 - CHANH does not assume liability for member organisation operations.
 - Any engagement involving risk transfer must be formalised and approved by the Board.
 - Staff must not act in ways that could expose CHANH to unintended legal or reputational risk.

- CHANH will maintain professional indemnity and public liability insurance, but this does not cover unauthorised actions by staff.

2. Stakeholder Relationships

- CHANH maintains collaborative relationships with NHVic, DFFH, and local government.
- CHANH directs its operations to be flexible to the needs of members and the capacity and direction of key stakeholders.
- CHANH may share general sector information and facilitate connections but will not intervene in member-stakeholder relationships without consent.
- Where appropriate, the Network will support member organisations in navigating stakeholder concerns, while maintaining neutrality and respect for all parties involved.

3. Network Relationships

- CHANH maintains mutually respectful relationships with other neighbourhood house networks.
- CHANH contributes to network discussions and development where appropriate.
- Where opportunities align, CHANH may enter into shared project or working relationships to benefit members.
- CHANH is not required to adopt any practices developed in other networks, unless there is clear benefit for members.

Responsibilities

Board

- Implement and monitor this policy
- Ensure compliance with privacy and cybersecurity obligations

Members

- Be informed of this policy
- Participate in reviews as required

Staff

- Implement this policy as part of their role
- Participate in training and policy reviews

Breach of Policy

A breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or membership.

Related Policies and Procedures

- Safe Workplace Policy
- Feedback, Compliments and Complaints Policy
- Incident Management Policy