

<b>HAWKE'S BAY DISTRICT HEALTH BOARD</b>	<b>Manual:</b>	Operational Policy Manual
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<b>Election Protocols Policy - HBDHB Staff</b>	<b>Approved:</b>	Chief Executive Officer
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## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is three-fold:

- To provide guidance and support to staff who wish to stand for membership of Hawke's Bay District Health Board (HBDHB).
- To provide guidance to staff on the standard of behaviour required of them regarding the election of DHB Boards.
- To ensure HBDHB maintains the confidence of its communities and owners by acting professionally and impartially during the DHB Board election process.

## SCOPE

This applies to all employees, include contracted or fixed term employees of HBDHB.

Employees shall be deemed to be representing the organisation when they are writing as a member of staff; are wearing the organisation's uniform and/or identification card; or can be associated with the organisation, e.g. are using a Board vehicle, presenting at meetings or conferences in their capacity as an HBHDB staff member.

## OUT OF SCOPE

HBDHB Board, Advisory Committee or any other associated committee or council member. Members of these groups have policies, guidelines, Terms of Reference and codes of conduct and ethics specific to their function.

## POLICY

HBDHB supports its population, including staff, to participate in the election of its governing Board as candidates and/or as voters.

People have the right to access HBDHB's services and facilities without harassment. This includes political harassment.

All HBDHB staff are required to remain politically neutral (apolitical) when carrying out their job. This includes interactions with patients/clients and their families, other staff, Board and Committee members.

HBDHB staff must do their job professionally and loyally, without letting their personal interests or views influence their advice or behaviour in the work place.

Employees of HBDHB may stand for DHB Elections:

- District Health Board employees have a statutory right to stand for election as a member of a DHB Board (clause 7, schedule 2, NZ Public Health and Disability Act 2000).

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- If elected, Board Members who are also members of staff, will need to:
  - ensure they can do their primary job unhindered and without detriment to the public interest
  - ask for and take approved leave without pay to attend to any board business that occurs in their normal working hours
  - be especially diligent and transparent over potential conflicts of interest
  - are familiar with requirements of Board and committee members as detailed in HBDHB's the e-governance manual available on the DHB's website <http://www.hawkesbay.health.nz>
- HBDHB upholds the principles of being a good employer. In this context, good and reasonable employer means:
  - making reasonable efforts to enable staff elected as Board members to take leave without pay to attend board business, provided that this does not adversely affect the operation of the organisation
  - make arrangements to cover approved absence where practical
- As governor, HBDHB's Board should:
  - recognise the particular difficulties for DHB employees who are also members of the board
  - pay particular attention to ensuring that conflicts of interest of members who are also DHB employees are handled appropriately
  - avoid as far as possible placing the CEO or board member-employees in situations where any role tensions could develop or be exacerbated
  - not pressure CEOs to grant leave for board members, recognising that the CEO is the employer and that s/he has the responsibility for service provision and employees
- It is important to the reputation and probity of HBDHB that no individual candidates, including staff who are standing for election, are unfairly advantaged through access to DHB resources, including staff time and communication channels.
- HBDHB staff whose regular duties require writing media releases, letters, speeches and carrying out administrative tasks for current elected and appointed members are to exercise extreme care to ensure such activities cannot be linked in any way to a political campaign.
- Staff members involved in an election campaign (either their own or that of any candidate) should ensure that they identify and manage any conflict, or potential conflict of interest with their employment at HBDHB.
- DHB resources should not be used for campaigning purposes:
  - No DHB resources (including staff time, computers, e-mail, cell phones, faxes, stationery, photocopiers, stamps, cards and venues) should be used for campaigning purposes.
  - No DHB-provided forums or meetings (e.g. reference group meetings, DHB forums and public meetings) should be used for campaigning purposes.
  - This provision applies to all staff, board and committee members, including those who are standing, or considering standing, for election to a DHB Board.

- DHB information should be available to all candidates on an equal basis:
  - Where DHB information is supplied to a candidate for campaign purposes, it should be supplied to other candidates as a matter of course.
- HBDHB publications, website, social media and other communication vehicles (eg: DHB-funded radio spots) should not be used for campaign purposes:
  - Where communication platforms are provided by or through HBDHB, all candidates should have equal access to them.
  - Hawke's Bay DHB shall be guided by the Office of the Auditor-General's Guidelines for Advertising and Publicity by Local Authorities (also relevant to DHBs) which states: "*a local authority must not promote, nor be perceived to promote, the re-election prospects of a sitting member. Therefore, the use of Council resources for re-election purposes is unacceptable and possibly unlawful,*" and,  
  
*"When the authority considers that information need not be presented as representing the corporate or collective position, the manner of its presentation should not create the appearance that what is being said represents the personal views of the people to whom the information is being attributed. Special care with presentation is required when attribution is to a spokesperson – commonly the Mayor or authority Chairperson or Chairperson of the associated committee – particularly during the pre-election period".*

The pre-election period is generally regarded as having started when the first public declarations of candidacy have been made.
- Board decision making during the election process:
  - During the election period (opening of nominations to the time the new Board takes office), the Board shall continue to carry out its duties.
  - The Board shall put in place arrangements as appropriate to ensure a smooth transition from the current to the newly elected Board.

## RELATED HBDHB DOCUMENTS

House Rules  
Media Relations Policy HBDHB/OPM/022  
Leave Policy HBDHB/PPM/080

## REFERENCES

"Good Practice for Managing Public Communications by Local Authorities", Controller and Auditor-General, April 2004.

## FURTHER INFORMATION / ASSISTANCE

If you are unsure whether or not certain requests or activities are a breach of the preceding protocols, please discuss the matter with your manager or contact the Communications Service.

For general information regarding the DHB election processes: [www.health.govt.nz](http://www.health.govt.nz)

For further detail on communications in a pre-election period, see the website for the Report of the Controller and Auditor-General – Good practice for Managing Public Communications by Local Authorities: <http://oag.govt.nz/2004/public-communications/part1.htm>

Useful advice sheets from the State Services Commission:

See Understanding the code of conduct - Guidance for State servants: [www.ssc.govt.nz/code-guidance-stateservants](http://www.ssc.govt.nz/code-guidance-stateservants); and

Political Neutrality Fact Sheet No. 2 Political Views and Participation in Political Activity [www.ssc.govt.nz/political-neutrality-guidance](http://www.ssc.govt.nz/political-neutrality-guidance).

## KEY WORDS

Board  
Elections  
Voting

*For further information please contact the Company Secretary*