

How We Work Together

A practical guide to our values, the way we make decisions, and the principles that help us work together — for members, volunteers, office bearers, candidates and elected representatives.

APPLIES TO	STATUS	VERSION
All members & volunteers	Party guidance	v2.2 · June 2026

Purpose

This guide explains how we work together at the Australian Democrats. It applies to members, volunteers, office bearers, candidates and elected representatives.

It is intended to provide practical guidance, establish shared expectations and support a positive, respectful and effective culture.

Welcome

Thank you for being part of this.

Thank you for contributing your time, skills and energy to the Australian Democrats. Whether you are a member, volunteer, office bearer, candidate or elected representative, you are part of a community committed to strengthening Australian democracy and improving outcomes for people, communities and the environment.

We come from different backgrounds, bring different experiences and will not always agree on every issue. What unites us is a commitment to working together respectfully, making decisions thoughtfully and acting in accordance with our shared values.

This guide explains the principles that help us work together effectively.

Our values

What we stand for

These values guide how we make decisions, how we treat one another, and how we represent the Australian Democrats.

Integrity, Truth and Transparency

We commit to acting honestly and ethically, admitting when we get it wrong, and telling the truth. We believe trust is earned through openness, accountability and a willingness to be transparent in both our decisions and our actions.

Evidence-Informed Governance

We commit to using the best available evidence, expertise and experience to inform our decisions. We believe the scientific method is the most reliable tool for understanding the world around us, and we seek practical solutions that work in the real world rather than approaches driven by ideology or vested interests.

Working Together

We commit to working collaboratively to find solutions. We value diverse perspectives, listen respectfully, and look for common ground where there are differences.

Looking Out for One Another and the Planet

We commit to acting with respect, fairness and compassion. We seek to support one another, strengthen our communities and preserve the planet for future generations.

How we make decisions

It's not about the loudest voice in the room

We seek to make decisions that are values-led, evidence-informed and focused on what works in practice. When considering an issue, we aim to:

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| 01 Think | Understand the issue and consider different perspectives. |
| 02 Listen | Engage respectfully with others, particularly those affected. |
| 03 Test | Consider our values, the available evidence and practical implications. |
| 04 Decide | Exercise sound judgement and make a decision. |
| 05 Explain | Be transparent about how and why the decision was made. |
| 06 Evaluate | Reflect on outcomes, learn from experience and adjust where needed. |

Decision-making authority

We value participation, consultation and respectful debate. We also recognise that the party's Constitution and delegated authorities establish clear responsibilities for decision-making. While we seek input wherever practical, not every decision will be made by consensus. Once a decision has been made through the appropriate process, we ask people to respect the outcome, even where they may have preferred a different approach.

How we treat each other

We expect everyone involved with the Australian Democrats to:

- Treat others with dignity and respect.
- Listen with curiosity.
- Engage in good faith.
- Value diversity of thought and experience.
- Be constructive when raising concerns.
- Take responsibility for their behaviour.
- Help create a welcoming and inclusive environment.

We do not accept bullying, harassment, discrimination, intimidation or personal attacks.

We all share responsibility for creating an environment where people feel welcome, respected and able to participate fully. We encourage people to contribute ideas, ask questions, raise concerns and engage constructively in party activities.

Disagreeing well

Healthy disagreement is part of a healthy democracy. We recognise that reasonable people acting in good faith can reach different conclusions. When disagreements arise, we aim to:

- Challenge ideas, not people.
- Seek understanding before seeking agreement.
- Focus on issues rather than personalities.

- Assume positive intent where possible.
- Remain respectful even when we disagree.

Our goal is not always consensus. Our goal is thoughtful and respectful decision-making.

Managing conflicts of interest

A conflict of interest does not necessarily mean someone has acted improperly. What matters is that actual, potential or perceived conflicts are identified and managed openly.

If you become aware of a conflict of interest, please disclose it to the relevant office bearer, committee or decision-making body.

Representing the party

When representing the Australian Democrats, we seek to act consistently with our values. If you are authorised to speak on behalf of the party, please do so responsibly and accurately.

If you are expressing a personal view, make it clear that you are speaking for yourself.

Social media

Members and volunteers are free to express personal views. However, unless authorised to do so, please do not present personal opinions as official positions of the Australian Democrats.

Speaking on behalf of the party

Members are encouraged to participate in public discussion, engage with the media, contribute to policy debates and advocate for issues they care about.

However, only authorised representatives may speak on behalf of the Australian Democrats, make commitments on behalf of the party, issue official statements, or represent party positions to the media, stakeholders or external organisations.

Unless specifically authorised, members should make it clear that they are expressing their own views and not speaking on behalf of the party.

Authorisation

Authorisation to speak on behalf of the party may be granted by the relevant office bearer, Executive or other delegated authority, depending on the circumstances. Where there is uncertainty about whether a communication may be perceived as representing the party, members should seek guidance before proceeding.

Privacy and confidentiality

Members, supporters and volunteers trust us with their information. Please:

- Only access information you need.
- Keep personal information secure.
- Do not share information without authority.
- Follow party processes for managing member and supporter data.
- Report any concerns promptly.

When in doubt, ask.

Using technology responsibly

Help keep our systems and information secure. Please:

- Use strong passwords.
- Enable multi-factor authentication where available.
- Keep devices secure.
- Avoid sharing accounts.
- Report suspicious emails, links or activity.

If something doesn't look right, ask before clicking.

Concerns and complaints

The Australian Democrats are committed to addressing concerns and complaints in a manner consistent with our values. When concerns arise, we seek to approach them thoughtfully, respectfully and in good faith — listening carefully, considering relevant information, exercising sound judgement, explaining outcomes where appropriate and learning from experience. Our goal is not simply to resolve disputes, but to strengthen relationships, improve how we work together and support a healthy organisation.

SPEAKING UP

We encourage members, volunteers, office bearers and elected representatives to raise concerns about behaviour, conduct, governance, misuse of party resources, breaches of party policies, or other matters that may be inconsistent with our values. People who raise concerns honestly and in good faith help strengthen the organisation.

Keeping the bastards honest starts with us.

The Australian Democrats will not tolerate retaliation, victimisation or adverse treatment of a person because they have raised a genuine concern in good faith. Retaliation against a person who raises a concern may itself be considered a conduct issue.

Disagreement is not misconduct

The Australian Democrats are a democratic organisation. People acting in good faith may disagree about policy, strategy, governance, priorities or decisions. Disagreement, by itself, does not constitute misconduct and should not be treated as a complaint. We encourage respectful debate, diverse perspectives and constructive challenge.

RAISING A CONCERN

If something is concerning you, we encourage you to consider whether the matter can be addressed directly with the person involved. In many situations, a respectful conversation can resolve misunderstandings and prevent issues from escalating. Where appropriate, focus on:

- the behaviour or issue that concerns you;
- the impact it is having; and
- the outcome you are seeking.

No one is required to raise a concern directly if they do not feel comfortable doing so.

SEEKING SUPPORT

If direct resolution is not appropriate, or does not resolve the issue, you may seek support from a local office bearer; a division executive member; a member of the National Executive; or another appropriate party representative. The purpose of seeking support is to:

- better understand the issue;
- explore options for resolution;
- identify whether further action is required; and
- support respectful and constructive outcomes.

WRITTEN COMPLAINTS

A written complaint may be appropriate where:

- the matter is serious;
- informal resolution has not been successful;

- there are allegations of bullying, harassment, discrimination or misconduct;
- there has been a significant breach of party policies, rules or responsibilities; or
- the circumstances warrant formal consideration.

Complaints should be submitted in writing and include sufficient information to allow the matter to be understood and considered.

In most instances, your written complaint should be provided to your Division President or another member of your Division Executive. If that is not appropriate, you may instead provide it to a member of the National Executive. The recipient will help ensure the matter is considered fairly and through an appropriate process.

HOW CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS WILL BE MANAGED

The Australian Democrats will seek to manage concerns and complaints fairly, proportionately and in good faith. Formal grievance, dispute resolution and disciplinary processes are governed by our Constitution and any applicable governance documents.

Depending on the nature of the matter, the relevant office bearer, Division Executive or National Executive may gather relevant information; speak with the people involved; seek additional information where required; facilitate discussion between parties; seek an agreed resolution; refer the matter to an appropriate body under the Constitution; or determine an appropriate outcome.

Not all concerns or complaints will require a formal investigation. The approach taken will depend on the nature, seriousness and complexity of the matter.

POSSIBLE OUTCOMES

Outcomes will depend on the nature of the concern, the circumstances involved and what is necessary to address the issue fairly and appropriately. Where possible, the focus will be on restoring constructive working relationships and supporting positive future engagement.

Possible outcomes may include:

- no further action;
- clarification of expectations;
- coaching or guidance;
- facilitated discussion;
- mediation;
- an apology;
- changes to responsibilities or access;
- referral to a relevant party body; or
- disciplinary action in accordance with the Constitution or other applicable governance documents.

FAIRNESS AND CONFIDENTIALITY

All parties involved in a concern or complaint are expected to act respectfully and in good faith. The Australian Democrats will treat concerns seriously, consider information fairly, provide people with an opportunity to respond where appropriate, and maintain confidentiality as far as reasonably possible. Absolute confidentiality cannot always be guaranteed where information must be shared in order to properly consider and address a matter.

GOOD FAITH

Concerns and complaints should be raised honestly and in good faith. Knowingly false, malicious or vexatious complaints are inconsistent with our values and may themselves be considered a conduct issue. We also recognise that a complaint made in good faith is not vexatious simply because it is not upheld.

Learning and improvement

Where appropriate, we seek to learn from concerns and complaints. Addressing issues is not simply about resolving disputes — it is also an opportunity to strengthen relationships, improve how we work together and build a healthier organisation. Consistent with our decision-making framework, we seek to listen, understand, exercise sound judgement, explain outcomes and learn from experience.

Looking after yourself

The Australian Democrats relies on volunteers. We recognise that people contribute in different ways and at different times depending on their capacity, circumstances and other commitments.

We encourage people to be realistic about what they can take on, to ask for help when needed and to take breaks where appropriate.

Thank you

Thank you.

The Australian Democrats exist because people choose to contribute their time, skills and energy. Thank you for being part of that effort. Together, we can help build a stronger democracy and a better future for Australia.



Keep the bastards honest.

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