

## *Managing relationships with Corporate members*

### *Introduction*

Corporate memberships of the AIHS are growing as companies increasingly approach us – to contribute to our work, or to engage with our stakeholders including members. These relationships are revenue opportunities but we also manage them carefully because we do not ever wish to be unreasonably beholden to any corporate contributor. Protecting our values and independence is more important to us than any revenue stream.

### *Why accept corporate member revenue and what do we do with it?*

The Institute has been established as a not-for-profit company with several areas of operation. Some come at a net cost – but we do them to help realise our vision and because it's our role as the national association for the profession. For example, the [OHS Body of Knowledge](#), and our support of [Education Accreditation](#) come at a cost, but they play an important part in shaping the growing knowledge base and integrity of learning for the profession. We fund this by making a surplus in other areas such as corporate memberships.

### *Corporates as stakeholders in health and safety*

Stakeholders in health and safety include government, private and not-for profit entities as well as individual people – all three tiers of government, regulatory bodies, professional associations like the AIHS, the health and safety profession itself, unions, employer groups, workers and companies. All groups are stakeholders in health and safety, and they commonly contain people who are just as committed to good health and safety as anyone in our profession. They also contain people with high levels of expertise to share.

### *Why do companies become corporate members of the AIHS and what do they get?*

Companies join us for a variety of reasons, which can include:

- To get access to the advertised member benefits such as events, services and information, and other things similar to individual membership;
- To actively contribute beyond their immediate business, to the development of good health and safety in Australia;
- Wanting a brand association with the not-for-profit work we do to improve things;
- Wanting to build their business networks;
- Wanting to have an engagement so their products are more immediately visible to our stakeholders – because our stakeholders are a marketplace for them; and/or
- Just wanting to stay connected to our work because they're interested.

Companies pay us an annual membership fee, at one of four levels – Bronze, Silver, Gold and Diamond. Corporate members receive a number of the services that individual members get, such as discounts to events and training, access to our research database, receipt of our magazine and information services, and also advertising, and they can also get opportunities to talk to members about their products- under fairly strict conditions outlined in more detail below.

### *Can a private company influence the direction of the Institute?*

No. Corporate members do not have any constitutional vote, or governance or operations influence on the Institute. Their representatives cannot run for member board positions, which are based around individual membership. No corporate member's payment represents any more than one half of one percent of our revenue, so the financial influence of any one corporate member can only ever be at best, extremely small. Even so - we put their money to good work, and we give them benefits in return.

## *Corporate engagement in events and professional development*

### *Pay to speak?*

Unlike many organisations similar to ours, corporate members or sponsors cannot 'buy' a spot on any podium at any professional development event we run (including conferences and seminars). Sponsors may be invited to the stage to introduce people, present awards or be acknowledged in thanks, and they may be invited to say a few words on the generic subject matter they are sponsoring or to place a banner or logo at an event or in conference material, but the corporate membership cannot buy a speaking engagement at a paid event.

### *Speaking as subject-matter experts*

Subject matter experts are found across the government, not-for-profit and commercial fields, and people from companies are not excluded from being used as subject matter experts just because they are from a private company that sells products:

- o Speakers at conferences are chosen via selection panels which are led by our volunteer branch members and which are focused on content, expertise and relevance. A corporate speaker must be speaking on a generic subject, unless in a very rare instance for some reason a selection panel asks them to talk about a product. This would be very unusual (eg where an innovative technology or product faces no competition) but not unheard of;
- o Conference selection panels have no directive to prefer or exclude any group, including corporate members. So, you *may* see a corporate member on a speaking list at a conference, but they will almost certainly not be presenting about a specific product. Their presence will be an outcome of their perceived subject-matter expertise;
- o We regularly use subject matter experts for webinars and other CPD, and we do not exclude corporate members from this either, making decisions based on their suitability to speak on the subject at hand – so it's common to have people from private companies delivering webinars etc. When they do, we specifically ask people from private companies NOT to promote their company or products. We place around 350 people each year on our stages at events, and exceptions where speakers don't follow these rules do happen, but they are very rare;
- o If a product is offered free of charge and unconnected to any form of on-sell, these limitations usually do not apply.

### *Product promotions*

We are happy to give our stakeholders access to our corporate members products, as long as the process falls within the rules we set.

- o **ADS:** You will see ads for products in some of our publications. These may come from corporate members, or from other agencies buying ads direct;
- o **WEBSITE:** We have a section on our website which is growing, where corporate members can place their product promotions offered to members at beneficial rates;
- o **EVENTS AS PRODUCT PROMOTIONS:** On occasion, a corporate member may want to run an event where they present their product as a solution to an issue. We are happy to advertise and co-host that event as long as it:
  - (a) is free to members;
  - (b) does not cost the Institute in members' funds; and
  - (c) the advertising clearly states that a product is going to be presented.

If you see an event like that, you will know we are not investing money in it, and you can choose to attend if you wish;

- o **DECLARATION OF INTEREST:**

When we do any kind of product promotion, or advertise on our website, or engage in any other activity which involves our work and our stakeholder groups we declare our interest and ensure everybody knows it's a product promotion.

### *Do we have controls relating to assessing corporate members product quality?*

Yes, but the controls purposefully have limitations. We do NOT currently wish to formally warrant products or make declarations of highest quality. But we do apply diligence against minimum standards.

We do not wish to have corporate members which have values inconsistent with those of the Institute, or whose products are demonstrably unsuitable or poor quality. The national office undertakes its own research, and also from time to time we seek product reviews from our own members to check on the usefulness and relevance of products.

We don't formally warrant the products, and we leave the choices and higher-level assessments to potential purchasers of the products, although we do feel confident that (a) the company is reputable, and (b) they are meeting a baseline entry standard. We invite our stakeholders to determine for themselves whether a corporate member's product is suitable for them.

Each year, we decline some corporate memberships because we are not clear that they fit the standards we're looking for, or their expectations about the way we might promote their products cannot be met. (For example, they may expect speaking engagements at our conferences.)

### *Summary*

We see our corporate members as great corporate citizens when it comes to improving health and safety. We take their investment in us and put it to work on the things that matter, and we appreciate, and try to honour their investment. As we do so, we protect the integrity of our work, and we do not 'sell' our processes, practices or the integrity of our operations in any way, in return.

As we continue grow we are engaging in more partnerships with ALL stakeholders groups, (government, not-for-profits, and companies) and we will always protect the integrity of what we do, and be open about how these relationships work.

Any health and safety person with ideas, perspectives, advice or criticism about our corporate relationships is welcome to contact us at any time put their views, and you will be heard.

### **David Clarke**

Chief Executive Officer



*Think Forward*