

Case study: CCC investigation highlights significant conflict-of-interest risks at Curtin University

September 2017



The CCC has completed an investigation into allegation that a university professor engaged in serious misconduct in their dealings with contractors.

The Corruption and Crime Commission (CCC) has found deficiencies in contract governance, recruitment practices, and management oversight at Curtin University that allowed a professor to exclusively select and renew contractors without disclosing private business connections they shared.

In August 2016, the CCC received an allegation from Curtin University that a professor had engaged contractors from a consultancy business they were a director and shareholder, without declaring a conflict-of-interest.

A CCC investigation found the professor managed a research body at Curtin University, where they recommended two contractors that were recruited to conduct research work on behalf of the university.

The professor gave little, if any, consideration to sourcing research staff within Curtin University, and management accepted the professor's recommendations without question. The contractors received in excess of \$1 million over four years for their research work at Curtin University.

The CCC did not find evidence of serious misconduct under the [Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act 2003](#). However, the Commission formed the opinion that there was a perceived and financial conflict-of-interest due to the professor's employment at the consultancy business.

The Western Australian public is entitled to have confidence in the integrity of their public officials and to know that their personal interests do not conflict with their public duties. As a Western Australian public officer, the professor should have declared their conflict-of-interest.

If the professor's recruitment and contract management practices were subject to more stringent management oversight, the professor's relationships with the contractors could have been immediately identified, and arrangements made to avoid any real or apparent conflicts-of-interest.

Awarding contracts to people you know, especially in specialised industries, can be a common practice in Western Australia and cannot always be avoided.

However, if a public officer has personal interests that conflict with their employment

duties, a conflict-of-interest must be declared, so it can be appropriately managed by the public sector agency.

Anyone can anonymously report suspected serious misconduct and corruption by Western Australian public officer's to the CCC by calling 1800 809 000 or by completing a [confidential online form](#).

Contact the Corruption and Crime Commission

 PO Box 7667 Cloisters Square
Perth WA 6850

 General Enquiries (08) 9215 4888
Report Corruption 1800 809 000

 www.ccc.wa.gov.au

 info@ccc.wa.gov.au

 <https://twitter.com/CCCWestAus>