



INTRODUCTION

Wildcare Australia Inc regards the dignity and autonomy of all people as a core value of the organisation. Bullying behaviour is based on the misuse of power in human relationships, and negates the dignity and autonomy of its victims.

Wildcare Australia Inc regards the health and safety of its members and associates as a primary responsibility. Bullying can affect health and wellbeing.

Wildcare Australia Inc is fully committed to eliminating, as far as possible, all forms of bullying in the workplace and in the relationships amongst its members through a culture of openness, support, and accountability.

PURPOSE OF POLICY:-

The purpose of this document is to outline Wildcare Australia Inc's position on bullying and to document the process which is to be followed should any instances of bullying be reported.

DEFINITIONS:-

“Unreasonable behaviour” is behaviour that is offensive, humiliating, intimidating, degrading or threatening. It includes, but is not limited to,

- Verbal abuse
- Initiation pranks
- Excluding or isolating employees
- Giving a person the majority of an unpleasant or meaningless task
- Humiliation through sarcasm, or belittling someone's opinions
- Constant criticism or insults
- Spreading misinformation or malicious rumours
- Deliberately setting work routines or procedures to inconvenience certain employees
- Displaying written or pictorial material which may degrade or offend certain employees

“Bullying” is repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed towards a person or group of persons. It includes behaviour that could be expected to intimidate, offend, degrade, humiliate, undermine or threaten.

“Repeated ... behaviour” refers to the nature of the behaviour, not the specific form of that behaviour. “Repeated unreasonable behaviour” may thus be a pattern of diverse incidents.

Workplace bullying can occur between:

- Two or more members/volunteers
- Committee members and/or Coordinators and members/volunteers
- Members, volunteers, employees and other persons at associated workplaces

Bullying can occur at any level of the organisation, can be experienced by both men and women and may involve a co-worker, a volunteer, supervisor, manager, service provider, user or customer.

Formerly agreed behaviour may be found to be bullying when it continues after a request from the recipient for the behaviour to stop, or at the point it becomes intimidating, offensive or humiliating.

Note (1): There are bound to be occasional differences of opinion, conflicts and problems in every organisation. Only when the treatment of another person is unreasonable, offensive or harmful does organizational bullying exist.

Similarly, the exercise of a supervisor’s legitimate authority in an organization through the direction and control of volunteer responsibilities, the monitoring of volunteer work, and giving feedback on performance, is not bullying insofar as the supervisor’s actions are intended to assist volunteers to improve their tasks, their volunteer work performance, or the standard of their behaviour. If a volunteer has performance problems, however, these should be identified and dealt with in a constructive way that is neither humiliating nor threatening.

Note (2): Bullying that directly inflicts physical pain, harm, or humiliation amounts to assault and should be dealt with as a police matter (see below).

POLICY:-

Bullying is prohibited. Wildcare Australia Inc will not tolerate any form of bullying under any circumstances.

The principles set out in this policy are intended to apply to any work or volunteer-related context, including training sessions, volunteer work functions, social events and business trips.

A breach of this policy will result in disciplinary action. Depending upon the severity of the case, consequences may include apology, counselling, transfer, demotion, dismissal, or other forms of disciplinary action deemed appropriate.

Wildcare Australia Inc strongly encourages any volunteer who feels they have been bullied, or have witnessed bullying taking place, to take action by making it clear that such behaviour is unwelcome and offensive; and/or by following the procedures set down for reporting the behaviour.

Bullying Policy

Version 1 (March 2009)

Any reports of harassment will be treated seriously and promptly with sensitivity and complete confidentiality, except insofar as

- (a) the rules of natural justice require the accused party to have knowledge of the identity of their accuser and the nature of the allegations made, and
- (b) any disclosure is mandated under applicable occupational health and safety legislation.

Complainants have the right to determine how to have a complaint treated, have support or representation throughout the process, and have the option to discontinue a complaint at any stage of the process.

The alleged bully will be given the right to have a support person of their own during any investigation procedures, to have representation and advice throughout the process, and to respond fully to any formal allegations made. No presumptions of guilt will be made and no determination reached until a full investigation has been completed.

No volunteer should be treated unfairly as a result of complaining of bullying. Disciplinary action may be taken against anyone who victimises or retaliates against a person who has complained of bullying, or against any employee who has been alleged to be a bully.

Managers or supervisors who fail to take appropriate corrective action when aware of bullying of a person will be subject to disciplinary action.

RESPONSIBILITY:-

It is the obligation and responsibility of every volunteer to ensure that the organization is free from bullying. The responsibility lies with every Committee member, Coordinator, supervisor volunteer to ensure that discrimination or victimisation does not occur.

It is the responsibility of the Management Committee to ensure that:

- they understand, and are committed to, the right of all volunteers to attend to their volunteer work and perform their duties without fear of being bullied in any form
- all reasonable steps to eliminate bullying are made
- all applicable occupational health and safety legislation is observed
- all volunteers are regularly made aware of their obligations and responsibilities in relation to providing an organization free from bullying
- they provide an environment which discourages bullying, and set an example by their own behaviour
- all complaints are treated seriously and confidentially
- they are as far as practicable aware of whether bullying is occurring, whether complaints are received or not, relying on such indices as
 - sudden increases in absenteeism
 - unexplained requests for transfers
 - behavioural changes such as depression
 - sudden deterioration in work performance

- they take immediate and appropriate corrective action if they become aware of any offensive action
 - guidance and education is provided, where requested and/or appropriate, to cases and subsequent decisions relating to bullying
 - ongoing support and guidance is provided to management and volunteers in relation to the prevention of bullying
 - this policy is displayed in the workplace.

*It is the responsibility of all **Committee Members and Volunteers** to ensure that:*

- they understand and are committed to the rights and entitlements of all employees and volunteers to attend work and perform their duties without fear of bullying in any form
- they provide an environment which discourages bullying
- they immediately report any offensive action

PROCEDURES:-

Grievance Procedures

Volunteers who believe they are the subject of bullying should take firm, positive and prompt action.

If deemed appropriate the volunteer should make the perceived bully (or bullies) aware that they find their behaviour offensive, unwelcome and unacceptable, and that it needs to stop immediately.

If the behaviour continues, or if the volunteer feels unable to speak to the person(s) directly, they should contact a member of the Management Committee with whom they feel comfortable. The Committee Member will provide support and ascertain the nature of the complaint and the wishes of the complainant. The complainant does not have to request a full formal investigation if they will be satisfied by less formal treatment of the issue.

Refer to the Wildcare Australia Inc Grievance Policy for further information.