



# Bullying and Grievance Policy

## Bullying

### INTRODUCTION

Granite Belt Wildlife Carers 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.

Granite Belt Wildlife Carers Inc regards the health and safety of its members and associates as a primary responsibility. Bullying can affect health and wellbeing.

Granite Belt Wildlife Carers Inc is fully committed to eliminating, as far as possible, all forms of bullying within the group 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 Granite Belt Wildlife Carers 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 volunteers
- 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 volunteers

**"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 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 member, volunteer, 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.

## **POLICY**

Bullying is prohibited. Granite Belt Wildlife Carers Inc will not tolerate any form of bullying under any circumstances.

The principles set out in this policy are intended to apply to any volunteer-related context, including training sessions, meetings, fund-raising and social events.

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

Granite Belt Wildlife Carers 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.

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.

Executive Committee members 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 member to ensure that discrimination or victimisation does not occur.

It is the responsibility of the Executive 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
  - 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 available to members electronically via the group's website or by contacting the Secretary.

It is the responsibility of the Executive Committee and Members to ensure that:

- they understand and are committed to the rights and entitlements of all volunteers to 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 Executive 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 Granite Belt Wildlife Carers Inc Grievance Policy (below) for further information.

## **Grievance Policy**

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that members have a process whereby grievances and/or complaints can be referred through the Executive Committee of Granite Belt Wildlife Carers.

### WHAT IS A GRIEVANCE?

A grievance is a real or perceived issue causing resentment, suffering or distress and which may be regarded as grounds for complaint in the members' environment.

A grievance may be about any act, omission, situation or decision that you think is unfair, discriminatory or unjustified.

Grievances can range in severity from matters that can be immediately resolved by timely appropriate action, to complex matters involving prolonged investigation, negotiation or disciplinary action.

### **The Granite Belt Wildlife Carers Inc. Grievance Procedure is:**

- Completely confidential – Only the people directly involved in making or investigating a complaint will have access to information about the complaint.
- Impartial – Both sides of the grievance will have a chance to tell their side of the story. No assumptions will be made and no action will be taken until all relevant information has been collected and considered.
- Free of repercussions – No action will be taken against anyone for making a complaint or helping someone to make a complaint. The Executive Committee will take all necessary steps to ensure that no victimisation occurs against any volunteer who makes a complaint.

- Timely – All complaints will be dealt with as quickly as possible. We aim to resolve all complaints within two weeks from receipt of the grievance if at all possible.

### WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE A GRIEVANCE

For a grievance to be dealt with effectively and efficiently you will need to:

- Prepare for your meeting at each level by writing down the facts relating to the incident. Be specific.
- When speaking to the appointed Executive Committee member clearly describe the problem and your concern. Focus on the problem, not the personality of other individuals involved and avoid being hostile. Discuss the situation and agree on a possible resolution.

#### **1st Stage**

If you can, try to sort out the issue directly with the person involved. Sometimes people do not mean to do things that hurt or offend others and sometimes they may not have realised that they did in fact hurt or offend you. This does not mean that it is acceptable. However, it does mean that if you can, you should tell the person who is acting in a hurtful or unsuitable way that you consider that their behaviour is unacceptable and/or is offensive so that they have the chance to apologise, and/or stop or change what they are doing.

#### **2nd Stage**

If the direct approach does not work, or you do not feel that you can sort it out directly with the other person, you should contact the Executive Committee. You should put your concerns in writing and forward to the Secretary.

A written complaint should include:-

- The details of the grievance
- The efforts taken to resolve the grievance; and
- The desired outcome/resolution

At this level all complaints will be treated confidentially.

The Executive Committee will discuss the issue and appoint a suitable Executive Committee member to manage your grievance.

#### **The appointed Committee Member will then take the following steps:-**

- Explain the grievance handling procedure including what may happen if there is enough evidence to support your complaint, or what will happen if there is not enough evidence to support your complaint.
- Talk to the other person/people involved separately and impartially to hear their side of the story in order to fully respond to the allegations.
- Liaise with you in relation to what the other person/people stated and discuss possible resolutions in order to rectify the complaint.
- Attempt to ensure that whatever you have agreed/decided upon actually happens.

## APPEALS

You should only ask the organisation to take a second look at a decision if they have not followed the procedure set out in this Policy or you think they did not do something properly.

If you think that the grievance procedure was not followed properly, you can appeal to the President. He/she will look at the way that the complaint was handled. If he/she thinks it was handled properly, they will not take any further action. If they think it was not handled properly, they will organise for the complaint to be looked at again by an alternative Committee member.

## NOTE

Written statements of events will be kept for all stages of the grievance to ensure the correct information is communicated at each stage. You may be requested to sign and date any paperwork generated from your part of the grievance.

Nothing in this policy is intended to alter or limit the rights of either the member or Granite Belt Wildlife Carers Inc.