



Healesville Community Renewable Energy Inc

Person03 – Bullying Policy

Policy Id	Person03	Version	02
Policy Type	Person	Subject	Bullying
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1 Introduction

Healesville CoRE regards the dignity and autonomy of all people as a core value of the organisation.

Healesville CoRE believes that all people should be able to work in an environment free from discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimization.

Healesville CoRE will not tolerate any form of bullying under any circumstances

2 Purpose

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

3 Policy

Any reference to 'volunteer' in this document includes any person who is doing work on behalf of or for Healesville CoRE. This includes anyone who is being paid by Healesville CoRE either directly or as recipient of grant financing.

Bullying is the repeated and intentional behaviour of causing fear, distress or harm towards another person. It is behaviour that is offensive, humiliating, intimidating, degrading or threatening. It can be verbal, physical, social or cyber.

Bullying includes, but is not limited to,

- verbal abuse (belittling, humiliating, swearing, unreasonable criticism, abusive or offensive comments);
- social abuse (spreading misinformation or malicious rumours, leaving someone out on purpose, embarrassing someone in public);
- physical abuse (pulling faces or making rude hand signals);
- cyber abuse (using technology to hurt someone else by sending hurtful messages, pictures or comments);
- deliberately excluding someone from work-related activities (this can be obvious, and it can be subtle, which means it's not always easy to spot);
- withholding information that is essential for someone to do their job;
- giving a person the majority of an unpleasant or meaningless task;
- deliberately setting work routines or procedures to inconvenience certain individuals;
- displaying written or pictorial material which may degrade or offend certain individuals.

Bullying can include repeated inappropriate behaviours such as

- short, rude responses
- eye rolling
- throwing items in anger.

Harassment is bullying.

Harassment occurs when someone is made to feel intimidated, insulted, or humiliated because of their age, disability, sexual preference, religion, skin colour or ethnicity, gender, political belief, appearance, or any other characteristic specified under anti-discrimination or human rights legislation.

Examples of harassment are telling insulting jokes about particular racial groups or genders, displaying offensive posters or screen savers, making derogatory comments about someone's race or religion.

Harassment can be against the law when it is discriminatory, when it includes conduct of a sexual nature or when it causes a risk to someone's health or safety.

Bullying can occur at any level of Healesville CoRE and may involve a co-worker, supervisor, 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

There are bound to be occasional differences of opinion, conflicts and problems in every workplace. Only when the treatment of another person is unreasonable, offensive or harmful does workplace bullying exist.

The exercise of any person's legitimate authority from subject knowledge for giving direction and control of work tasks, the monitoring of workflow, and giving feedback on performance, is not bullying insofar as the person's actions are intended to assist co-workers to improve their task delivery and work performance.

If any volunteer has performance problems, however, these should be identified and dealt with in a constructive way that is neither humiliating nor threatening.

Healesville CoRE 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 following the procedures set down for reporting the behaviour.

The responsibility lies with every volunteer to ensure that discrimination or victimisation does not occur.

It is the responsibility of all Healesville CoRE Central Committee members to ensure that:

- they understand, and are committed to, the right of all volunteers to attend any meeting or function and perform their duties without fear of being bullied in any form;
- they understand, and are committed to, the right of all volunteers to undertake their chosen activity without fear of being bullied in any form;
- all applicable occupational health and safety legislation is observed;
- all volunteers are made aware of their obligations and responsibilities in relation to providing a workplace free from bullying;
- all members contribute to providing an environment which discourages bullying, and set an example by their own behaviour;
- all complaints are treated seriously and confidentially;
- 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;
- all Healesville CoRE members are aware that this is an approved policy and any member has access to this on request from a Central Committee member;
- they immediately report any offensive action.

Any person who believes that they are being bullied has the right to identify their complaint and take action as described below. The action may be an *Affirmative Action*, an *Informal Complaint*, a *Formal Complaint* or any combination of these three actions. A person who reports alleged bullying does not have to request a full formal investigation if they will be satisfied by less formal treatment of the issue.

Bullying that directly inflicts physical pain, harm, or humiliation amounts to assault and should be dealt with as a police matter.

4 Complaints Procedure

4.1 Affirmative Action Procedure

Any person who believes they are the subject of bullying should take firm, positive and prompt action. If deemed appropriate the person 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 you feel safe and comfortable doing this, calmly tell the other person that you object to their behaviour and ask them to stop it. They may not realise the effect their behaviour is having on you or others, and your feedback may give them the opportunity to change their actions.

If the behaviour continues, or if the volunteer feels unable to speak to the person(s) directly, they should contact any member of the Central Committee with whom they feel comfortable. The Central Committee member will provide support and ascertain the nature of the complaint and the wishes of the complainant. If the complainant is female and there is no female Central Committee member to approach, then the complainant is entitled to have another female included as someone who is more likely to understand the female point of view and eliminate the potential for male bias.

4.2 Formal Complaints Procedure

The complainant/s must formally consent to proceeding with a formal complaint, particularly as witnesses or other volunteers may become involved. The formal procedure will be co-ordinated by the responsible manager under the guidance of the Central Committee if applicable. The Central Committee member, or nominated representative, should clarify the complaint with the complainant and obtain a step-by-step

account of the incident. In serious cases, more than one interview may be necessary. The Central Committee member, or nominated representative, will document all such interviews accurately and avoid irrelevant information. This record will include parties involved, timing, location, and nature of conduct complained against. The Central Committee member, or nominated representative, will keep these records in a confidential and secure place. These records should be kept for a period of seven years.

The Central Committee member, or nominated representative, will organise an investigation, which in most cases will involve (but is not be limited to):

- a private interview to ascertain the facts and to find what the complainant expects to happen as a result of making the complaint;
- an interview with the alleged harasser(s) to ascertain their defence;
- interviews with other volunteers or individuals who may be able to assist;
- records kept by the person claiming to have been bullied;
- information on whether the evidence was presented by the parties in a credible and consistent manner;
- information on the absence of evidence where it should logically exist.

Keep the affected parties informed and document all investigation actions and outcomes.

On completion of the investigation the complainant and the Central Committee member, or nominated representative, will determine a course of action to be taken. This may involve guidance from the Central Committee. Possible courses of action may include, but will not be limited to, any combination of:

- counselling;
- disciplinary action against the bully or bullies (e.g. removal from assigned responsibility, or revoking Healesville CoRE membership);
- if there is strong evidence that the complaint was vexatious or malicious, disciplinary action against the person who complained;
- formal apologies and undertakings that the behaviour will cease;
- conciliation/mediation conducted by an impartial third party, where the parties to the complaint agree to a mutually acceptable resolution.

The responsible manager will advise all relevant parties of the outcome. If there is insufficient proof to decide whether or not bullying has occurred, the Central Committee member, or nominated representative, concerned will remind those involved of expected standards of conduct.

The Central Committee member, or nominated representative, will monitor the outcome to ensure that the alleged offensive behaviour has ceased, and that neither party has been victimised. This may involve follow-up interviews.

Some forms of bullying (for example physical or obscene phone calls) may constitute criminal conduct. While Healesville CoRE is committed to treat most complaints about bullying at an organisation level as far as possible, this type of conduct is not suited to internal resolution. Such complaints should be treated by the criminal justice system. Volunteers should be advised of the option of police support or intervention. It is not the obligation or duty of Healesville CoRE to report such matters to the police on behalf of the complainant.

5 Related Documents

Person04 - Sexual Harassment
Value02 - Code of Ethics
Management01 - Central Committee Structure

6 Reference Documents

The Occupational Health and Safety **Act** 2004, version 045 effective 06 August 2025 (<https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/in-force/acts/occupational-health-and-safety-act-2004/045>), is the main workplace health and safety **law** in Victoria. It sets out key principles, duties and rights about OHS.

Worksafe guide for employers – Workplace bullying - <https://content-v2.api.worksafe.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-04/ISBN-Workplace-bullying-guide-for-employers-2020-04.pdf>