

BULLYING POLICY

Introduction

1. U3A Bendigo Incorporated 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.
2. U3A Bendigo is fully committed to eliminating, as far as is possible, all forms of bullying in its operating environment and relationships, through a culture of openness, support, and accountability.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline U3A Bendigo's position on bullying and to document the process for responding to a report of bullying.

Policy

1. This policy deals with repeated unreasonable behaviour that constitutes bullying.
2. "Unreasonable behaviour" is behaviour that is offensive, humiliating, intimidating, degrading or threatening. It includes, but is not limited to:
 - verbal abuse
 - excluding or isolating people
 - humiliation through sarcasm, or belittling someone's opinions
 - constant criticism or insults
 - spreading misinformation or malicious rumours
 - displaying written or pictorial material which may degrade or offend
 - deliberately setting work routines or procedures to inconvenience certain persons
 - disproportionate assignment of unpleasant or meaningless work to certain persons.
3. "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.
4. Bullying can occur between two or more members.
5. Bullying that directly inflicts physical pain or harm amounts to assault and will not be dealt with under this policy (refer to Procedures, point 6).
6. There will be occasional differences of opinion, conflicts and problems. Only when the treatment of another person is repeated, unreasonable, offensive or harmful does bullying exist.
7. Formerly accepted behaviour may be found to be bullying when it continues after a request from the complainant for the behaviour to stop, or at the point it becomes intimidating, offensive or humiliating.
8. U3A Bendigo has a duty of care to provide a safe environment and accepts and acts on its duty of care. Any allegations of bullying that are reported to the Committee of Management will be investigated promptly, thoroughly, and fairly.
9. Complaints will be treated in confidence, and where confidentiality cannot be guaranteed this will be clearly indicated to the complainant.
10. All parties will be treated with respect.
11. The person against whom the allegation is made has the right to natural justice – that is, the right to know what is alleged against them, the right to put their case in reply, and the right for any decision to be made by an impartial decision-maker.

Procedures

1. A person who believes that he/she is the subject of bullying should take firm, positive and prompt action.
2. Where appropriate, the perceived bully/bullies should be made aware that their behaviour is offensive, unwelcome and unacceptable, and that it needs to stop immediately.
3. Where the behaviour continues, or the person who feels bullied feels unable to speak directly to the perceived bully, he/she should report the matter to the U3A Bendigo Secretary who will notify the President immediately.
4. The President or his/her delegate, will provide support to the complainant and ascertain the nature of the complaint and the wishes of the complainant. The complainant may opt to have the matter dealt with by formal investigation or by less formal means.
5. The complaint will be handled in accordance with the Model Rules.
6. Some forms of severe bullying, for example, physical attack or obscene phone calls, may constitute criminal conduct. While U3A Bendigo is committed to treat most complaints about bullying at an organisational level as far as possible, potential criminal conduct is not suited to internal resolution and should be handled by the criminal justice system. Complainants will be advised of the option of police support or intervention. It is not the obligation or duty of U3A Bendigo to report such matters to Victoria Police on behalf of the complainant.

Responsibilities

1. The **U3A Bendigo Committee of Management** is responsible for:
 - developing, implementing, reviewing and publishing this policy
 - ensuring that they understand and are committed to the right of all members to attend U3A activities and venues without fear of being bullied in any way
 - taking all reasonable steps to eliminate bullying
 - making all members aware of their obligations and responsibilities and to foster a U3A Bendigo environment that is free from bullying
 - ensuring they foster an environment that discourages bullying, and sets an example by their own conduct
 - treating all complaints promptly, seriously and confidentially
 - as far as is practicable, made aware of whether bullying is occurring, whether complaints are received or not, relying on such indices as:
 - sudden increases in absenteeism
 - sudden deterioration in participation
 - behavioural changes such as depression
 - taking corrective action when they become aware of any offensive action
 - providing guidance and education subsequent to decisions relating to bullying
 - providing ongoing support and guidance in relation to the prevention of bullying
2. It is the **responsibility of all members and volunteers** to ensure that:
 - they understand and are committed to the rights and entitlements of all members to attend U3A Bendigo premises and activities without fear of bullying
 - they help foster an environment that discourages bullying.

3. The **U3A Bendigo Secretary** is responsible for:
 - receiving and responding to enquiries about this policy
 - receiving complaints about bullying and for bringing a complaint to the immediate attention of the President.
4. The **U3A Bendigo President**, or his/her delegate, is responsible for:
 - interviewing and supporting a complainant.
 - ensuring that a bullying complaint is handled in accordance with the U3A Bendigo Rules.

Authorisation:

This policy was adopted by Committee of Management of U3A Bendigo Incorporated, and minuted as such, on 2nd August 2021.