

WHISTLEBLOWER POLICY AND PROCEDURE



Part 1 - Purpose

Northside Community Service ('the company' or 'Northside') is committed to the highest standards of legal, ethical and moral behaviour.

Northside is committed to maintaining an environment in which any person is able to report without fear of retaliatory action, serious instances of wrongdoing they believe is occurring.

This policy complements normal reporting and communication channels within Northside and provides an alternative means of reporting alleged or suspected wrongdoing where the usual channels appear to have failed or are inappropriate.

Note: This policy is intended to apply to reports of alleged or suspected wrongdoing, which is serious in nature. Generally, such reports would be regarded as being in the public interest (i.e. activities that are illegal, fraudulent or risk significant financial loss to the organisation) or other matters that could seriously impact the reputation of the organisation.

Other matters in relation to an employee's work environment, issues with the behaviour of other employees etc., should be raised through the Employee Grievance and Complaints Handling Procedure. The policy must not be used for trivial or vexatious matters

Part 2 - Scope

This policy covers:

- How to report wrongdoing
- Confidentiality of Whistleblowers and Whistleblowing reports
- Protection of Whistleblowers
- False reporting
- Management of a person against whom a Whistleblowing report is made
- Role of Whistleblowing Protection Officers

This policy applies to the board, executives, managers, staff, volunteers, students on work placement and sub-contractors.

Part 3 - Policy

3.1. Confidentiality of Whistle blowers identity and Whistleblowing reports

3.1.1 Generally, Northside Community Service Ltd will not disclose the person's identity unless:

- the person making the report consents to the disclosure;
- the disclosure is required or authorised by law, and/or
- the disclosure is necessary to further the investigation.

3.1.2 It may also become necessary to disclose the fact and the substance of a report to the person who is the subject of the report.

3.1.3 Northside will store any records relating to a report of wrongdoing securely and permit access by authorised persons only.

3.1.4 Unauthorised disclosure of information relating to a report, the identity of a Northside employee/volunteer/contractor who has made a report of wrongdoing or information from which the identity of that person could be inferred will be regarded seriously and may result in disciplinary action, which may include dismissal.

3.2 Protection of Whistle blowers

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- 3.2.1 Northside is committed to protecting and respecting the rights of a person who reports wrongdoing in good faith. Northside will not tolerate any retaliatory action or threats of retaliatory action against any person who has made or who is believed to have made a report of wrongdoing, or against that person's colleagues, employer (if a contractor) or relatives. For example, the person must not be disadvantaged or victimised by having made the report by:
- dismissal
 - demotion
 - any form of harassment
 - discrimination
 - current or future bias; or
 - threats of any of the above.
- 3.2.2 Any such retaliatory action or victimisation in reprisal for a report being made under this policy will be treated as serious misconduct and will result in disciplinary action, which may include dismissal. If a person who has made a report believes retaliatory action or victimisation has occurred or been threatened, the person who has made the report has the right to make a submission to the Internal or Board Appointed External Whistleblower Protection Officers to report this conduct.
- 3.2.3 It should be noted, however, that if the person making a report has been involved in the wrongdoing that they are reporting, making a report will not necessarily shield them from the consequences of their actions. A person's liability for their own conduct is not affected by their reporting of that conduct under this policy. In some circumstances an admission may be a mitigating factor when considering disciplinary or other action.

3.3 False reporting

- 3.3.1 Where it is shown that a person purporting to be a whistleblower has knowingly made a false report of wrongdoing, then that conduct itself will be considered a serious matter and that person may be subject to disciplinary action which may include dismissal.
- 3.3.2 Also note that this policy is not intended to replace the Employee Grievance and Complaint Handling Procedure, which is there for all employees to raise any matter they may have in relation to their work, their work environment, another person, or a decision affecting their employment.

3.4 Management of a person against whom a Whistleblowing report is made

- 3.4.1 Individuals against whom a whistleblowing report is made will be treated fairly and supported through the assessment and investigation process. This will involve the investigation being handled as confidentially as possible and ensuring that the individual has the opportunity to answer the allegations during the investigation.

3.5 Whistleblowing Protection Officers

- 3.5.1 The role of a Whistleblower Protection Officer is to safeguard the interests of the whistleblower. The Whistleblower Protection Officer has direct, unfettered access to independent financial, legal and operational advisers as required, and a direct line of reporting to the CEO or any senior management team member or Director of the Company, as may be required.
- 3.5.2 The Whistleblower Protection Officer is responsible for appointing an investigator to inquire into the substance of reports. On the basis of sufficient evidence in support of matters raised in a report, the Whistleblower Protection Officer determines whether to refer reports for further action, or refute these where necessary. Investigations must be conducted in a fair and independent manner.
- 3.5.3 The investigation will not be conducted by a person who may be the subject of the investigation or has inappropriate links or connections (actual or perceived) to the person(s) or practice(s) under investigation.

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- 3.5.4 The Whistleblower Protection Officer is to ensure that the Whistleblower is kept informed of the outcomes of the inquiry or investigation, subject to the considerations of privacy of those against whom the allegations are made

Part 4 - Procedure

4.1 How to report wrongdoing

- 4.1.1 You should consider whether to report the matter to your immediate manager. Your manager must then report the allegation to either of the two internal Whistleblower Protection Officers listed below.
- 4.1.2 If it is inappropriate to do so, or you do not wish to report it to your manager, you can report it directly to either of the internal Whistleblower Protection Officers:
- Executive Director, Community Services (Ph: 02 6163 0418 or 0422 323 720)
 - Executive Director, Children’s Services (Ph: 02 6163 0444 or 0406 379 619)
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- 4.1.3 If the alleged or suspected wrongdoing involves the Company’s senior management, you can report the matter to the internal Whistleblower Protection Officers above or one of the Board appointed Whistleblower Protection Officers:
- Northside Board Chair – Stephen Brand (PH: 0418 682 011)
 - Northside CEO – Bruce Papps (6171 8012)
- 4.1.4 The Whistleblower Protection Officers may appoint an external Whistleblower Protection Officer if it is deemed necessary due to the nature of the issue.
- 4.1.5 You may choose to remain anonymous. However, it should be noted that it may be more difficult for the alleged wrongdoing to be fully investigated if further information cannot be sought from the whistleblower.

Note: If a report concerns alleged or suspected breach of Corporation or Company Security laws, the recipient of a report under this policy must seek legal advice before disclosing any information at all relating to the report.

If a person makes a report of alleged or suspected wrongdoing, Northside Community Services will endeavour to protect that person’s identity from disclosure.

4.2 Communication and Follow Up

- 4.2.1 Northside Community Service Ltd aims to ensure all employees are continuously aware of who the Whistleblower Protection Officers are, and the alternative ways in which employees can contact them.
- 4.2.2 The Whistleblower Protection Officer is to ensure that the Whistleblower is kept informed of the outcomes of the inquiry or investigation, subject to the considerations of privacy of those against whom the allegations are made

Part 5 - Definitions

Whistleblowing “the deliberate, voluntary disclosure of individual or organisational wrongdoing by a person who has or had access to data, events or information about an actual, suspected or anticipated serious wrongdoing within or by the Company that is within the Company’s ability to control”

Wrongdoing Covered by the policy includes any behaviour or conduct that:

- is dishonest, fraudulent or corrupt

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- is illegal, or involves violence, harassment, criminal damage to property, people, or children or other breaches of state or federal legislation
- involves acts of child harm, physical and/or emotional harm to children
- is unethical, such as dishonestly altering company records engaging in questionable accounting practices, wilfully breaching the Company's code of conduct
- is potentially damaging to Northside Community Service Limited or a Northside Community Service Limited person, such as unsafe work practices or substantial wasting of resources
- may cause financial loss to Northside Community Service Limited or damage its reputation or be otherwise detrimental to Northside Community Service Limited's interests
- involves any other kind of serious impropriety

Whistleblowing Protection Officers

The role of a Whistleblower Protection Officer is to safeguard the interests of the whistleblower. The Whistleblower Protection Officer has direct, unfettered access to independent financial, legal and operational advisers as required, and a direct line of reporting to the CEO or any senior management team member or Director of the Company, as may be required.

Part 6 – Related Documents

- Northside Code of Conduct
- Northside Values
- Northside Grievance Policy and Procedure
- Mandatory Reporting

Part 7 – Policy Status and Details

Document Reference:	
Status:	Final
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Signature of Approval Authority:	
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Part 8 – Revision History

Revision Date	Version No.	Change	Reference Sections
7/11/18	V3	Update contact details	4.1