



Member Protection Policy

March 2024

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1. In

Buddy Up Australia (Buddy Up) is committed to safeguarding our Members, providing an environment where everyone is treated fairly, with dignity and respect, and is protected from abuse, bullying, harassment, sexual misconduct, unlawful discrimination, victimization, and vilification. Everybody should feel comfortable and secure that any differences are respected, and free to request others to refrain from behaviour which makes them feel uncomfortable.

This Member Protection Policy (MPP) seeks to ensure that everyone involved in Buddy Up is aware of their rights and responsibilities, sets out the standards of behaviour expected of those involved with Buddy Up and the behaviours that are not acceptable (Prohibited Conduct),

Members should feel confident to complain about harassment without any reservations. All allegations of bullying, harassment or discrimination will be investigated and taken seriously, incidents will be dealt with quickly, privately, fairly, impartially, and confidentially.

If an individual is unsure whether conduct they have witnessed is likely to breach this policy or relevant legislation, they should speak to their Program Coordinator, Program Manager or the Executive Director of Buddy Up for further information.

2. Our Vision and Mission

Buddy Up Australia believes that every Australian who has provided service to our country has the right to feel connected and valued within their local community. Buddy Up Australia aims to enrich the lives of Australian service personnel by connecting them to their community through purposeful volunteering, social and physical activity.

3. Our Values and Principles

Our members are expected to act consistently with Buddy Up Australia's values:

Wellness - We build healthy bodies and minds to contribute fully to our community.

Mateship - We respect others despite differences and build meaningful relationships.

Service - We commit to our purpose to help others and ourselves feel valued.

Courage - We share our story to help others and ourselves and create solutions when faced with challenges.

4. Scope

This policy applies to all Buddy Up Australia Members as defined by the Constitution and all representatives of Buddy Up including employees, volunteers, and contractors. Collectively referred to as Members within this policy.

This policy applies to all activities and behaviours that occur within the Buddy Up Environment where Members interact with colleagues and their actions may affect them either directly or indirectly, including:

- in relation to any dealing or connection with Buddy Up;
- during Buddy Up activities, volunteering opportunities and events; and
- in electronic communications, including emails, social media and within the Buddy Up mobile application.

5. Relevant Legislation and Standards

For the purpose of this policy, relevant Legislation and standards include:

- Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)
- Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (WA)
- Fair Work Act 2009 (Cth)
- Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)
- Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)
- National Principles | Child Safe Organisations (humanrights.gov.au)
- Working with children checks | Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission (acic.gov.au)

6. Version

Version	Date of Issue	Author(s)	Brief Description of Change
1.0	May 2021	Buddy Up Board	Initial release
1.1	September 2022	Buddy Up Board	Terminology/content review and new WHS Code of Practice check (psycho- social safety)
1.2	March 2024	Buddy Up Board	Full review incorporating Child Safety and ACN Governance checklist

7. Prohibited Conduct

A Member commits a breach this Policy when they, either alone or in conjunction with another or others, engage in any of the following conduct against one or more Members:

- Bullying,
- Harassment,
- Sexual Harassment,
- Unlawful Discrimination,
- Victimisation, or
- Vilification.

1.1. Bullying

Bullying occurs when an individual or group repeatedly:

- behaves unreasonably towards another individual or group of people, and
- the behaviour creates a risk to health and safety.

Bullying may be direct or indirect, and verbal, physical or written. Examples of bullying include but are not limited to:

- aggressive or intimidating conduct,
- belittling or humiliating comments,
- spreading malicious rumours,
- teasing, practical jokes or initiation ceremonies,
- exclusion from Buddy Up events,
- intentionally setting tasks that are unreasonably below or beyond a person's skill

- level,
- displaying offensive material in the Buddy Up environment, and
- pressure to behave in an inappropriate manner.

Bullying does not include reasonable management action carried out in a reasonable and lawful way. Examples of reasonable management action include but are not limited to:

- performance management,
- disciplinary action for misconduct or disciplinary measures in accordance with other policies and procedures,
- implementing governance policies and procedures,
- maintaining reasonable objectives and standards in the Buddy Up environment,
- making justifiable decisions related to recruitment, selection, and other development, and
- overseeing injury and illness in accordance with work health and safety, injury management and workers compensation legislation and policies.

Buddy Up will not tolerate or accept any form of bullying in the Buddy Up environment.

1.2. Harassment

Harassment is any form of behaviour that is unwanted i.e. any behaviour that humiliates, threatens, offends or intimidates another person. It is against the law if this behaviour is based on a person's race and religion, sex and pregnancy, marital status, disability, HIV/AIDS status, age or homosexuality and that of any of their friends or associates.

Harassment may include conduct that is verbal, visual, or physical, such as slurs, disparaging remarks, vulgar language, offensive emails, inappropriate photos or videos and threatening behaviour. Conduct may still constitute harassment where the person engaging in the conduct is unaware the conduct is unwelcome.

Buddy Up will not tolerate or accept harassment for any reason in the Buddy Up environment.

1.3. Sexual Harassment

Harassment may constitute sexual harassment where it involves unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature. Conduct may still constitute harassment where the person engaging in the conduct is unaware the conduct is unwelcome. Sexual harassment is not behaviour which is based on mutual attraction, flirtation, consent, and reciprocity.

Examples of sexual harassment include but are not limited to:

- sexual comments, questions, jokes, pictures, reading matter or objects,
- physical gestures or contact such as pinching, touching, grabbing, kissing, or hugging,
- staring or leering toward a person or parts of their body,
- demands or requests for sexual favours or sexual encounters,
- advances via email, text, phone call or social network messaging, and
- sending rude or offensive emails, attachments, or text messages.

Buddy Up will not tolerate or accept any form of sexual harassment, by members or representatives. A single instance of unwelcome conduct may constitute harassment, or

sexual harassment, and is expressly prohibited by this policy.

1.4. Unlawful Discrimination

Unlawful discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic or attribute. A person can still treat another person less favourably, and unlawfully discriminate against them on one of the grounds below, even if they do not intend to do so.

Grounds of discrimination are set out in the relevant Legislation. The protected characteristics defined by relevant Legislation include but are not limited to:

- Gender
- race/ethnicity
- marital status
- religion
- sexual orientation
- age
- disability or impairment
- pregnancy or potential pregnancy
- family responsibilities
- workplace rights
- political conviction
- criminal record.

Discrimination may either occur:

- directly - where a person or group is treated less favourably than another person or group in a similar situation because of an individual characteristic protected by law.
- indirectly - when an unreasonable requirement, condition or practice is imposed that has, or is likely to have, the effect of disadvantaging people with a personal characteristic protected by law.

Buddy Up will not tolerate or accept unlawful discrimination under any circumstances.

1.5. Vilification

Vilification is any act that occurs publicly which could incite, encourage, or urge others to physically harm, hate, have serious contempt for, or severely ridicule, a person, or a group of people because they are, or are thought to be, members of a particular group. This includes but is not limited to race, religious belief or activity, sex, or sexual identity.

Buddy Up will not tolerate or accept any form of hatred or vilification in the Buddy Up environment due to a protected attribute of a person, including a single instance of vilification.

1.6. Victimisation

Victimisation occurs when an individual is treated less favourably or detrimentally because they have either lodged a complaint, intend to lodge a complaint, or are involved in a complaint of unlawful or inappropriate conduct.

Buddy Up will not tolerate any victimisation in relation to a member who has made a

complaint in relation to this policy in good faith.

8. Vulnerable People

Buddy Up is committed to providing a safe environment that protects all vulnerable people from harm or risk of harm and that upholds the rights of children, young people and vulnerable people to feel and be safe.

Vulnerable people can include:

- children and seniors
- people with impaired intellectual or physical functioning
- people from a low socio-economic background
- people who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders
- people who are not native speakers of the local language
- people with low levels of literacy or education
- people subject to modern slavery, which involves human exploitation and control, such as forced labour, debt bondage, human trafficking, and child labour.

2.1. Child Safety within the Buddy Up environment

Buddy Up arranges events and activities for Members, who by definition are over 18 years of age.

It is acknowledged that some Buddy Up Australia events may be suitable for children / young people, under the age of 18 years, to attend when accompanied by a parent or guardian. An example of this is: a family BBQ at a local public park, or a camping weekend.

Where this occurs, the following communication is mandatory prior to the event taking place:

- The safety and wellbeing of children / young people attending a Buddy Up Australia event is the sole responsibility of the parent / guardian / carer whom they are in attendance with; and
- Buddy Up Australia is not responsible for supervising children / young people at events.

The above expectations should be communicated by the following means, including but not limited to:

- The Buddy Up Mobile Application,
- Social media channels (as required),
- Email communication, and
- Verbally by the Event Leader.

2.2. Child Safety at Community Volunteering Events

Buddy Up Australia engages in community volunteering activities managed by third parties as part of their purposeful volunteering event delivery for Members.

On occasions these opportunities have included supporting school projects and engaging directly with children. Where this opportunity presents itself and Buddy Up agrees to engage, it is the responsibility of the event organiser to ensure all child safety protocols are strictly adhered to. This includes:

- All participating Buddy Up Australia members having a valid and in-date Working with Children / Vulnerable Persons check prior to the event taking place.

Buddy Up Australia agrees to reimburse the member for the cost of this check. The Reimbursement and Supplier Payment Policy can be located on the Codesafe App.

9. Compliance with policy

Compliance with this policy is mandatory.

A member who engages in any conduct that constitutes unlawful discrimination, sexual or other harassment, bullying, vilification, or victimisation in violation of this policy and/or any applicable legislation may be subject to disciplinary action, including but not limited to revocation of membership and/or reporting to the appropriate authority.

10. Grievance Procedure

Where a member has a grievance arising from a potential breach of this policy, attempts should be made to resolve the grievance in accordance with this policy and the following steps:

Step 1: Approach the person directly

If a member feels comfortable and safe doing so, they should first try and resolve the grievance directly with the persons concerned. This may involve:

- informing the person of the conduct or issue of concern,
- informing the person how the conduct or issue made the member feel, or how it affected them, and
- clearly asking the person to stop or appropriately address the conduct or issue complained of.

Approaching the person directly is not a compulsory step. The Member is encouraged to progress to Step 2 if they:

- do not feel comfortable or safe confronting the relevant person,
- the grievance is serious, or
- the grievance remains unresolved after approaching the person.

Step 2: Report the grievance to a Buddy Up Representative

If the grievance is not able to be resolved under Step 1, the member should report the grievance to a Buddy Up representative, being their Chapter Leader, State Program Co-ordinator or National Program Manager.

A Buddy Up Representative may:

- discuss the grievance with the member,
- explain the steps that can be taken under this policy to attempt to resolve the grievance,
- identify the outcomes sought by the member,
- determine whether they are the appropriate person to be handling the grievance, or
- determine whether the grievance should be resolved through an informal or formal process.

Step 3: Informal grievance resolution

The informal grievance resolution procedure will be used for grievances that are less serious and are unlikely to result in disciplinary action.

The informal procedure involves a range of informal actions to attempt to resolve the grievance including but not limited to:

- making enquiries to ascertain further information about the grievance,
- holding a mediation or meeting between the member and the person/s whom the grievance is about, with a view to resolving the grievance,
- discussing the grievance with the person whom the grievance is about, and
- training or coaching about appropriate behaviour in the Buddy Up environment and Buddy Up's Code of Conduct.

Where a Buddy Up Representative feels the informal grievance resolution procedure is not appropriate in the circumstances, or the grievance remains unresolved, the grievance may be escalated to Step 4 after consultation with the Executive Director.

Step 4: Formal grievance resolution

Formal grievances will be overseen by the Executive Director, or the Board Chair in the event that a formal grievance concerns the Executive Director.

The formal grievance resolution procedure will generally be used for grievances that:

- are serious in nature,
- are likely to result in disciplinary action, and/or
- remain unresolved after Step 3.

To escalate a grievance to Step 4, the Member must provide the Buddy Up Representative with a written statement about the grievance as soon as reasonably practicable. The written statement should include the following information (if known):

- name of the person whom the grievance is about,
- nature of the alleged conduct or issue,
- dates and times when the alleged conduct or issue occurred,
- names of any witnesses,
- any action taken by the member to resolve the grievance, and
- the outcome being sought.

Buddy Up may at its sole discretion decide to apply the formal grievance resolution procedure to a grievance that has not been reported in writing, due to the seriousness of the alleged conduct or issues.

The Executive Director will determine the procedure for addressing a formal grievance under Step 4, considering the nature and severity of the allegations. Once determined, the member will be notified verbally or in writing of the procedure to be followed.

The formal grievance resolution procedure may involve a formal investigation of the allegations. Where formal investigation occurs, Buddy Up may, at its sole discretion, appoint either an internal or external investigator who may investigate in a manner which they consider is appropriate in the circumstances.

4.1. Investigating Complaints

In all actions taken under this policy, the principles of procedural fairness and natural justice will be observed, including:

- conducting a review expeditiously upon the receipt of any report,
- providing an opportunity for a member to present their allegations and any supporting facts in writing,
- informing a respondent of sufficient particulars of the allegations to enable them to respond to any allegation,
- affording the respondent, a reasonable opportunity to respond, and to provide a written or oral response to the information provided,
- any investigation process relating to an allegation will be conducted by an impartial investigator appointed by the Executive Director,
- the right to have a support person at any meeting (applies to both the complainant and the respondent), and
- any decision made by the impartial decision maker will be based on evidence.

The expectation is all members will participate in the relevant resolution process in good faith, and in an open and honest manner.

4.2. Financial Support

Whilst Buddy Up Australia is not obliged to provide financial support to members in relation to a grievance matter, any requests for financial support, including assistance towards legal fees, will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Requests are to be made in writing to the Executive Director, who in consultation with the Chair and / or Board of Directors, may approve financial support in consideration of investigation outcomes and a review of the organisations financial position.

4.3. Confidentiality

Buddy Up Representatives will endeavour to maintain confidentiality as far as reasonably practicable during the handling of any grievance. However, it may be necessary to speak with other people or disclose details of the grievance, for example, to determine what happened, to gather information, where someone's safety of health and wellbeing may be at risk or to afford fairness to those against whom the grievance has been made and to resolve the grievance.

All members who are involved with the grievance under this policy must maintain confidentiality, and shall not discuss the grievance, the grievance handling process, or the outcomes with others.

Failure to maintain confidentiality constitutes non-compliance with this policy.

4.4. Grievance outcomes

Whilst the timeframe for resolving a grievance under this policy will vary depending on the nature and complexity of the concerns or issues raised, Buddy Up will endeavour to resolve grievances in a timely manner.

A Buddy Up Representative will inform the complainant and the respondent of the outcome as soon as reasonably practicable after a determination has been made.

The desired outcome of any grievance is that relationships are restored, and parties are able to interact harmoniously in accord with Buddy Up’s values.

Where the substantiated complaint is deemed serious in nature, Buddy Up may report the matter to the appropriate Federal or State authority.

If a report is found to be made frivolously or vexatiously, Buddy Up may take disciplinary action including, but not limited to, revocation of membership, formal warning, or referral to an appropriate Federal or State authority.

4.5. Record Keeping

All incidents, informal and formal, are to be reported through to the Executive Director for recording in the Incident Register.

11. Roles and Responsibilities

High level responsibilities	
Members	<p>Responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creating, maintaining and being a part of an environment in which everyone is treated with respect, courtesy, fairness and dignity, without bullying, discrimination or harassment. • not using, causing, instructing, aiding or knowingly permit another person to engage in discriminating or harassing behaviour. • not placing the health, wellbeing or safety of others at risk by engaging in unacceptable behaviours. • adhering to expected standards of professional and ethical conduct and behaviour. • completing relevant training and participate in awareness-raising activities. • seeking advice and reporting unacceptable behaviours in accordance with this policy and related procedures. • cooperating with the complaints and grievances resolution processes and abide by any resolution outcomes, if required.
Buddy Up Representatives (Chapter Leaders, Program Coordinators or Program Manager)	<p>Responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fostering a culture that does not tolerate bullying, harassment and discrimination, and handling instances in line with this policy. • managing grievances in accordance with this policy. • escalating grievances to the Executive Director as required.
Executive Director	<p>Responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implementing a framework safeguarding the health and wellbeing of Members. • providing advice on the Buddy Up Member Protection Policy • managing grievances in accordance with this policy and leading the resolution of formally reported issues under Step 4. • maintaining an Incident Register. • assuming accountability for the effectiveness of this policy. • approving requests for financial support after consultation with

	the Chair and / or Board of Directors.
Buddy Up Board of Directors	<p>Responsible for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring that Buddy Up observes all laws relating to safeguarding the health and wellbeing of Members. • ensuring adequate resources to enable effective safeguarding of Members. • approving the Member Protection Policy. • take proactive steps to understand and assess the systems of culture (both formal and informal) in our organisation and work with management to leverage opportunities and implement changes where necessary.

12. Companion Document

This policy should be read in conjunction with Buddy Up Australia’s [Code of Conduct](#).

13. Approval

This policy has been approved by Buddy Up Australia’s Board of Directors.

14. Variation and Review

Buddy Up reserves the right to vary, replace or terminate this policy at any time. This policy will be reviewed every two years by the Board.