



## **ECOSS Dispute Resolution and Grievance Process**

### **Introduction**

Open communication and feedback are regarded as essential elements of a satisfying and productive work environment.

Yarra Valley ECOSS encourages its employees, volunteers, Site Co-locators, Committee of Management and paid independent contractors to resolve any issues or concerns that they may have at the earliest opportunity with each other. Failing that, they should take their concern to their immediate supervisor or point of contact on the Committee of Management.

The preferred process involves employees, volunteers or Site Co-locators resolving issues to their satisfaction internally, without feeling they have to refer to external organisations or to authorities for assistance.

Open and non-aggressive communication methods will be used, including active listening and respectful process.

Yarra Valley ECOSS will commit to training Committee of Management Members in open and non-aggressive communication, ensuring they strive for positive communication strategies.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to provide an avenue through which employees, volunteers, Site Co-locators and their supervisors, can resolve work-related complaints as they arise.

### **Policy**

Yarra Valley ECOSS will establish mechanisms to promote timely and efficient resolution of workplace issues.

Employees, volunteers and Site Co-locators should feel comfortable discussing issues with their point of contact or supervisor in accordance with the procedures outlined below.

All formal avenues for handling grievances will be fully documented and the employee/volunteer/site co-locator's wishes will be taken into account in determining the appropriate steps and actions.

No employee/volunteer/site co-locator will be intimidated or unfairly treated in any respect if they utilise this Policy to resolve an issue.

This Policy applies to permanent and part-time or casual paid employees and to volunteer workers and ECOSS site Co-locators.

## Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of **Staff and Committee of Management (COM)** to ensure that:

- They identify, prevent and address potential problems before they become formal grievances;
- They are aware of, and are committed to the principles of communicating and information sharing with their employees and volunteers;
- All decisions relating to employment practices are made with consideration given to the ramifications for the individual, as well as the organisation in general;
- Any grievance is handled in the most appropriate manner at the earliest opportunity;
- All employees, volunteers and Site Co-locators are treated fairly and without fear of intimidation.
- **Confidentiality/Privacy:** You agree to uphold strict confidentiality & privacy principles whilst employed by YV ECOSS and at all times thereafter, as to YV ECOSS client/customer/staff information, data, operating procedures, lists and financial information acquired by you during your tenure of employment.

It is the responsibility of **Employees, Volunteers and Site Co-locators** to ensure that:

- They attempt to resolve any issues through their immediate supervisor or point of contact on COM and through internal processes at the earliest opportunity.

It is the responsibility of the **Committee of Management** to ensure that:

- All supervisors, employees, volunteers and Site Co-locators and paid independent contractors are aware of their obligations and responsibilities in relation to communication and information sharing;
- Ongoing support and guidance is provided to all employees in relation to employment and communication issues;
- All supervisors, employees, volunteers and Site Co-locators and paid independent contractors are aware of their obligations and responsibilities in relation to handling grievances;
- Any grievance that comes to the attention of supervisors is handled in the most appropriate manner at the earliest opportunity.

## Employment Practices

All Committee of Management members and supervisors should be aware of the possible ramifications of their actions when dealing with employee/volunteer/site co-locator and paid independent contractor issues. They must ensure that all employees, volunteers and site co-locators and paid independent contractors are treated with fairness, equality and respect.

If there are any doubts or queries in relation to how to deal with a particular set of circumstances, supervisors should contact the Committee of Management for advice at the earliest opportunity.

Where a grievance or dispute has been brought to a Manager's/COM's attention, they should assess whether the person complaining involved is covered by an Award or Agreement, and if so should refer to that document for grievance procedures. If the employee or volunteer involved is not covered by such a document, the guidelines below should be followed.

## Grievances and Dispute Resolution Procedures:

**Step 1:** An employee, volunteer or Site Co-locator or paid independent contractor who considers that they have a dispute or grievance should raise the matter with their immediate supervisor or point of contact on COM as a first step towards resolution.

All parties are to maintain complete confidentiality at all times.

**Step 2:** The two parties should discuss the matter openly and work together to achieve a desired outcome within an agreed time frame

The Supervisor should check for clarification of the issue to ensure they fully understand the complainant's concern. Supervisors should follow the standard procedure of offering the employee, volunteer or Site Co-locator or paid independent contractor the opportunity to have an independent witness at the discussion, ensuring they follow the steps outlined below:

- If more than one person is present, establish the role of each person.
- Outline the process that is to be followed.
- Inform the parties that any information obtained in the conduct of the review is confidential.
- Listen to the complainant and diagnose the problem.
- Take accurate and detailed notes of all conversations (including dates, people involved) and attach any supporting documentation.
- If deemed necessary, provide the employee/volunteers/site co-locator/paid independent contractor with a written summary of the meeting and clarification of the next steps to be taken.

The Supervisor must ensure that the manner in which the meeting is conducted will be conducive to maintaining positive working relationships, and will provide a fair, objective and independent analysis of the situation.

**Step 3:** If deemed necessary, the complainant is to be provided with an Incident Report Form, which will be filled out and given to the President of the Committee of Management either in person, or via the pigeonhole, and notify their supervisor that the Incident Report Form has been lodged. The complainant will receive a response within 14 days.

**Step 4:** If the complainant is not satisfied with the response and the matter is not resolved, for example: If the grievance/dispute is one of a confidential or serious nature involving the employee, volunteer's supervisor or site co-locators or paid independent contractor's point of contact, then the issue should be discussed with another member of the Committee of Management or the CEO.

**Step 5: If the dispute is not resolved within Committee of Management**

If the dispute still remains unsolved, an independent mediator may be employed as soon as possible by the Committee of Management to make an extra effort to resolve the conflict.

**Step 6: If the dispute is still not resolved**

If the dispute remains unsolved the Complainant may wish to take the dispute to VCAT whereby it will be heard by a tribunal.

Wherever possible ECOSS strives to resolve disputes or take relevant action within one month of receipt of the dispute/ incident report form.

## **Authorisation**

[Signature of Committee of Management Secretary]

[Date]

[Name of Organisation]