

## 4. U3A LAKES ENTRANCE – Policy Guidelines

### BULLYING (approved 11 March 2021)

#### Introduction

1. U3A Lakes Entrance Inc. regards the dignity and autonomy of all people as a core value of the organization. Bullying behaviour is based on the misuse of power in human relationships and negates the dignity and autonomy of its victims.
2. U3A Lakes Entrance Inc. is fully committed to eliminating, as far as possible, all forms of bullying in its operating environment and relationships, through a culture of openness, support and accountability.

#### Purpose

3. The purpose of this document is to outline U3A Lakes Entrance Inc.'s position on bullying and to document the process for responding to a report of bullying. This document is a policy guideline and is consistent with:
  - \* The U3A Network Victoria Rules and Constitution as amended December 2013.
  - \* The Associations Incorporation Reform Regulations 2012.

#### Policy

4. This policy deals with repeated unreasonable behaviour that constitutes bullying.
5. “Unreasonable behaviour” is behaviour that is offensive, humiliating, intimidating, degrading or threatening. It includes, but is not limited to:
  - \* verbal abuse
  - \* excluding or isolating another person/s
  - \* 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.
6. “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.
7. Bullying can occur between two or more members and/or volunteers.

8. Bullying that directly inflicts physical pain or harm amounts to assault and will not be dealt with under this policy (refer to clause 19).
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. U3A Lakes Entrance Inc. 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.
12. Complaints will be treated in confidence, and where confidentiality cannot be guaranteed this will be clearly indicated to the complainant.
13. All parties will be treated with respect.
14. 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**

15. A person who believes that he/she is the subject of bullying should take firm, positive and prompt action. 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.
16. 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 U3A Lakes Entrance Inc.'s Secretary who will notify the President immediately.
17. 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.
18. The complainant will be handled in accordance with U3A Lakes Entrance Inc.'s *Grievance Policy*.
19. Some forms of severe bullying, for example, physical attack or obscene phone calls, may constitute criminal conduct. While U3A Lakes Entrance Inc. is committed to treat most complaints about bullying at an organizational level as far as is possible, potentially 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 Lakes Entrance Inc. to report such matters to Victoria Police on behalf of the complainant.

## Responsibilities

20. U3A Lakes Entrance Inc.'s Committee of Management is responsible for developing, implementing, reviewing and publishing this policy.

21. It is the responsibility of U3A Lakes Entrance Inc.'s Committee of Management to ensure that:

- \* they understand and are committed to the right of all members and volunteers to attend U3A activities and venues without fear of being bullied in any way

- \* all reasonable steps are taken to eliminate bullying

- \* all members and volunteers and made aware of their obligations and responsibilities to foster a U3A environment that is free from bullying

- \* they foster an environment that discourages bullying, and set an example by their own conduct

- \* all complaints are treated promptly, seriously and confidentially

- \* they are, as far as is practicable, 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

- behavioral changes such as depression

- \* they take corrective action when they become aware of any offensive action

- \* guidance and education is provided subsequent to decisions relating to bullying

- \* ongoing support and guidance is provided in relation to the prevention of bullying

22. 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 and volunteers to attend U3A premises and activities without fear of bullying

- \* they help foster an environment that discourages bullying

23. U3A Lakes Entrance Inc.'s 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.

24. U3A Lakes Entrance Inc.'s President, or his/her delegate, is responsible for interviewing and supporting a complainant.

25. U3A Lakes Entrance Inc.'s President is responsible for ensuring that a bullying complaint is handled in accordance with U3A Lakes Entrance Inc.'s *Grievance Policy*.

***This document was approved by the Lakes Entrance U3A  
Committee of Management on 11 March 2021.***