

Heartfulness Institute, Australia

Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy

1. Statement of Intent

Heartfulness Institute, Australia is committed to encouraging all meditators to maintain respectful relationships and to avoid words or actions that may harm the wellbeing of others.

Everyone has the right to be treated with consideration, fairness, dignity, and respect. This contributes to an environment in which individuals feel safe to meditate and volunteer.

The organization has zero tolerance towards bullying and harassment and will investigate any allegations of such behavior.

This policy applies to all individuals practicing Heartfulness within Australia and should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Heartfulness Code of Conduct for Volunteers
- Heartfulness Code of Conduct for Trainers
- Guidance for Meditators
- Complaints Handling Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

2. Definition of Harassment and Bullying

Harassment is any unwanted physical, verbal, or non-verbal conduct that has the purpose or effect of:

- Violating a person's dignity, or
- Creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment.

Harassment may be an isolated incident or repeated behavior, and may occur against one or more individuals. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Physical: touching, assault, gestures, intimidation, aggressive behavior.
- Verbal: unwelcome remarks, suggestions or propositions, malicious gossip, jokes, banter, offensive language.
- Non-verbal: offensive literature or pictures, graffiti, inappropriate computer imagery, isolation or exclusion from social activities.

- Written harassment includes unwelcome remarks, suggestions, or propositions; malicious gossip; jokes or banter; offensive language; personal insults; or insults against the Heartfulness organization. This applies to all forms of written communication, including physical letters, emails, and digital messaging services (e.g., WhatsApp, SMS, or social media).

Bullying is generally repeated and persistent behavior, though it may also occur in single severe instances. It includes behavior such as:

- Intimidating, physically abusive, or threatening conduct.
- Ridiculing or humiliating an individual, especially in front of others.
- Malicious or insulting behavior.
- Singling out one person unfairly when there is a common issue.
- Shouting at an individual to enforce compliance.

3. If You Are Being Harassed or Bullied

If you experience harassment or bullying, consider whether you feel able to raise the issue directly with the person responsible. If you do so, explain clearly that their behavior is not welcome and makes you uncomfortable.

If this is too difficult, embarrassing, or serious, you should raise your concerns in accordance with our Complaints Handling Policy or Whistleblowing Policy. These policies can be found on our Australia website: www.heartfulnessinstitute.org.au

4. Consequences of Breach

Where an allegation is established against a **volunteer, trainer, Heartspot coordinator, or zonal coordinator**, the following steps (or others, depending on severity) may be taken:

- A formal apology (in person, in writing, or both).
- Requirement to undertake further training.
- Written warning issued by the Secretary, outlining corrective steps and a timeline for remedial action (which may also include issuing an apology or training).
- Termination of engagement or removal from role by the Secretary and/or Board of Directors, where considered to be in the best interests of Heartfulness Institute, Australia.

Where an allegation is established against a **mediator/participant**, the following graduated steps may be taken depending on the seriousness and/or frequency of the behaviour:

- Verbal warning – for minor or first-time breaches.
- Written warning – where behaviour persists or is more serious in nature.
- Temporary suspension – exclusion from Heartfulness sessions or activities for a defined period.
- Permanent expulsion – in cases of repeated, severe, or harmful conduct, the individual may be permanently excluded from participating in Heartfulness sessions or events.

All decisions will be made in consultation with the Secretary, and records of actions taken will be maintained in accordance with the Complaints Handling Policy