

Heartfulness Institute, Australia

Whistleblowing Policy

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a safe and transparent process for volunteers, trainers, coordinators, and members of the public to raise concerns about serious misconduct, illegal activity, or breaches of policy at Heartfulness Institute, Australia.

The policy ensures that individuals can report concerns confidentially and without fear of reprisal, in line with the Australian Whistleblower Protection Laws (Corporations Act 2001 and ACNC Governance Standards).

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Volunteers, trainers, coordinators, Board members, and staff (if any).
- Contractors, partners, and service providers.
- Participants or members of the public who engage with Heartfulness Institute programs.

Concerns may be raised about conduct within any centre, program, or activity of Heartfulness Institute, Australia.

3. What Can Be Reported

Whistleblowing concerns may include, but are not limited to:

- Fraud, theft, or misuse of funds.
- Corruption, bribery, or conflicts of interest.
- Serious breaches of Heartfulness policies or codes of conduct.
- Bullying, harassment, or discrimination.
- Abuse or endangerment of participants, volunteers, or the public.
- Criminal conduct or suspected illegal activity.
- Cover-ups or attempts to conceal misconduct.

This policy does not cover personal complaints or grievances (e.g. interpersonal disputes) unless they involve systemic misconduct or serious risk to the organisation. Such issues should be raised under the Complaints Handling Policy.

4. Reporting a Concern

Concerns can be reported in any of the following ways:

- Email: au.secretary@heartfulness.org or australia@heartfulness.org
- In writing: Addressed to the Secretary, Heartfulness Institute, Australia
- Direct report: To the Chair of the Board of Directors, where appropriate

Anonymous reports will be accepted, though more detail is encouraged to enable a proper investigation.

When raising a concern, please provide:

- A clear description of the issue.
- Dates, times, locations, and people involved (if known).
- Any supporting evidence (emails, documents, observations).

5. Protection of Whistleblowers

Heartfulness Institute, Australia is committed to protecting whistleblowers from:

- Dismissal or demotion.
- Harassment, victimisation, or discrimination.
- Threats or retaliation.

Confidentiality will be strictly maintained, and the identity of the whistleblower will not be disclosed without consent, unless required by law.

6. Investigation Process

1. Acknowledgement – All reports will be acknowledged within 10 business days.
2. Assessment – The Secretary and/or designated Board members will assess the nature and seriousness of the concern.
3. Investigation – An impartial investigator will gather evidence, interview relevant parties, and ensure all sides are heard.

4. Outcome – Findings will be documented, and corrective actions (if required) will be implemented.

5. Feedback – Where possible, the whistleblower will be informed of the outcome, subject to privacy and legal constraints.

7. False or Malicious Allegations

While all reports are encouraged, deliberately false or malicious allegations are not acceptable. If such behaviour is found, it may result in disciplinary action.

8. Roles and Responsibilities

- Board of Directors: Overall responsibility for oversight of whistleblowing reports and investigations.
- Secretary: Primary contact point, responsible for maintaining records and ensuring follow-up.
- Volunteers and Trainers: Required to report concerns honestly and cooperate with investigations.

9. Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or sooner if required by changes in law, regulatory requirements, or organisational needs.