



Code of Conduct

Version V1

Date of Approval 20 June 2021

PREAMBLE

It is important that the Committee Members of Victorian Environment Friends Network (VEFN) demonstrate a high standard of professional conduct, which is evident in their dealings with each other and dealings with personnel from VEFN members. This code of conduct is written to help support Committee Members to be effective and skilled at managing the range of issues referred to in the code.

The purpose of this code of conduct is to:

1. Set general principles of behaviour and ensuring that respect is a central part of VEFN activity.
2. Have appropriate child safe policies in place.
3. Establish procedures through which sexual harassment and bullying issues are minimized and dealt with appropriately, if required

Breaches of the code of conduct must be addressed by the VEFN Committee which should advise the person breaching the code to cease such actions. Complaints regarding code of conduct breaches must be handled in a timely, responsive and sensitive manner.

If a Committee Member fails to address breaches of the code of conduct then this may be grounds for disciplinary action including suspension or expulsion of the VEFN committee, in accordance with the Rules of VEFN.

1. BEHAVIOUR

Committee Members must meet the following requirements regarding their conduct during any activity held or sanctioned by VEFN:

- (a) Respect the rights, dignity and worth of others, and value their ideas and opinions
- (b) Be fair, considerate and honest in all dealings with others
- (c) Maintain a duty of care to others involved in VEFN and VEFN Member programs
- (d) Be professional in, and accept responsibility for, their actions
- (e) Operate within the Rules of VEFN
- (f) Report any unlawful, threatening or violent behaviour to the appropriate authorities.

VEFN Committee Members must not:

- (a) Engage in any unlawful, threatening or violent behaviour
- (b) Shame, humiliate, oppress, belittle or degrade any person
- (c) Engage in any form of harassment of others



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- (d) Unlawfully discriminate against any person
- (e) Use their involvement with VEFN, or a Member Group to promote their own beliefs, behaviours or practices where these are inconsistent with those of VEFN or a Member Group
- (f) Do anything that brings VEFN or friends groups in general into disrepute.

2. CHILD SAFETY

Context

VEFN strives to be Child Safe, with no tolerance for child abuse and a commitment to children's best interests. All children who participate in VEFN activities have a right to feel and to be safe. We encourage children to express their views and we listen to their suggestions, especially on matters that directly affect them.

Physical or sexual abuse of a child is a crime and must be reported to police, including grooming for sexual conduct with a child under the age of 16 years. All adults who form a reasonable belief that such a sexual offence has occurred have an obligation to report it to police.

This Code is intended comply with the Victorian Government's Child Safe requirements. VEFN recognises that there are key risks to Child Safety being:

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Grooming (abuse of trust usually occurs where there is an ongoing relationship of trust)
- Inappropriate child-to-child or adult-to-child physical or verbal contact
- Circulation of sexually explicit material.

Managing the risks

In order that these risks are managed effectively, VEFN must:

- (a) Consider child safety risks in their event / activity planning
- (b) Actively work to mitigate any risks
- (c) Ensure there are people appropriately qualified to work with children, when appropriate
- (d) Model appropriate behaviour towards children
- (e) Listen directly to children and respond to them appropriately
- (f) Report any complaints, concerns or disclosures to the VEFN Committee.

VEFN Committee members must not:

- (a) Engage in any activity with a child that is likely to physically or emotionally harm them
- (b) Initiate unnecessary physical contact with a child, or do things of a personal nature for them that they can do for themselves
- (c) Be alone with a child unnecessarily and for more than the shortest possible time
- (d) Engage in open discussions of a mature or adult nature or use inappropriate language in the presence of children
- (e) Show favouritism to children through the provision of gifts or inappropriate attention.



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3. SEXUAL HARASSMENT, BULLYING AND RESPECT

Context

All Committee Members and VEFN Members are entitled to be treated with dignity and respect. VEFN has a commitment to provide a healthy and safe working environment free from workplace bullying and sexual harassment.

Under the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 organisations covered by the law – including volunteer based organisations – have a positive duty to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation.

Managing the risks

The VEFN Committee members will:

- (a) Be aware of potential situations where such behaviour can occur in planning events / activities
- (b) Actively plan to manage such potential situations
- (c) Actively work to mitigate the risk
- (d) Report any complaints, concerns or disclosures to the VEFN Committee while maintaining confidentiality and protecting people's identity

If a matter of bullying or sexual harassment is raised to the Committee, office bearers will:

- (a) Seek the advice of experienced and responsible external advisors to address the situation
- (b) Ensure all processes maintain confidentiality and protect people's identity.