

Animal Welfare.
Worldwide.



FOUR PAWS Australia Whistleblower Policy

December 2019

1 TARGET GROUP

This Whistleblower Policy applies to FOUR PAWS Australia personnel, contractors, the employees of our contractors and volunteers.

2 OBJECTIVE

FOUR PAWS Australia (FP-AU) is committed to operating legally (in accordance with applicable legislation and regulation), properly (in accordance with organisational policy and procedures), and ethically (in accordance with recognised ethical principles). On this basis we do not tolerate unethical, unlawful, undesirable or immoral conduct. Employees and those working with and on behalf of FP-AU are expected to cooperate with the organisation in maintaining legal, proper, and ethical operations, if necessary by reporting non-compliant actions by other people.

This policy outlines our commitment to maintaining an environment in which our personnel, contractors, the employees of our contractors and our volunteers, can report, without fear of retaliatory action, concerns about any serious instances of wrongdoing that they believe may be occurring in FP-AU. It should encourage the reporting of matters that may cause harm to individuals or financial or non-financial loss to FP-AU or its overseas affiliates or damage to its reputation;

3 INTERACTION WITH OTHER POLICIES

This policy is not intended to replace other reporting processes that may deal with ethical, moral and/or legal issues, except where the issue is a serious matter where existing reporting systems have failed to process the issue or processed it in an inappropriate, unfair or biased manner.

4 WHISTLEBLOWING DEFINITION

There is no globally accepted definition of 'whistleblowing'. However, a commonly accepted definition specifies that 'whistleblowing' is:

.... the disclosure by organization members (former or current) of illegal, immoral or illegitimate practices under the control of their employers to persons that may be able to effect action.¹

Wrongdoing includes any conduct that:

- is dishonest, fraudulent or corrupt,
- is illegal, such as theft, drug sale or use, violence, harassment, criminal damage to property or other breaches of the laws of states, territories or the Commonwealth of Australia,

¹ Parliament of Australia Department of Parliamentary Services – Research Note 14 February 2005, No.31, 2004-5 ISSN 1449-8456

- is unethical, such as dishonestly altering company records or engaging in questionable accounting practices, or wilfully breaching FP-AU's Constitution or other ethical statements,
- is potentially damaging to FP-AU or FP-AU personnel, such as unsafe work practices or substantial wasting of resources,
- may cause financial loss to FP-AU or damage its reputation, or be otherwise detrimental to FP-AU's interests, or
- involves any other kind of serious impropriety.

5 REPORTING A MATTER

Any personnel who detects or has reasonable grounds for suspecting wrongdoing is encouraged to raise any concerns with their Line Manager through normal reporting channels. Volunteers should raise concerns with coordinators, who must then report them to the Director Australia. A contractor or former employee should report possible concerns to the Director Australia.

The Line Manager must report the allegation to the Director Australia, who is responsible for ensuring this matter and other possible matters reported via volunteer coordinators, contractors and former employees is properly dealt with, which may include appointing an external investigator to inquire into the allegations.

Where the whistle-blower does not feel comfortable reporting to their Line Manager or volunteer coordinator, or where the whistle-blower has previously done so and believes no action has been taken, or where the whistle-blower wishes to remain anonymous, matters may be reported directly to the Director Australia.

In the case of alleged or suspected wrongdoing involving senior FP-AU management, then the whistle-blower may contact a member of the Board of FOUR PAWS Australia or the International Head of Human Resources at FOUR PAWS International (Vienna).

6 INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGATIONS

All reports of wrongdoing will be thoroughly investigated as appropriate - either internally or as otherwise nominated by a Board member or the International Head of Human Resources. The investigation will be conducted in a fair and impartial way, following the principles of natural justice, which means the investigation will be conducted without bias and that any person against whom an allegation is made will be given the opportunity to respond.

At the end of the investigation, the investigator will report their findings to the Director Australia who will determine the appropriate response, or, should senior management be implicated, to the nominated Board member of FOUR PAWS Australia or the International Head of Human Resources. FP-AU is committed to implementing the findings and recommendations of any investigation to rectify any wrongdoing as far as are practicable in the circumstances.

Where issues of discipline arise, the response will be in line with FP-AU Disciplinary Procedures.

7 CONFIDENTIALITY OF WHISTLE-BLOWER'S IDENTITY AND WHISTLEBLOWING REPORTS

If a person makes a report of alleged or suspected wrongdoing under this policy, FP-AU will endeavour to protect that person's identity from disclosure.

Generally, FP-AU will not disclose the person's identity unless:

- (a) the person making the report consents to the disclosure,
- (b) the disclosure is required or authorised by law, and/or
- (c) the disclosure is necessary to further the investigation.

Generally, reports made under this policy will be treated confidentially. However, when a report is investigated, it may be necessary to reveal its substance to people such as other FP-AU personnel, external persons involved in the investigation process and, in appropriate circumstances, law enforcement agencies.

At some point in time, it may also be necessary to disclose the fact and the substance of a report to the person who is the subject of the report. Although confidentiality is maintained, in some circumstances, the source of the reported issue may be obvious to a person who is the subject of a report.

8 COMMUNICATION WITH THE WHISTLE-BLOWER

Once the investigation is complete, a verbal report will be made to the whistle-blower. This report will explain the findings and actions taken to the fullest extent possible within commercial, legal and confidentiality constraints. Where the whistle-blower chooses to remain anonymous, alternative arrangements may be made for providing a verbal report of the outcome of the investigation to that person.

All whistle-blowers must maintain the confidentiality of all such reports, and not disclose the information to any person.

9 WHISTLE-BLOWER PROTECTION

Whistle-blowers who report matters in good faith, and provided they have not been involved in the conduct reported, will not be penalised or personally disadvantaged because they have reported a matter, by any of the following:

- dismissal, demotion, any form of harassment, discrimination, bias
- or threats of any of the above.

A whistle-blower who believes they, or their family, have been the victim of any of the above because of their status as a whistle-blower, should immediately report the issue to the

Director Australia, a Board member of FOUR PAWS Australia or the Head of International Human Resources.

Any Manager, who is found to have dismissed, demoted, harassed, or discriminated against a whistle-blower because of their status as a whistle-blower, may be subjected to disciplinary measures, including dismissal.

10 WHISTLE-BLOWER INVOLVEMENT

A whistle-blower, who has been involved in the reported conduct, may still be provided with immunity from FP-AU initiated disciplinary proceedings by agreement with the Director Australia or, as appropriate, International Head of Human Resources. FP-AU has no power to provide immunity from criminal prosecution.

11 NOT ACTING IN GOOD FAITH OR FALSE REPORTING

Where it is established by the investigator that the whistle-blower is not acting in good faith, or they have made a false report, personnel will be subject to disciplinary proceedings, which may include dismissal. In all other cases appropriate action will be taken, which may include legal action.

While not intending to discourage whistle-blowers from reporting matters of genuine concern, it is strongly suggested whistle-blowers ensure as far as possible that reports are factually accurate, complete, from first-hand knowledge, presented in an unbiased fashion (and any possible perception of bias of the whistle-blower is disclosed), and without omitting any facts.

12 MANAGEMENT OF A PERSON AGAINST WHOM A REPORT IS MADE

FP-AU recognises that individuals against whom a report is made must also be supported during the handling and investigation of the report. FP-AU will take all reasonable steps to treat fairly the person who is the subject of a report, particularly during the assessment and investigation process.

Generally, the investigator must ensure that the person who is the subject of any report that is investigated:

- Is informed as to the substance of the allegations, and
- Is given the opportunity to answer the allegations before any investigation is finalised,
- Is informed about the substance of any adverse comments that may be included in any report arising from the investigation before it is finalised, and
- Has their defence set out fairly in any report.

Where the allegations in a report have been investigated, and the person who is the subject of the report is aware of the allegations or the facts of the investigation, the investigator must formally advise the person who is the subject of the disclosure of the outcome of the investigation.

13 MONITORING AND REVIEW OF POLICY

- (a) The Board of FOUR PAWS Australia is responsible for ensuring this policy is reviewed regularly.
- (b) Where whistle-blowing issues are identified, the Board of FOUR PAWS Australia will receive and consider reports from the Director Australia and work with the Director Australia to ensure that any necessary resolution is promptly implemented.
- (c) Any updates and revisions to this policy must be approved by the Board of FOUR PAWS Australia.
- (d) This policy and the actions outlined above will be reviewed in two years from the date of approval unless required earlier because of changes to the risk profile of the workplace or relevant legislation.
- (e) If necessary, further changes and actions may be introduced to ensure that whistle-blowers are protected.



FOUR PAWS Australia

GPO Box 2845, Sydney

NSW 2001, Australia

phone: 1800 454 228

enquiries@four-paws.org.au



[four-paws.org.au/instagram](https://www.instagram.com/four-paws.org.au)



[four-paws.org.au/facebook](https://www.facebook.com/four-paws.org.au)



[four-paws.org.au/twitter](https://www.twitter.com/four-paws.org.au)



[four-paws.org.au/youtube](https://www.youtube.com/four-paws.org.au)