

# Whistleblower Policy and Procedure

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Paddle Australia (**PA**) is committed to a culture of high integrity and ethical behaviour in fulfilling its responsibilities to its members and stakeholders and to comply with the *Corporations Act 2001 (Cth)* in all its operations and interactions.

## 2. PURPOSE

- 2.1 PA is committed to protecting and respecting the rights of a Whistleblower who reports wrongdoing or misconduct on reasonable grounds under this policy. PA will not tolerate any reprisals or threats of reprisals against a Whistleblower, or against a Whistleblower's colleagues, employer or relatives.
- 2.2 The purpose of this policy is to encourage the reporting of Reportable Conduct that is of legitimate concern to PA by providing a convenient and safe reporting mechanism that ensures protection for anyone who makes a Report.
- 2.3 This policy defines who can make a protected report and the process to make the Report.

## 3. SCOPE

- 3.1 This policy applies to all Workers of PA.
- 3.2 This policy does not apply to members of PA. Any Reportable Conduct or Whistleblowing relating to or by a member should be managed under PA's Member Protection Policy.

## 4. DEFINITIONS

- 4.1 "**Eligible Recipient**" refers to the nominated person(s) to receive Reports of Reportable Conduct. Currently the preferred Eligible Recipient is the PA CEO. Should this not be appropriate, alternative Eligible Recipients are the PA President or Member Protection Officer.
- 4.2 "**Report**" means when a Whistleblower notifies the Eligible Recipient of Reportable Conduct.
- 4.3 "**Reportable Conduct**" means information that the Whistleblower has reasonable grounds to suspect or have concerns of serious misconduct or wrongdoing that includes, without limitation:
- a) illegal activities (including but not limited to theft, dealing in or use of illicit drugs, violence, harassment, intimidation or threatened violence and criminal damage against property);
  - b) dishonest behaviour;
  - c) fraudulent or corrupt activity, including financial fraud or bribery;
  - d) perverting the course of justice;
  - e) unlawful, corrupt or irregular use of PAs funds or practices;
  - f) unethical behaviour, including any form of discrimination, harassment or bullying;
  - g) improper or misleading accounting or financial reporting practices;
  - h) a breach of any legislation relating to PAs operations or activities;

- i) behaviour that is oppressive, unjust, discriminatory or grossly negligent (including gross mismanagement, serious or substantial waste of PAs resources or repeated breaches of administrative procedures);
- j) any behaviour that poses a serious risk to the health and safety of any person at the workplace;
- k) a serious risk to public health, public safety or the environment;
- l) an improper state of affairs in relation to PA;
- m) any other conduct which may cause loss to PA or be otherwise detrimental to the interests of PA or any of its employees; and
- n) the deliberate concealment of information tending to show any of the conduct listed above.

Reportable Conduct does not include personal work-related grievances. Personal work-related grievances include but are not limited to interpersonal conflicts between the Whistleblower and another employee, or a decision relating to the engagement, transfer or promotion of the Whistleblower. Such grievances should be addressed by the appropriate manager in accordance with PAs Grievance Policy and Procedure.

- 4.4 **“Whistleblower”** means a person who makes a Report of Reportable Conduct under this policy on reasonable grounds.
- 4.5 **“Workers”** includes employees, independent contractors or representatives of independent contractors, work experience students and other volunteers.

## 5. RESPONSIBILITY TO REPORT

- 5.1 It is expected that any person becoming aware of any Reportable Conduct will notify the appropriate personnel as per this policy in order to maintain PAs integrity and ethical behaviour.
- 5.2 A Whistleblower must provide information to assist in any inquiry or investigation of the conduct disclosed.
- 5.3 A Report can be made anonymously, however it may be difficult for the matter to be properly investigated without the Whistleblower’s identity. If further legal action is taken on the reported matter, it may become necessary for a Whistleblower to identify themselves. Whistleblowers are encouraged to provide their identity to enable a robust process to be undertaken.

## 6. PROTECTION OF WHISTLEBLOWERS

- 6.1 PA will take all reasonable steps to ensure that a legitimate Whistleblower will not be subject to any form of victimisation, discrimination, harassment, demotion, dismissal, threats or prejudice because they have made a Report, even if the disclosure is subsequently determined to be incorrect or is not substantiated. This also applies to anyone providing information related to an investigation pursuant to this policy.
- 6.2 PA will take all reasonable steps to protect the identity of a Whistleblower and will adhere to statutory requirements in respect of the confidentiality of Reports made. In appropriate cases, disclosure of the identity of a Whistleblower or the allegation made may be unavoidable, such as if court proceedings result from a Report pursuant to this policy. If the Whistleblower wishes to benefit from statutory protections provided under the *Corporations Act 2001 (Cth)*, they may have to disclose their name. In these instances,

PA will continue to take all reasonable steps to protect the Whistleblower from any possible reprisal.

- 6.3 This policy will not protect a Whistleblower if they are also involved in, or connected with, the Reportable Conduct.

## 7. REPORTING ON REASONABLE GROUNDS

- 7.1 A Report may have serious consequences, including potential damage to the career prospects and reputation of people who are the subject of allegations of misconduct or wrongdoing. Therefore, it is very important that those who make a report under this policy do so with reasonable grounds for believing that the information is correct or likely to be correct.
- 7.2 PA takes very seriously any Reports made under this policy and will look particularly unfavourably on any false Reports or claims. Disciplinary action may be taken against anyone who makes a report that is not on reasonable grounds.
- 7.3 A Report will not be considered to be made on reasonable grounds if it is frivolous, vexatious, raised for a malicious reason, for personal gain or an ulterior motive, or if it is not based on facts and/or circumstances that provide a reasonable basis for the Report. Repeated Reports about trivial matters may also be considered not to be made on reasonable grounds and if so will not be investigated under this policy.

## 8. PROCEDURES

### 8.1 Making a Report to an Eligible Recipient

- 8.1.1 Any person who has reasonable grounds to suspect that Reportable Conduct has occurred is encouraged to first discuss the matter informally with their manager in order to determine if serious misconduct or wrongdoing has occurred. This provides an opportunity to clarify the conduct in question, ask questions and determine if the conduct is Reportable Conduct under this policy. At all times, these discussions must remain confidential.
- 8.1.2 If this is not considered appropriate, or the conduct has already been confirmed as Reportable Conduct, a Report should be made to an Eligible Recipient.
- 8.1.3 Reports should normally be made to the preferred Eligible Recipient. If the Report involves the preferred Eligible Recipient or a Director of PA, then the Report should be made to the alternative Eligible Recipients.
- 8.1.4 Where possible, a Report of Reportable Conduct should be in writing and should contain, as appropriate, details of the:
- a) nature of the alleged Reportable Conduct;
  - b) persons or persons believed to be responsible for the Reportable Conduct;
  - c) facts on which the Whistleblower's belief that a Reportable Conduct has occurred are based; and
  - d) nature and whereabouts of any further evidence that may substantiate the Whistleblower's allegations, if applicable.
- 8.1.5 Reports should provide specific, adequate and pertinent information regarding the Reportable Conduct with respect to, among other things, dates, places, specific

activities, persons/witnesses, amounts and other relevant information, in order to allow for a reasonable investigation to be conducted.

## 8.2 Reporting to a Third Party

8.2.1 Protection will only be offered by PA to any Whistleblower who informs an external (to PA) third party of concerns about Reportable Conduct if:

- a) the Whistleblower has previously made a Report regarding the matter to an Eligible Recipient and either:
  - (i) at least ninety (90) days have passed since the Report was made; and
  - (ii) the Whistleblower does not have reasonable grounds to believe that action is being, or has been taken to address the Report; and
  - (iii) the Whistleblower has reasonable grounds to believe that making a further Report would be in the public interest; or
  - (iv) the Whistleblower has reasonable grounds to believe that the information concerns a substantial and imminent danger to the health and safety of a person, persons, or the environment; and
- b) the Whistleblower provides prior written notification to PA that:
  - (i) includes sufficient information to identify the previously made Report;
  - (ii) clearly states that the Whistleblower intends to make a public interest disclosure or an emergency disclosure under this section of the policy; and
  - (iii) the information disclosed is no greater than necessary to inform the third party of the misconduct or the otherwise improper state of affairs.

## 8.3 Investigation

8.3.1 Any Reports of Reportable Conduct made under this policy will be properly assessed, and if appropriate, inquired into or independently investigated. The Eligible Recipient will determine the appropriate method and personnel for an investigation. In appropriate cases, assistance may be sought from internal or external specialists as deemed necessary.

8.3.2 During an investigation, an investigator must conduct sufficient inquiry to be able to determine conclusions and any recommendations regarding the Report.

8.3.3 The investigator and any specialists involved in the investigation shall be allowed access to all relevant materials, documents, and records and all personnel must co-operate fully with the investigator.

8.3.4 Any investigations will be conducted in a fair and independent manner and all reasonable efforts will be made to preserve the confidentiality of an investigation.

8.3.5 Information contained in reports and provided by Whistleblowers in the course of an investigation will be kept confidential, except as required by law or where disclosure is necessary to regulatory authorities, law enforcement agencies or professional advisors to PA.

8.3.6 A Whistleblower must keep confidential the fact that a Report has been made (subject to any legal requirements) to avoid jeopardising an investigation.

8.3.7 During an investigation, PA will also take reasonable steps to fairly treat any person who is the subject of a Report.

## 8.4 Investigation Findings

- 8.4.1 On conclusion of the investigation, the investigator must prepare a report of the findings for the Eligible Recipient which should include recommendations for steps to be taken to prevent the Reportable Conduct from occurring in the future, as well as any action that should be taken to remedy any harm or loss arising from the Reportable Conduct, including disciplinary proceedings against the person responsible for the conduct, and the referral of the matter to appropriate authorities, as is deemed necessary.
- 8.4.2 The Whistleblower will be kept informed of the progress, findings and conclusion of an investigation by the investigator, subject to privacy and confidentiality considerations.
- 8.4.3 Where a person is identified as being suspected of possible Reportable Conduct, but preliminary enquiries determine that the suspicion is baseless or unfounded and that no formal investigation is warranted, then the Whistleblower will be informed of this outcome and the matter concluded with no further action.
- 8.4.4 The Eligible Recipient will decide whether the person named in the Report should be informed that a Report was lodged and found to be baseless upon preliminary review. This decision will be based on a desire to preserve the integrity of a person so named and to protect the Whistleblower.
- 8.4.5 Where an investigation is conducted and the investigator believes there may be a case for an individual to respond to, the investigator must ensure that a person who is the subject of a Report:
- a) is informed of the substance of the allegations;
  - b) is given a fair and reasonable opportunity to answer the allegations before the investigation is finalised;
  - c) has their response set out fairly in the investigator's report; and
  - d) is informed about the substance of any adverse conclusions in the investigator's report that affects them.
- 8.4.6 Where adverse conclusions are made in an investigator's report about an individual, that individual has a right to respond to those conclusions prior to any action being taken by PA against them.
- 8.4.7 All relevant parties must adhere to the determination and any recommendations of an investigation or inquiry held under this policy.

## 9. BREACH OF THIS POLICY

- 9.1 Any Worker who is found to have breached this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or engagement.
- 9.2 Any retaliatory action or victimisation in reprisal for a Report made under this policy will be treated as serious misconduct and will result in disciplinary action, which may include termination of employment. In some circumstances, it may be illegal in which case PA may notify the Australian Securities and Investments Commission or the appropriate state or federal police.

## 10. REVIEWS

- 10.1 PA reserves the right to amend this policy from time to time subject to organisational needs or changes in the law. The Policy will be reviewed at least every two years and

any amendments will be approved by the PA Board, updated in the PA Policy register and updated on the PA website if appropriate.