

## **WREB Co-op Limited**

### **Internal Disputes Procedure**

This policy focuses on disputes that occur internally, such as those within management, and those between staff (volunteer and paid staff members) and management, or between individual staff members, whether paid or voluntary.

The following steps outline how to follow our adopted formal procedures for working through internal conflicts within our community organisation.

### **Our policies**

The following policies have been adopted after consulting widely with volunteers, paid staff members, board members and shareholders over some years.

When a conflict arises within the organisation, our policies are:

1. Disputes and conflict will be dealt with immediately. To ensure that bitter feelings and resentments are not left to fester and spread it is considered best that disputes and conflicts between people in the workplace are dealt with promptly.
2. Time will be allocated at board, management, and staff meetings to deal with disputes. Arrangements will be made for special dispute resolution meetings when required.
3. Disputes will be dealt with according to agreed procedures.
4. 2WEB listeners, supporters and sponsors will be protected from the effects of any dispute.
5. Complaints or grievances from people involved in the organisation will be raised and dealt with, within the organisation as comprehensively as possible.
6. Decisions will always be made with reference to the best interests of members, listeners, volunteers and paid staff and the organisation as a whole.
7. An outside, neutral person and/or facilitator will be called in to work with the group to solve a dispute if all parties cannot find agreement.

### **Operational matters**

The following operational matters will be observed by board and management:

- Conflicts will be automatically referred to a management committee meeting (either ordinary or special) where issues can be discussed and resolved as soon as they occur. These meetings will

deal with issues arising from conflict according to agreed policies and procedures.

- A contact person will be identified who is acceptable and accessible to everyone in the service. The role of the contact person is to act as first point of contact for the parties, and to propose a pathway to resolution of the conflict. This person may attempt to resolve the dispute, but whatever is finally decided needs to be ratified or agreed by the board of management.
- In the case of any failure by the initial contact person to resolve the conflict, a Disputes Sub-Committee may be set up by the board of management. In a similar fashion to the contact person, this sub-committee will have defined terms of reference and will act according to agreed policies and procedures. When attempting to resolve a dispute, the subcommittee will make recommendations to the complete board of management.

### **Dispute/conflict resolution process**

In dealing with all matters of internal conflict, the contact person, disputes sub-committee and board of management will have regard to basic principles of fairness and justice.

All parties to any dispute have the right to be heard and to put their case.

All parties to any internal dispute have the right to be represented by an independent person if that is their preference.

Any staff members, committee members and/or board members are required to observe the following principles:

- Clear communication
- Clear and democratic decision-making
- Compassionate hearing of all grievances
- Appropriate time limits for whatever is decided.
- Early contact is to be made with those involved in the dispute/complaint
- Initial contact is to be made verbally with all parties to the dispute
- Any final resolution decisions must be made in writing
- The disputes contact person will make the first attempt to resolve the dispute
- The contact person may decide to meet with each party to a dispute separately or all at the same time, depending on his/her judgment
- Possible outcomes to dispute resolution might be written or verbal warnings, compromises, written and signed agreements, recommended action, or internal changes to policy.
- If the first attempt to resolve a dispute fails entirely; a second attempt will be made by the board sub-committee.
- This subcommittee will review all information gathered in the first attempt at resolution and look for better ways to find a positive outcome.

- All parties to a dispute will have the right to appeal any decision to the full board of management.

**When a dispute arises:**

- The staff management team is authorised by the contact person, sub-committee or committee to make the first attempt to resolve the issue within a timeframe of 2 weeks.
- If the review by the contact person finds that the issue is not resolved, a second attempt to resolve the dispute is dealt with by the contact person, or the disputes sub-committee.
- If still unresolved, the dispute will be taken to the full board of management at an ordinary or special meeting for a decision.
- Appeals can occur within the wider management committee and involving outside representatives if any of the parties' desire.
- These procedures will be reviewed at the end of each year considering experience.