

Policy Statement

The Affinity Education Group Pty Ltd and its related entities (collectively 'AEG') recognise that commitment to fostering a culture of good corporate governance, ethical behaviour and the detection and prevention of illegal behaviour and undesirable conduct must include a mechanism in which concerns can be raised confidentially, freely, and without fear of reprimand, victimisation, or discrimination. This Whistleblower Policy provides a reporting mechanism and encourages a culture of reporting misconduct throughout the organisation. Individuals who make reports within the scope of this policy ('Whistleblowers') are encouraged to report actual, suspected or potential serious misconduct or an improper state of affairs or circumstances involving AEG.

This policy sets out:

- When a person will be protected for making a disclosure.
- The protections that will be provided to a Whistleblower.
- How disclosures made under this policy will be handled by AEG.

Purpose & Objectives

The purpose of this policy is to outline the governance and reporting processes which AEG apply to achieve the right outcomes for children, families, and our people. AEG is committed to conducting business responsibly, with honesty and integrity, and encourages a culture of openness and accountability in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations.

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Encourage disclosures of potential misconduct or an improper state of affairs or circumstances.
- Ensure individuals who disclose can do so safely, securely, and with confidence they will be protected and supported.
- Ensure that disclosures are dealt with appropriately and in a timely manner.
- Provide transparency around AEG's framework for receiving, handling, and investigating disclosures.
- Meet AEG's legal and regulatory obligations.

Disciplinary action may be imposed on anyone shown to have caused detriment to a person because they want to, or have raised a concern, or made a disclosure.

Scope of Policy

All directors, officers, employees and contractors of AEG, wherever they are based, must comply with this policy.

This policy also applies in relation to Whistleblowers, who are:

- current or former directors, officers, contractors and employees of AEG (including permanent, part-time, fixed term, temporary, volunteers, and consultants).
- An individual who supplies or has supplied services or goods to AEG (whether paid or unpaid) and employees of persons who supply or have supplied services or goods to AEG (whether paid or unpaid)
- Associates of AEG. The term 'Associate' is defined by the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth) ('**Corporations Act**') and it includes directors of related bodies corporate.
- A relative, dependant, or spouse of any of the above people.
- Anyone else who is an 'eligible whistleblower' under the *Corporations Act*.

Policy Principles and Requirements

Eligible disclosures may be about misconduct or an improper state of affairs or circumstances

Disclosures solely about personal work-related grievances are not covered by this policy and do not qualify for protection under the whistleblower laws unless they also relate to detriment or threat of detriment by reason of a Whistleblower making or being suspected of making a protected disclosure.

Accountable (Owner)	General Counsel	Accountable (Expert)	Chief Risk & Quality Officer
Responsible	All staff, students, volunteers, families	Document Version	V6.0
Consulted	People teams, Legal, Risk, Finance	Date Approved	Mar 2026
Informed	All staff, students, volunteers	Date next reviewed	Jan 2027

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1. Protected Disclosures

AEG encourages any individual to which the scope of this policy applies to raise their concerns by making a ‘**Protected Disclosure**’. Individuals must have reasonable grounds to suspect that information disclosed under this policy concerns misconduct or an improper state of affairs or circumstances. A disclosure made without reasonable grounds (such as where it is known by the individual making the disclosure to be false) may amount to misconduct and be subject to disciplinary action

AEG also supports and will comply with all statutory protections that are made available to Whistleblowers.

Examples of eligible disclosures:

Some examples of matters that qualify for protection under this policy and the whistleblower laws are:

- Conduct that amounts to a criminal offence or contravention of the Corporations Act or *Australian Securities and Investments Commission Act 2001* (Cth).
- Conduct that is a Commonwealth criminal offence punishable by more than 12 months imprisonment.
- Serious health and safety risks, including risks to children, employees, contractors, and children’s families.
- Any illegal conduct, such as sexual misconduct, grooming or predatory behaviour, theft, fraud, dealing in, or use of, illicit drugs, actual or threatened violence, corruption, bribery, criminal damage to property or breaches of work health and safety laws.
- Negligence, default, breach of trust or breach of duty.
- Any conduct that may indicate a systemic issue in relation to AEG.
- Conduct that represents a danger to the public or the financial system.
- Information that indicates a significant risk to public safety or the stability of, or confidence in, the financial system.
- Misconduct in relation to AEG’s tax affairs.
- Breaches of law (including the *Education and Care Services National Law and National Regulations*).
- Engaging in or threatening to engage in detrimental conduct against a person who has made a whistleblower disclosure or is believed or suspected to have made, or be planning to make, a disclosure.
- Actions intended to deliberately hide or conceal any of the above.

2. Personal Work-Related Grievances

Disclosures that solely concern personal work-related grievances are not covered by this policy. These are grievances about matters in relation to your employment or engagement by AEG that have, or tend to have, implications only for you personally. Such matters should be reported to the People & Culture team.

Examples of personal work-related grievances include:

- An interpersonal conflict between employees.
- A decision that does not involve a breach of workplace law.
- A decision about performance, engagement, remuneration, payroll, transfer, or promotion.
- A decision to suspend or terminate employment.

However, if the personal work-related grievance includes information that may qualify as a Protected Disclosure under this policy it will qualify for the Whistleblower protections.

Examples may include circumstances where the conduct concerned may have significant implications for AEG.

How to Report

AEG encourages Whistleblowers to make a Protected Disclosure to one of the following addresses / persons:

- whistleblower@affinityeducation.com.au.
- General Counsel, Paul Kelly (paul.kelly@affinityeducation.com.au).

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- Chief Risk & Quality Officer, Nicola Page (Nicola.page@affinityeducation.com.au).

Concerns may also be raised confidentially, or anonymously, by reporting by telephone to the Chief Risk & Quality Officer or General Counsel at 07 3555 7773.

If it is considered inappropriate to report to the Chief Risk & Quality Officer or General Counsel, the Whistleblower is encouraged to report their reasonable suspicion to the Board Chair, CEO, a member of the Executive Team or to AEG's external auditors.

In addition to the above, Whistleblowers are entitled to make a Protect Disclosure to the following people:

- any officer (which includes a director or company secretary) or senior manager of AEG;
- AEG's registered tax agent or BAS agent if the disclosure concerns AEG's tax affairs or the tax affairs of an associate of AEG, or an officer or employee at AEG who has functions or duties relating to its tax affairs and who you consider may be assisted in their role by knowing that information.

If a disclosure is made from or to an AEG email address, the email may be accessed by certain people within AEG's IT department in accordance with AEG's policies. If a Whistleblower is concerned about those limited circumstances in which email might be accessed, the Whistleblower may prefer to make their disclosure verbally by calling the number referred to above or by mail.

A Whistleblower may make a Protected Disclosure anonymously (and stay anonymous throughout and after any investigation) and still qualify for protection under the Australian whistleblower laws.

A Whistleblower may wish to obtain independent legal advice before making a disclosure. Communications between Whistleblowers and their legal advisers are protected under the Australian whistleblower laws.

Investigation

Investigations undertaken under this policy will be carried out in a confidential, fair, objective, and timely manner, and may be undertaken by specialist investigator(s) depending on the nature and complexity of the concern(s) raised. AEG will aim to conclude the investigations within two months of receiving a Protected Disclosure. However, the length of time needed to investigate will depend on the nature of concerns raised and their complexity.

Adequate and relevant records will be securely kept in accordance with AEG record retention policies and procedures. These may include but will not be limited to investigatory notes, witness statements, minutes of meetings, mails, notes of telephone calls and copies of correspondence. These records will be kept in an organised and confidential manner.

At the end of the investigation process, the Whistleblower will be informed the investigation has been finalised and, where appropriate, informed of the outcome(s).

Subject to the exceptions allowed under this policy or otherwise by law, the identity of a Whistleblower (or information that is likely to lead to their identity becoming known) must be kept confidential at all times during and after the investigation (including in any reporting to the Board Chair, CEO, any Executive Team member or to any persons affected).

In some cases, it may be necessary to disclose the fact of and/or substance of a Protected Disclosure to a person whose conduct is the subject of the Protected Disclosure to allow them an opportunity to respond.

Findings of investigations will be reported directly to the Board Chair and to the Board Risk & Safety Committee.

In cases where the Board Chair, CEO, or any Executive Team member have been accused of reportable conduct, or where they have a close personal relationship with a person against whom an adverse finding is made, they will be excluded from the reporting process.

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The investigator(s) may make recommendations to minimise risk of potential misconduct and AEG will consider, and where appropriate implement, any such findings and recommendations.

Protection & Support

AEG encourages openness and will support people who raise genuine concerns under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

AEG has in place processes for protecting, supporting and monitoring the welfare of Whistleblowers. This includes risk assessment of any potential detriment, work adjustment considerations and support services such as stress management strategies, which may include counselling.

The protection and support offered to Whistleblowers is managed by AEG’s Whistleblower Protection Officer (‘WPO Nicola Page at Nicola.Page@affinityeducation.com.au. Whistleblowers and other persons to whom this policy applies should contact the WPO if they have questions about protections and support available or wish to report a suspected contravention of whistleblower protections. Reports of a suspected contravention may also be made as a separate report under this policy to the recipients referenced under the heading How to Report above. If the matter concerns the WPO, questions and concerns should be directed to Paul Kelly at Paul.Kelly@affinityeducation.com.au.

1. Confidentiality & Secure Record-Keeping

Excluding in the circumstances where a Whistleblower consents to their identity being known, AEG and all persons who receive a Protected Disclosure or who are otherwise responsible for or involved in an investigation under this policy must take all reasonable steps to reduce the risk that a discloser will be identified.

It is illegal for anyone to identify a Whistleblower or disclose any information that is likely to lead to the Whistleblower being identified, unless:

- It is not possible to investigate the disclosure without disclosing information that might identify the Whistleblower (but all reasonable steps must be taken to protect the Whistleblower’s identity).
- It is necessary to obtain legal advice about the Protected Disclosure and the whistleblower laws, in which case, AEG can pass the information onto its lawyers.
- AEG needs to disclose the information to the Australian Federal Police; Australian Securities and Investments Commission (‘ASIC’), the Australian Prudential Regulatory Authority (‘APRA’) or the Australian Taxation Office (‘ATO’) (if the disclosure concerns AEG’s tax affairs or the tax affairs of an associate of AEG).
- The Whistleblower consents to the disclosure of their identity.

AEG will take the following steps to protect a Whistleblower’s identity:

- Obscuring their name and identifying features from any internal reporting about the Protect Disclosure (unless the Whistleblower agrees for their identity to be known).
- Referring to the Whistleblower with a gender-neutral pronoun (unless the Whistleblower agrees for their identity to be known).
- Engaging qualified staff and/or external advisors to handle and investigate disclosures.
- Storing all material relating to disclosures securely and limiting access to that information to those directly involved in handling and investigating the Protected Disclosure and outcomes connected with it.
- Ensuring that anyone who is involved in handling and investigating the Protected Disclosure is aware of the confidentiality requirements.

A Whistleblower may make an additional disclosure or lodge a complaint to a regulatory body, such as ASIC, APRA, or the ATO, if they believe that their identity has been revealed without consent.

2. Protection from Detriment

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AEG does not accept detrimental treatment or victimisation of Whistleblowers. It is illegal for anyone at AEG (including any officers, employees or contractors) to cause or threaten any detriment to any person because that person:

- is or proposes to make a disclosure under this policy or the Australian whistleblower laws; or
- is suspected or believed to have made a disclosure under this policy or the Australian whistleblower laws.

Detrimental treatment includes (but is not limited to):

- Dismissal.
- Disciplinary action.
- Alteration of an employee’s position or duties to his or her disadvantage.
- Bullying, harassment, or intimidation of a person.
- Harm or injury to a person, including psychological harm.
- Damage to the person’s reputation.
- Threats and any other poor treatment connected with raising concerns.

However, AEG is entitled to take steps that:

- are reasonably necessary to protect a Whistleblower from detriment (for example, moving the Whistleblower to another location to protect them from detriment where, for example, the Protected Disclosure concerns risks connected with the Whistleblower’s immediate work area); or
- relate to managing unsatisfactory work performance in line with AEG’s performance management framework.

If a Whistleblower believes they have been the subject of actual or threatened victimisation or other retaliatory action, they are encouraged to report the matter.

3. Protection from Liability

A whistleblower who makes a Protected Disclosure will be protected from any of the following in relation to their disclosure:

- Civil liability – for example, any legal action against the Whistleblower for breach of employment contract, duty of confidentiality or another contractual obligation.
- Criminal liability – for example, prosecution for unlawfully releasing information contained in the Protected Disclosure.
- Administrative liability – for example, disciplinary action for making the Protected Disclosure.

However, a Whistleblower may be liable for any misconduct that they have engaged in (including misconduct that is revealed by the Protected Disclosure or revealed by an investigation into the Protected Disclosure).

Non-Compliance with Policy

Any breach of this policy by an AEG officer, employee or contractor will be taken seriously and may be the subject of a separate investigation and/or disciplinary action. A breach of this policy may also amount to a civil or criminal contravention under the Australian whistleblower laws, giving rise to significant penalties.

AEG encourages staff to raise any concerns about non-compliance with this policy with the WPO in the first instance. Concerns may also be reported to any other eligible recipient, ASIC, APRA or the ATO for investigation.

Australian Whistleblower Laws

By making a disclosure in accordance with this policy, a Whistleblower may be protected under the Australian whistleblower laws if the type of matter disclosed is protected by those laws.

While this policy principally deals with internal disclosures, the protections afforded by the Australian whistleblower laws also include some types of disclosure made to external parties, such as:

- Legal representatives, to obtain advice or representation about the Australian whistleblower laws;

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- ASIC, APRA or the ATO; or
- Members of parliament and journalists, where the Whistleblower has reasonable grounds to believe that making the further disclosure would be in the public interest or the information concerns a substantial and imminent danger to the health or safety to one or more persons or to the natural environment, but only if: (i) the Whistleblower previously made a disclosure of that information to either ASIC, APRA or another Commonwealth body prescribed by regulation; and (ii) the Whistleblower notified that body in writing of their intention to make a disclosure to an MP or journalist (where, for public interest disclosures, at least 90 days must first have passed since the previous disclosure before this notice may be given).

It is important to understand strict criteria apply and a Whistleblower should obtain independent legal advice before making a disclosure to an MP or journalist.

For more information about the Australian whistleblower laws (including how to make a disclosure directly to ASIC or the ATO), see the information available on the ASIC website (including Information Sheet 239 How ASIC handles whistleblower reports) and the ATO website.

Understanding & Accessibility

This policy will be made available on AEGs website and will be effective from the date of posting. The policy may be made available in other languages upon request to AEGs General Counsel or Chief Risk & Quality Officer.

Review

This policy will be reviewed at a minimum annually and tabled at AEGs Board. The review will include an assessment of the operation and effectiveness of AEGs whistleblower programme and if any recommendations or changes to the programme are required.

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Version History

Version Control	Date	Author	Description of Change
1.0	April 2014	AEG	New policy / procedure
1.1	April 2015	AEG	Minor amendments
1.2	May 2016	AEG	Revision
1.3	Dec 2016	AEG	Revision
1.4	Jun 2017	AEG	Reformatting
7.19	July 2019	AEG	Legislation changes
5.20	May 2020	AEG	Contact details updated
6.21	Jun 2021	AEG	Revised role names, added Modern Slavery Statement
11.21	Nov 2021	AEG	Updated roles and Board details
8.22	Aug 2022	AEG	Significant update
10.22	Oct 2022	AEG	Updated QPE director names
1.23	Jan 2023	AEG	Removed External Whistleblower contact
7.23	July 2023	AEG	Added email address
12.23	Dec 2023	AEG	Added RACI table and reference
1.25	Jan 2025	AEG	Scheduled review
V13	Jan 2026	AEG	Scheduled review – updated contact details and changes throughout. Sent for external review and amendments and approved by Board.

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