

## **COUNCIL POLICY – Community Care**

### **Whistleblower Policy**



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| <b>POLICY TITLE:</b>           | Whistleblower Policy |
| <b>POLICY NUMBER:</b>          | 247                  |
| <b>REVISION NUMBER:</b>        | 1                    |
| <b>TRIM REFERENCE:</b>         | SF14/411 - R24/3865  |
| <b>RESOLUTION NUMBER:</b>      | 4555                 |
| <b>POLICY TYPE:</b>            | Strategic            |
| <b>APPROVING OFFICER:</b>      | Council Adoption     |
| <b>DATE OF ADOPTION:</b>       | 31 August 2026       |
| <b>TIME PERIOD OF REVIEW:</b>  | 3 Years              |
| <b>DATE OF NEXT REVIEW:</b>    | 31 August 2029       |
| <b>RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT:</b> | Community Care       |

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### **1. OBJECTIVE**

This policy ensures that staff, clients, and families can report misconduct or legal breaches safely and without fear of retaliation. Concerns will be addressed promptly, promoting early identification of issues like neglect and supporting those who speak up. The aim is to build trust in the Flinders Shire Council (FSC) as a safe and accountable organisation. The Aged Care Act 2024 requires compliant whistleblower systems as a registration condition, with strengthened Standard 2 being particularly applicable. A whistleblower policy directly supports:

- Transparent governance
- Safe and accessible reporting systems
- Organisational accountability
- Protection from retaliation
- Compliance with the Aged Care Act 2024 whistleblower protections

### **2. SCOPE**

This policy covers the following:

- Clients
- Family members and representatives
- Advocates
- Volunteers
- Students and trainees
- Staff (all types)
- Former staff or clients
- Any person who interacts with the provider in a relevant way

### **3. DEFINITIONS**

|                             |                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Whistleblower</b>        | A person who reports suspected wrongdoing in good faith.                                                              |
| <b>Wrongdoing</b>           | Includes fraud, abuse, neglect, bullying, harassment, discrimination, unsafe practices, or breaches of law or policy. |
| <b>Detriment</b>            | Any harm, punishment, or disadvantage suffered because of making a report.                                            |
| <b>Protected Disclosure</b> | A report made under this policy that qualifies for legal protection.                                                  |

#### 4. POLICY

1. FSC actively protects whistleblowers to uphold people's rights and fulfil our legal responsibilities.
2. Anyone, including staff, residents, families, carers, and advocates can make a whistleblower disclosure.
3. Disclosures can be made anonymously.
4. Protected disclosures cover any wrongdoing i.e. fraud, abuse, neglect, bullying, harassment, discrimination, unsafe practices, or breaches of law or policy. The identity of the whistleblower will be protected unless consent is given, or disclosure is legally required.
5. Our Council will prevent detriment to the whistleblower and address reprisals including victimisation, dismissal, demotion, or harassment.
6. All reports are managed discreetly.
7. We honour diverse voices and community values and always act on concerns to improve our service.

#### 5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

|                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Governing Body</b>                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Approve policy and monitor compliance with policy.</li><li>• Ensure whistleblower protections are upheld.</li><li>• Address non-compliance.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Director<br/>Community<br/>Services and<br/>Wellbeing (DCSW)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Take the lead role in communication and investigations.</li><li>• Model openness, transparency, and psychological safety.</li><li>• Ensure no retaliation, subtle or overt, occurs.</li><li>• Promote safe reporting practices.</li><li>• Allocate resources for investigations.</li><li>• Ensure timely and fair investigation.</li></ul> |
| <b>Community Care<br/>Team Leader</b>                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reinforce that speaking up is valued and protected.</li><li>• Promote the policy in staff meetings, onboarding, and supervision.</li><li>• Receives and documents reports.</li><li>• Supports staff and clients during the process.</li></ul>                                                                                              |
| <b>Carers and<br/>Support Staff</b>                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Know how to report concerns.</li><li>• Support colleagues and clients who speak up.</li><li>• Maintain confidentiality and respect.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Clients and<br/>Families</b>                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To raise concerns without fear.</li><li>• Be informed of their rights.</li><li>• Access support throughout the process.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

#### 6. COUNCIL EXCEPTIONS

This policy applies only to Community Care services within the Community Services and Wellbeing Directorate. If this policy does not apply to a situation, staff must follow the general corporate policies and procedures used across all Council service areas.

#### 7. IMPLEMENTATION

##### 7.1 Making a Report

- Reports can be made verbally, in writing, or anonymously.
- Reports should be directed to DCSW, or an external whistleblower hotline.

## **7.2 Receiving and Assessing**

- All reports are logged within the incident management system and assessed for risk and urgency by the DCSW.
- Immediate action is taken by the DCSW if safety is a risk.

## **7.3 Investigation**

- Investigations are undertaken by the DCSW, fairly and confidentially.
- Findings are documented and shared with relevant parties.

## **7.4 Protection and Support**

- Whistleblowers are protected from retaliation.
- Support services are offered as needed.

## **7.5 Resolution and Action**

- Corrective actions are taken by DCSW or delegate.
- Lessons learned are used to improve practice.

## **7.6 Feedback and Closure**

- Whistleblowers are informed of outcomes by the DCSW.
- The process is reviewed for fairness and effectiveness by the Chief Executive Officer.

## **8. TRAINING AND ORIENTATION**

- All staff receive orientation training to understand this policy.
- Everyone within the scope of this policy will have access to this information.

## **9. RELATED LEGISLATION**

- Aged Care Act 2024
- Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission Act (via Rules and Regulatory Powers)
- Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009

## **10. RELATED DOCUMENTS**

- Privacy and Confidentiality Policy

## **11. ATTACHMENTS**

- N/A

## **12. REVIEW TRIGGER**

Community Care policies are to be renewed every three years, or earlier if significant issue or change in legislation affecting this policy occurs.

## **13. PRIVACY PROVISION**

Council respects and protects people's privacy and collects, stores, uses and discloses personal information responsibly and transparently when delivering Council services and business.

## **14. APPROVAL**

Adopted at the August 2026 Council Meeting - Resolution Number 4555.