	Policy Name	Whistleblower Policy
	Policy Category	Governance
	Date Adopted	April 2026

Purpose

The Upper Waitematā Ecology Network (UWEN) is an organisation that welcomes all members of the community to join in the mahi of protecting our environment. This broad area of work means that the organisation is fluid, open to change and reactionary to both the needs of the habitats we work in and the people we work with. There are core policies and procedures in place to ensure safety and wellbeing, equity and fairness in decision making and the actions that are taken.

This policy sets out the support that will be given to anyone (or any organisation) that wants to raise concerns, misgivings or to report breaches of the policies and procedures that arise as a result of the conduct of any individual, group of individuals or aligned organisation. Confidentiality, respect, due diligence and a fair process will be followed to ensure any issues raised are investigated appropriately and in a timely manner.

Overview

This policy sets out the due process and support that will be offered to any individual or group of individuals that wish to lodge concerns or complaints about conduct or actions of the organisation or aligned individuals. The manner that a disclosure can be made and assurance of how it will be handled are set out below to ensure that no-one who lodges a concern will be disadvantaged and that matters will be handled sensitively.

Code of conduct

All members of the Governance and Operational team of UWEN, volunteer leaders, contractors and employees are bound by the UWEN code of conduct and expectations set out in the suite of policies and procedures in place by UWEN, an affiliated or network group, or other organisations that may be responsible for that person's conduct.

This policy applies to governance and operational team members, other officers, stakeholders, administrators, employees, contractors, managers, volunteers, parents/guardians and anyone else who wishes to draw concerns or complaints to our attention. This policy sets out our processes for reporting concerns and complaints and explains the protections available to individuals submitting those concerns and complaints.

Concerns or complaints

This policy applies to any concern or complaint that relates to UWEN, an affiliated or network group, individual or team aligned with the organisation and is raised by an individual, or group of individuals. This policy sets out the process to be followed and the protection to be given where any person or group thinks an issue ought to be drawn to the attention of the organisation, so that it can be addressed. It might for example include a concern regarding any of the following, please note this is an indicative and not exhaustive list of possible scenarios.

- poor or inappropriate behaviour at events
- security or health and safety concerns
- work-related issues, which might apply to employees, contractors or volunteers conduct, performance, approach or attitude
- corrupt or improper use of the organisation's, or a related organisation's, money or resources
- harassment, bullying or discrimination of any sort

Whistleblowing

Raising a concern or complaint can sometimes be referred to as "whistleblowing" and UWEN welcomes feedback in all forms from anyone who works with or alongside the organisation. The ability to investigate how things are done and to reflect on that through the viewpoint of other people is an important part of continuous improvement and enables the organisation to grow and learn and re-evaluate processes.

It is recognised that in some instances, it could be awkward, difficult or a breach of confidentiality to raise a concern or complaint about another person or group. However, this disclosure of information about wrongdoing, illegal or unethical conduct or about suspected wrongdoing, illegal or unethical conduct is encouraged.

The person(s) to whom the disclosure is made will be:

- independent of the issue
- in a position to do something about the disclosure - whether that is to refer it to the appropriate external authority for further investigation or to investigate the matter on the organisation's behalf
- in a position to put in place any immediate steps that might be necessary to protect the organisation, the public or individuals likely to be affected.

If the whistleblower is unsure of whom to contact, they can reach out to the Network Manager, through the email info@uwen.org.nz or to the Convenor of the organisation, up to date contact information will be held on the UWEN website.

If there is no one within UWEN that would be appropriate to report the concern to, the individual may report the concern to an appropriate external third party and/or authority. Any external investigations by appropriate authorities will receive the full support of UWEN.

The individual or group who would wish to make a disclosure can do so in the knowledge that the matter will be handled in the following manner:

- Only the named person who has been contacted will know the identity of the people or persons who have raised the concern and all information will be anonymised from that point wherever possible, understanding that the nature of the disclosure might make anonymity difficult.
- Only those people that need to be involved in the investigation, reporting or any resulting actions will be involved, no other members of the organisation will be informed of the details of the issue unless it is materially important that they do.
- Matters will be handled in a timely manner and UWEN will aim to resolve the matter within 20 working days. If the nature of the disclosure and the following investigation mean this timeframe can not be met, the person or party making the disclosure will be kept updated of progress and likely timeframes.
- The whistle-blower may be asked to clarify details or provide evidence; they can refuse to withhold that additional information if they wish and that will be considered as part of the investigation.
- Any breach of policy or procedure that was found to take place will be investigated and dealt with in accordance with the legislation, policy, procedure or ethical boundaries of the organisation.
- The whistle-blower will be informed of the progress of the investigation and outcomes but these may be generalised rather than specific to protect privacy rights.
- If the individual who has made the disclosure wishes the disclosure or his or her identity to be kept confidential, those wishes are respected to the extent that it is possible and appropriate.

Investigation

Once a concern is received via email to the Network Manager, or to another individual within UWEN, they must ensure that the appropriate steps are taken to address the issue, including:

- Taking immediate action as necessary to protect the organisation, the public and any individuals likely to be affected
- Escalate the complaint as appropriate to ensure that it is addressed promptly and appropriately to a team of UWEN representatives (based on the nature and type of concern)
- Acknowledge receipt of the concern and provide any information as to next steps or request further information, in writing by email, within five working days of receipt.

Reporting the matter in a timely manner enables the organisation to gather information and evidence if required, in a more effective way and to respond to the concerns. However, the matter will still be investigated to the best of the organisation's ability regardless of the time elapsed.

The precise steps taken following this will depend on the nature, seriousness and circumstances of the issue disclosed, but the person responsible for the investigation should ensure the following occurs:

- The disclosure will, if appropriate, be investigated promptly and fairly, in accordance with any relevant or applicable policies and procedures of UWEN, stakeholders or any legal requirements
- If the concern is well founded, the issue is addressed promptly and appropriately, and external agencies are notified or involved where appropriate
- If the disclosure or identity of the individual who made it cannot be kept confidential, the individual will be advised of this, prior to disclosure of their identity, and will be provided with the reasons his or her disclosure or identity cannot be kept confidential
- If the complainant or any other person is required to attend meetings regarding the complaint, they are entitled to attend with a support person
- Any rules, policies or legislation that exist and are relevant given the circumstances will be applied as part of the outcome and decisions of the investigation
- Outcomes and decisions from any investigation will be presented in writing based on facts and evidence.

Should an external third party and/or authority be involved in the investigation, that agency will receive the full support of UWEN and the organisation will support any recommendations made resulting from their investigation.

Protected disclosure

In addition to the offer of anonymity wherever possible, the organisation will ensure the person, people or group making a disclosure will be protected by the organisation from repercussions or victimisation as a result of having made the disclosure. In line with the requirements of the Protected Disclosures Act (2000), UWEN can assure the individual or party that they will be protected from any adverse treatment because of this disclosure, including but not limited to:

- discrimination, marginalisation or bias
- victimisation or harassment
- any employment disadvantage such as suspension, demotion, disciplinary action or dismissal.


When making a disclosure, the person or party should be aware that for the investigation to be fair, open, responsible and transparent, all parties involved in the allegations will need to be made aware of the concerns. Adequate opportunities also need to be given to respond to the allegations and given some context whilst protecting the identity of the person raising the concern wherever possible.

If the party making the disclosure feels they have been the subject of retaliatory or malicious behaviour because of the investigation, or making the complaint, they must raise this with the investigation team at UWEN.

Malicious, defamatory, retaliatory actions or bullying of any kind, if investigations draw a reasonable conclusion have happened, may result in disciplinary action or other actions as appropriate given the relations the organisation has with the individual(s) who carried out this behaviour.

Summary

This Policy, in conjunction with the suite of policies and procedures that exist and legal requirements, aim to give reasonable protection to individuals or parties who wish to raise concerns about the organisation, individuals, groups, practices or procedures. These matters are taken seriously and will be handled respectfully and without any future prejudice to the complainant.

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Signed by Chair	
Date of next review	April 2028

Linked and supporting documents

- [Conflict Resolution Policy](#)
- [Privacy Policy](#)