

Canberra Liberals Bullying and Harassment Policy

Canberra Liberals Bullying and Harassment Policy

Key points

The Canberra Liberals will not accept bullying or harassment:

- If you feel you have been subject to bullying or harassment, you are encouraged to report the matter to the Divisional Director or to a member of Management Committee.
- If the alleged conduct is unlawful, including in particular claims of sexual harassment, complainants are encouraged to report the matter to Police.

Scope

The *Liberal Party of Australia (ACT Division)* (Canberra Liberals) supports a safe environment for its staff and volunteers free from all forms of bullying and harassment.

This policy applies to the staff of the Canberra Liberals and volunteers performing tasks under the supervision of staff and directors of the party. Parliamentarians and their employees are covered by relevant laws and policies under both ACT and Commonwealth legislation.

Aims

This policy aims to ensure:

- That the Canberra Liberals are committed to providing a safe, flexible and respectful environment free from bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment.
- All Canberra Liberals staff and volunteers should treat others with dignity, courtesy and respect at all times.

This protocol has been adopted by the Management Committee to ensure an efficient and robust handling of any complaints.

Principles

The first and most important concern where there is a complaint about bullying or harassment is to ensure the safety and support of a complainant.

Secondly, complaints will be treated confidentially, seriously and lawfully.

Thirdly, natural justice is important for both the complainant and the accused.

What is unacceptable behaviour?

Bullying, harassment and sexual harassment are unacceptable to the Canberra Liberals and can be unlawful.

Staff and volunteers that have engaged in such conduct may be counselled, warned or disciplined and could have the matters referred to external organisations, including the Police.

Just because someone does not object to inappropriate behaviour at the time, it does not mean that they are consenting to the behaviour.

The Canberra Liberals have a zero tolerance approach to sexual harassment, whether it happen in the Divisional Office, at Canberra Liberals events or between individuals more broadly.

All staff and volunteers have the same rights and responsibilities in relation to sexual harassment. A single incident is enough to constitute sexual harassment – it doesn't have to be repeated.

All incidents of sexual harassment – no matter how large or small or who is involved – are serious and will be considered confidentially.

If you are concerned about your personal safety or wish to report a criminal act, please make immediate contact with the Police.

Resolving issues and complaints

We strongly encourage anyone who believes that they have been bullied or harassed to take appropriate action.

If anyone feels they have been bullied or harassed, they should immediately seek out a member of the Management Committee to raise the concern and to seek information about how to progress a formal complaint. If any activities have been, or have been suspected to be, in contravention of the law a complaint should be supported to the relevant authorities, including the police.

If a complainant comes forward, it is important that any member of Management Committee immediately notify the Honorary General Secretary or Divisional Director, if appropriate. It is important that diligent records are kept of all interactions on such matters.

Should a formal complaint be lodged, the Complaints Committee will consider the complaint on its merits and make a recommendation to Management Committee on a course of action.

Management Committee should consider the Complaints Committee's recommendation in line with best practice and the disciplinary provisions in the Canberra Liberals constitution. Management Committee may also refer the matter to an external party for further investigation before making a final determination.

It is important to recognise that the Management Committee, in most cases, cannot guarantee an individual natural justice nor take action on unproven or alleged criminal or civil acts. However, as far as is practicable, the Complaints Committee's and Management Committee shall apply the principles of natural justice to both the complainant and the accused.

To ensure that all volunteers are aware of their rights and obligations, a half-page introductory note should be provided to all staff and volunteers providing key contact information for the Division as well as the location of resources to support new staff and volunteers.

Confidentiality

Staff or volunteers at the Canberra Liberals should not to talk with other staff members, volunteers or members about any complaint of discrimination or harassment, unless it is directly related to the investigation of the complaint or it falls with their duties.

If a complaint leads to formal disciplinary action, the complaint may need to be disclosed. The Division will discuss this with the complainant prior to any action being taken.

Breaching the confidentiality of a formal complaint investigation or inappropriately disclosing personal information obtained in a professional role (for example, as a Committee member) is a serious breach of this policy. If that breach constitutes a violation of section 12(1) of the Constitution it may lead to formal discipline.

Attachment – Liberal Party of Australia’s Complaints and Dispute Resolution Policy

The Canberra Liberals are also guided by The Liberal Party of Australia’s Complaints and Dispute Resolution Policy which is [available here](#).

Attachment – Summary of Complaints Process

1. Any complaint received by Division shall be considered by the President at first instance and referred to the Complaints Committee in a timely manner;
2. The Complaints Committee will consider any complaint, including undertaking any investigation necessary, in order to make a recommendation to Management Committee. Following an assessment of the allegations and collection of information, the Complaints Committee will provide the allegation to the person who has been complained against for a preliminary response;
3. Management Committee will consider any matter from the Complaints Committee and form a preliminary view on whether section 12(1) of the Constitution has been breached and whether a member should be disciplined;
4. If Management Committee forms a preliminary view, the President shall write to the Member providing a full statement, including reasons, to permit the Member to respond either in writing or in person to Management Committee.
5. The Management Committee following a reasonable period of allowing a Member to formally respond shall then make a final decision.
6. The decision of Management Committee may then be appealed to Divisional Council.

Date adopted

Interim protocol: Passed March 2018 Management Committee

Policy adopted: 10 September 2018 Management Committee

Amended: 11 March 2019 Management Committee