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*from the mountains to the sea*

**2 triple b-fm**

ABN 87 202 627 542

*Bellingen Shire's Community Radio*

phone: 02 6655 0718

requests: 02 6655 0035

e-mail: [radio@2bbb.net.au](mailto:radio@2bbb.net.au)

[www.2bbb.net.au](http://www.2bbb.net.au)

52 Wheatley St Bellingen NSW

PO Box 304 Bellingen 2454

## **Bellingen Community Communications Cooperative Limited Conflict Resolution Policy, Guide and Procedure**

### **Introduction**

It is the intention of Bellingen Community Communications Cooperative Limited known as 2bbb FM to guide all Members of the Organisation in the area of Internal Conflict Resolution for the purposes of continued peaceful stability within and to have continuity of efficiency.

### **Purpose:**

People who choose to become involved in Community Broadcasting share a vision of providing Programs designed to meet the diverse needs of our Community. Challenges in achieving this united vision are complex and ongoing, yet, the dedication and commitment necessary to attain their goals can sow seeds for possible discontent and conflict. The demands for versatility, professionalism and co-operation within limited resources of people and funding calls for a proactive approach, as well as active conflict resolution skills and processes.

### **Policy:**

Bellingen Community Communications Cooperative Limited will establish mechanisms to promote fast and efficient resolution of station issues. Members and volunteers should feel comfortable discussing issues with the Board of Management in accordance with the procedures outlined below. All formal avenues for handling of grievances will be fully documented and the member/volunteer's wishes will be taken into account in determining the appropriate steps and actions. No member will be intimidated or unfairly treated in any respect if they utilise this Policy to resolve an issue.

### **What is conflict?**

Conflict is the very stuff of life. It arises when the different ideas, values, interests, hopes, desires or opinions of individuals are questioned. Questioning can have positive or negative results. It's how we handle a question that makes the difference. Handled positively, questions can be seen as challenging opportunities for creative solutions to new and existing areas of difficulty. Handled negatively, conflict arises which presents obstacles and it reminds us of existing history between the players and causes us to focus on personalities rather than the issue at hand.

## **What is conflict resolution?**

Conflict Resolution is the mechanism we use to consider ways of understanding differences and using that understanding to build better professional and personal relationships:-

- Responding not reacting to situations.
- Identifying conflict clues for early intervention.
- Find out all the facts and carefully analyse them in relation to the conflict.
- Turning opponents into conflict resolving partners, and asking appropriate questions to help people shift their fixed positions.

These guides are specified and indicated in the latest Codes of Practice for the Station, prominently displayed on the notice board in the main office. If they are not on the board, then they will be made available immediately upon request, from the Management.

**If there is a need for a resolution of a conflict between two or more Members of the Organisation: The following guidelines are in place for that purpose and are listed here on.**

The matter needs to be reported to the Conflict Resolution/Mediation Officer or to an appropriate Board Member person who will arrange for a meeting of all parties to enable a resolution or a Mediation on a one-on-one basis or if unable to mediate in that manner then by a meeting of all concerned persons or in a collective meeting.

## **Grievance Mechanisms**

When disputes or conflict occur within the Station between volunteer workers, the first step is negotiation between the disputants with the aim of bringing about agreement or settlement of the opposing demands or attitudes. This should first be tried with a one-on-one situation and if unable to obtain a resolution, then a Mediator should be engaged from the Management Co-ordinator.

The idea might be to approach the person that you have a grievance with as soon as possible.

1. Don't let it fester until your emotions are running on full throttle as what started off as a misunderstanding may become a crisis.
2. Your aim is to avoid ambushing them! Their responsibility is to acknowledge your concern regardless of whether the issue seems trivial to them, is a difference of opinion, belief or priority.
3. Acknowledgement doesn't say either party is "right or wrong". It simply recognises that the situation exists. If now is not a good time to discuss the issue, we must feel free to honestly say that is the case, and to set up a mutually suitable time later that day, or if not possible, then on the very next day that you will both be at the Station.

4. The topic for discussion and approximate time needed, will determine the agenda, time and place of the meeting at 2bbb. These steps allow most grievances to be handled between the parties concerned. The process empowers both parties to turn potential opponents into problem solving partners.

When informal negotiations have failed to resolve the conflict, each party will be required to present verbally, and in writing, their understanding of the dispute and what has led to it. The designated Board Member/s will use Conflict Resolution techniques to achieve an equitable solution. This will be done by consulting separately with the parties and then in joint discussion to develop a solution that will satisfy all parties.

If an agreement cannot ultimately be reached, a mutually acceptable external Facilitator or Mediator may be sought to assist with conflict. Persons involved in the dispute resolution need to deal with all issues promptly and fairly and listen to needs objectively and keep an open mind.

Assumptions must be avoided about motives, attitudes and options need to be developed so everyone agrees what will work, also to ensure everyone is committed to agreements.

### **Conflict can arise for any number of reasons:**

1. You may be having trouble understanding someone else's perspective on a Radio issue.
2. You may have different beliefs and values to someone else.
3. You may have misunderstood certain rules with Program allocations.
4. You may not like the way Station guidelines are laid out or implemented.
5. Your needs may conflict with someone else's needs at the Station.
6. You may not be happy about how someone is treating you as a Member.
7. You may be feeling stressed or angry about something and that causes you to be confrontational.

### **Resolving your differences**

Approaching the person you disagree with: Talking to the person about your disagreement can be helpful. In approaching them, it is a good idea to make sure it is in a constructive way, thinking about the points you want to express. Approaching the person is more often effective if you are calm and not angry.

**Think about how safe it is to approach someone you are in conflict with:**

Approaching them in public may mean they are less likely to be violent or abusive. If they are likely to be violent or abusive, it may be best not to resolve it directly. Perhaps you could talk to them over the phone or send an email.

**Gain an understanding of each other's perspective:**

To help understand why both parties are disagreeing, it may help to ask questions about their point of view and how they perceive it.

**Explain how you feel:**

When you talk to the representing person you are in disagreement with, try to tell them how you feel. You can try to explain how you feel as a result of their opinion; try not to make statements about their perception of the problem.

**Allocate time to talk:**

It can be easy to get back into an argument while you are trying to resolve it. One way to avoid this is by giving each other time to highlight each point of view. It may be easier to write your point of view down so that you can both read it and think about what the other has said. This way you can come back and discuss it.

**Use a Mediator:**

You may need someone else to help you resolve a disagreement. You may ask for a Mediator to help you and the other party to get another perspective on the disagreement.

**Consult the Conflict Resolution Policy:**

If one person in a disagreement has more power over the other person, this can be particularly difficult. At work in the Station it can be even more difficult. In these situations it is useful to check out the Conflict Resolution Policy.

**Agree to disagree:**

It is also possible to agree to disagree. It is not good to even necessary to agree with someone all of the time. It is very important to remember that most people are not confident or comfortable in dealing with conflict; however, they see it as an unnecessary distraction or interruption from what they are normally used to doing.

Most people are of the opinion that it is far too stressful to handle or be involved in any form and would probably try to avoid it. Some may think that it is far quicker to deal with conflict with aggression. Aggression and avoidance will only lead to a greater level of conflict in the long run and also cause damage to any future co-operation, collaboration, contribution and teamwork.

2bbb FM Community Radio relies on Volunteers being an effective team as a whole to get the job done so-to-speak as everyone needs to work in a peaceful environment. In summary, the latest Codes of Practice are in place to answer any other questions if in doubt of any of the matters mentioned before.

## Easy Guide Steps For Better Understanding

1. If you are unable to get a satisfactory answer by talking one-on-one with a Board Member or another representative of the Station; then you may firstly want to write a letter of official complaint to the Board of Management outlying your reasons of complaint and wait for a reply.
2. When you receive an answer to your letter, you may find that the appointed 2bbb FM Mediation Officer will want to contact you for a personal consultation to make the necessary arrangements for a mediation session with you.
3. Telephone or personally speak with the Mediation Officer, (from the Station), to assist in the resolution of the grievance with both parties. All of the items you have highlighted in your original letter of complaint should be considered carefully from all perspectives and discussed by both parties individually or together.
4. The 2bbb FM Mediation Officer will then arrange talks with both parties to obtain an agreement which would be arranged with all persons.
5. This step is to inform you, that if both parties cannot agree to any of the mediation you have had, then you need to ask for an external Mediator with both parties agreeing to seek an external Mediator.
6. If both parties are in agreement with the way that the matter has been resolved, then a signed agreement with all parties needs to be put in place with other people from the Board of Management being informed at the time of the agreement.
7. If there is no satisfaction with any of the agreed mediations, then you are entitled to approach the appropriate authority; this is only to be done if the matter is concerning the running of the Station and therefore may contravene the ACMA Rules.
8. Representation may then be made in writing to the ACMA stating the steps that you and the other party have taken with the matter.

Board Approval Date: .....6<sup>th</sup> February 2014