

Community Bank Whistleblower Policy

Version 1.1



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OVERVIEW

BACKGROUND

Our Community Bank company is committed to promoting a culture of integrity and ethical behaviour, where our decisions, actions and conduct reflect and reinforce our values. If you raise a whistleblower concern under this policy, you should feel confident that you can do so without fear of personal detriment. All whistleblower concerns raised under this policy will be treated seriously and we will investigate them carefully.

All Community Bank company directors and employees are required to report whistleblower concerns and comply with this policy.

PURPOSE

This policy outlines the processes and protections you are entitled to if you decide to raise a whistleblower concern.

This policy aims to provide clarity on:

- the importance of raising your whistleblower concerns;
- how you qualify for protection as a whistleblower under the Corporations Act;
- how to raise a whistleblower concern;
- how whistleblower concerns will be dealt with; and
- your rights and protections so you feel safe to speak up.

APPLICATION

This policy applies to our Community Bank company.

INTERPRETATION

Capitalised terms within the Whistleblower Policy are defined in the 'Definitions' table, contained within Appendix A of this document.



POLICY

1 WHISTLEBLOWING

1.1 Whistleblower concerns

By reporting your whistleblower concern regarding suspected misconduct (Reportable Conduct), you can help make our Community Bank company a fair, safe and honest place to work and assist in preventing theft, fraud and dishonesty. We would like to identify and address any wrongdoing as early as possible, so raise your whistleblower concern as soon as you can.

1.1.1 Who can raise a whistleblower concern?

Individuals both within and external to our Community Bank company can raise a whistleblower concern under this policy and qualify for protection under the Corporations Act. Eligible Whistleblowers include current and former:

- employees and directors;
- contractors;
- consultants;
- suppliers;
- third party providers;
- brokers; and
- auditors.

In addition, Reportable Conduct may be raised by an associate, relative, dependent or spouse of these individuals.

Whistleblower concerns relating to the operation and governance of this Community Bank Company should be raised under this policy, unless it is not appropriate to do so, in which case the concern may be raised under Bendigo and Adelaide Bank's (BEN's) Whistleblower Policy.

If a whistleblower concern is raised under the BEN Whistleblower Policy, it may still be more appropriate for it to be dealt with under this policy. The BEN Whistleblower Program Officer and / or the BEN Whistleblower Investigator have the discretion to determine that a concern raised under the BEN Whistleblower Policy should be referred back to and dealt with by our Community Bank company under this policy.

1.1.2 What is Reportable Conduct?

A 'whistleblower concern' or 'Reportable Conduct' refers to a concern regarding past, present or future suspected or actual breach of law, Bendigo and Adelaide Bank Limited's (BEN) <u>Code</u> <u>of Conduct</u> or any other BEN policy, or any policy adopted by our Community Bank company.

Reportable Conduct includes an activity, conduct or state of affairs that is illegal, unethical or improper. For example:

- allegation of criminal activity (including fraud, theft, modern slavery, bribery and corruption);
- unethical behaviour;



- failure to comply with a legal obligation, including taxation obligations;
- significant breaches of BEN's <u>Code of Conduct</u> or any other BEN policy, or any policy adopted by our Community Bank company;
- breaking any law administered by ASIC, APRA or the Commonwealth; and
- activities that represent a danger to the public or the financial system.

Please note that matters not relating to the above Reportable Conduct will not be covered by whistleblower protections under the Corporations Act. Further, employee workplace complaints – also known as personal work-related grievances - may be **excluded** from this policy if they do not also relate to Reportable Conduct. In those circumstances, the employee workplace complaint will be handled under BEN's Complaints Procedure for Employees.

1.1.2.1 Employee workplace complaints

An employee workplace complaint, or personal work-related grievance is a concern or complaint made by an employee relating to their work or the work environment. An employee workplace complaint may arise from a policy of BEN or adopted by our Community Bank company, or may relate to an act, omission, situation or decision that an employee believes is unfair, discriminatory, unjust or unreasonable.

Examples of employee workplace complaints include:

- Discrimination;
- Harassment, including sexual harassment;
- Bullying in the workplace;
- Health and safety;
- Employment conditions (excluding matters arising from the Enterprise Agreement);
- Performance management;
- Disputes between colleagues; or
- Situations or decisions an employee believes are unfair, unjust or unreasonable.

We take employee workplace complaints seriously. For them to be best resolved we recommend you raise your complaint via the channels indicated in the 'Raising a Concern' section of the BEN Complaints Procedure for Employees.

If you need assistance in determining if your concern is Reportable Conduct and a whistleblowing matter or an employee workplace complaint, or for further information on how to raise a whistleblower concern, contact the Whistleblower Program Officer.

1.1.3 Reasonable grounds

You will not be disadvantaged for reporting a whistleblower concern under this policy, even if it turns out you are mistaken. You can still qualify for protection even if the concern turns out to be incorrect.

We will focus on the quality of the information concerning the Reportable Conduct, not on the motivation of the whistleblower.

Where it is shown that a person has raised a whistleblower concern that is deliberately false or misleading under this policy, the matter will be treated seriously, and appropriate disciplinary action will be considered. Any disciplinary action will be governed by BEN's Disciplinary Procedure.



2 REPORTING A WHISTLEBLOWER CONCERN

2.1 How do I raise a whistleblower concern?

You can raise a whistleblower concern and receive protection by contacting one of our Community Bank company's Eligible Recipients.

Alternatively, if it is not appropriate to raise your whistleblower concern with our Community Bank company's Eligible Recipients, you can raise a whistleblower concern and receive protection via BEN's external Whistleblower Service.

If you decide to report a whistleblower concern you can do so by disclosing your name, or you can report the matter anonymously.

2.2 External BEN Whistleblower Service

If it is not appropriate to raise your whistleblower concern with our Community Bank company's Eligible Recipients, you can report your whistleblower concern through the external BEN Whistleblower Service. This whistleblower reporting service is provided by an independent third party and is currently managed by Deloitte.

You can contact the BEN Whistleblower Service through any of the methods set out below.



Online

Post

Use the Online Report Form – this contains step by step instructions to assist you in making your disclosure http://speakingup.deloitte.com.au



Email speakingup@deloitte.com.au



Phone BEN Whistleblower Hotline - toll free 1800 223 150



BEN WHISTLEBLOWER SERVICE Reply Paid 12628 A'Beckett Street, Melbourne, Victoria, 8006

2.2.1.1 Choosing to remain anonymous

Whether you want to stay anonymous or not when you contact the BEN Whistleblower Service is up to you. We recognise that maintaining confidentiality is important to the integrity of the whistleblower concerns process and to protect the welfare of people making reports.

The BEN Whistleblower Service will keep any information you give about yourself confidential within the BEN Whistleblower Service. However, the BEN Whistleblower Service will disclose it if required by law to do so.

If you do decide to remain anonymous, please be aware that this may impact on the ability to investigate your concern.



2.2.1.2 Process: The BEN Whistleblower Service

The following outlines the process when a whistleblower concern is made to the BEN Whistleblower Service:

- Telephone calls to the BEN Whistleblower Service are not recorded, nor is there a caller ID to identify the call. Your whistleblower concern will be known only by a reference number unless you choose to tell the BEN Whistleblower Service your name.
- Tell the BEN Whistleblower Service as much as you can when you blow the whistle on misconduct. For example:
 - names of people involved
 - names of any witnesses
 - date, time and location of the misconduct
 - details of any proof
 - money or assets involved
 - how often you think the incident has happened
- The BEN Whistleblower Service will advise you of the protection available under the legislation.
- The information will be provided to the BEN Whistleblower Program Officer.
- The BEN Whistleblower Program Officer will review the information and determine whether it is appropriate to investigate the matter, or whether the matter should be referred back to our Community Bank company for investigation.
- If you provide your name and contact details, this information will only be known to those required to have this information to investigate the matter.
- If you choose to remain anonymous, feedback will be made available on the BEN Whistleblower Service portal, which you can access using the case ID your password, which you will receive at the end of lodging your initial whistleblower concern.
- You always have the option of providing additional information or making note of any concerns of adverse treatment, via the BEN Whistleblower Service portal once you have logged in.

2.3 Reporting to Eligible Recipients

If the above options for raising your whistleblower concern are not available for any reason, you can also contact an "Eligible Recipient". Our Eligible Recipients are:

- Community Bank company directors;
- The Community Bank company secretary;
- The Branch Manager; and
- The auditor of the Community Bank company.

You can do this by:

- Speaking with them in person or by phone; and
- Before disclosing your whistleblower concern, inform the Eligible Recipient that you would like to raise a whistleblower concern under this policy.

An Eligible Recipient may direct you to raise your whistleblower concern via BEN's external whistleblower service if considered appropriate.

If an Eligible Recipient is the subject of your whistleblower concern, or if you have another reason to believe that the Eligible Recipient is not likely to deal with your concern properly then report your concern via BEN's external Whistleblower Service as outlined above.



2.3.1 Other ways you can raise your whistleblower concern

Nothing in this policy is intended to limit you from disclosing Reportable Conduct or providing information to a government agency, law enforcement body or a regulator in accordance with any relevant law, regulation or prudential standard.

You may also qualify for protection if you are an Eligible Whistleblower and choose to make an Emergency Disclosure or a Public Interest Disclosure - these terms are defined in the 'Definitions' section of this policy. Specific criteria apply when raising your concern under either of these methods of disclosure, and it is recommended that you contact an independent legal advisor before making an Emergency Disclosure or a Public Interest Disclosure.

3 INVESTIGATION PROTOCOLS

The investigation process will differ depending on the nature of the suspected misconduct being investigated. It may be a formal in-depth investigation, or a broad review or audit on the subject matter or the work area disclosed. The purpose of the investigation is to determine if whistleblower concerns are substantiated, with a view to remedying any misconduct uncovered, where practical.

Each whistleblower concern will be assessed by an Investigator to determine whether it qualifies for protection and whether a formal, in-depth investigation is required. In circumstances where it may be unclear whether your disclosure qualifies for protection, we may decide to treat you as if you were protected as a whistleblower.

All investigations will be conducted in a fair, objective and independent manner and all reasonable efforts will be made to preserve confidentiality.

To avoid putting an investigation at risk, if you raise a concern under this policy you are required to keep that fact confidential (subject to any legal requirements).

If you provide your details, feedback will be provided initially within seven days and then regularly while the investigation is in progress, with a further update when the investigation has been finalised. Please note that there may be circumstances where it may not be appropriate to provide you with details of the outcome.

If you choose to remain anonymous, feedback will be made available on the BEN Whistleblower Service portal, which you can access using the case ID and password given to you at the end of lodging your initial whistleblower concern.

If you choose to remain anonymous, your identity will not be disclosed to the investigator or to any other person. Information that is likely to lead to your identification may be disclosed without your consent, provided that:

- It is disclosed for the purpose of reasonably investigating the whistleblower concern; and
- All reasonable steps are taken to reduce the risk that you will be identified.

Where it is deemed appropriate, an external expert may be engaged to assist with the investigation. For example, where the whistleblower concern involves members of the Community Bank Board, or where the BEN Whistleblower Program Officer deems it necessary, external independent investigators may be engaged to perform the investigation.

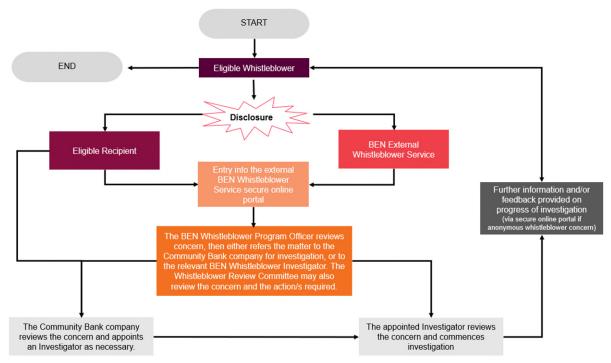
The costs of such engagement may be recovered by BEN from the Community Bank company at BEN's discretion under the applicable terms of the Franchise



Agreement.

Persons who are identified as having information relevant to an investigation are required to co-operate and assist the Investigator, in order to help our Community Bank company comply with its obligations under the whistleblower provisions of the Corporations Act, and so the investigation can proceed efficiently and be concluded as promptly as possible.

3.1 Reporting a whistleblower concern: process map



3.2 Whistleblower concerns that are substantiated

If the Investigator and / or BEN Whistleblower Program Officer are satisfied on completion of an investigation that the whistleblower concern/s raised are justified, they may make recommendations for further action.

The Investigator and / or BEN Whistleblower Program Officer will take the following into account when making recommendations:

- Where appropriate, develop recommendations in consultation with the relevant stakeholders;
- Aim to stop any substantiated misconduct which may be in breach of the law, BEN's <u>Code of Conduct</u> or any other BEN policy, or any policy adopted by our Community Bank company;
- Aim to minimise any damage or loss to our Community Bank company or BEN as a result of the substantiated misconduct;
- Identify the action/s recommended to be taken; and
- Consider if information should be provided to our Community Bank company's insurers or other third parties.



3.3 Whistleblower concerns that are not substantiated

If the Investigator and / or BEN Whistleblower Program Officer is satisfied that a whistleblower concern is not substantiated, they will make a recommendation of no action in relation to the whistleblower concern. The Investigator and / or BEN Whistleblower Program Officer has discretion to make this decision without undertaking an investigation if the circumstances justify it.

If a report of a whistleblower concern is considered by the Investigator and / or the BEN Whistleblower Program Officer to have been deliberately false or misleading, and wasn't reported anonymously, the Investigator and / or the BEN Whistleblower Program Officer may recommend that disciplinary action be taken against the person raising the concern. In this case the matter must be dealt with under BEN's Disciplinary Policy (and any other relevant policies or procedures adopted by our Community Bank company).

3.4 Reporting to third parties

In certain circumstances you may have a legal obligation to make a report to a third party, such as a statutory body or government department. You should make sure that you meet all reporting requirements. BEN's Whistleblower Program Officer can advise you on these reporting obligations.

4 SUPPORT AND PROTECTIONS FOR WHISTLEBLOWERS

You will qualify for protection as a whistleblower under the Corporations Act if you are an Eligible Whistleblower.

4.1 Civil, criminal and administrative liability

A whistleblower will not be subject to any civil, criminal or disciplinary action for raising a whistleblower concern that is covered by this policy, or for participating in any subsequent investigation.

Provided you acted without malice, you are not liable for defamation.

However, this policy will not protect you if you are also involved in the reported misconduct or illegal activities, or if the whistleblower concern is deliberately false or misleading. Anyone who raises a whistleblower concern but is later found to have been involved in wrongdoing related to the concern, will not be protected in relation to their role in the reported wrongdoing. However, in some cases the raising of the whistleblower concern may be a mitigating factor.

4.2 Confidentiality

If you choose to disclose your name, every effort will be made to protect your identity.

Information about your identity and information that is likely to lead to your identification may be disclosed in the following circumstances:

- Where the information is provided to ASIC, APRA or the Australian Federal Police;
- Where the information is disclosed to a legal practitioner for the purpose of



obtaining legal advice in relation to the operation of applicable whistleblower protection laws; or

• Where you consent.

If your whistleblower concern relates to an allegation against a person, in most cases it will be necessary to disclose details about the whistleblower concern raised to the person against whom an allegation is made, to enable them to respond. In these circumstances, we will take all reasonable steps to reduce the risk that you will be identified. You may refuse to answer questions you feel could reveal your identity at any time, including during follow up conversations.

If it is not possible to keep your identity anonymous during the investigation, we will take all reasonable steps so that you will not be disadvantaged in your employment or arrangement with our Community Bank company.

It is illegal for a person to identify a whistleblower discloser or share any information that could lead to the identification of a discloser, outside of the above circumstances. You can lodge a complaint about an actual or suspected breach of confidentiality by contacting BEN's Whistleblower Program Officer, or by lodging your complaint with ASIC, APRA or the ATO for investigation.

4.3 No detriment

You will be protected from actual or threatened detriment as a result of raising a whistleblower concern or potentially raising a whistleblower concern. You will be protected from victimisation – victimisation may include termination of employment, a reduction in your terms and conditions of employment, demotion, unfair or unequal treatment in the workplace, or if you are a supplier, cancellation of your contract.

Retaliation in any form against an individual who reports suspected misconduct under this policy (even if the whistleblower concern turns out to be mistaken) or who helps in the investigation of a whistleblower concern, will not be tolerated and will be treated as a breach of this policy and BEN's <u>Code of Conduct</u>.

You will not be protected from actions that are not detrimental conduct. Examples of activities that are not detrimental conduct include management of unsatisfactory work performance, as long as the action is consistent with BEN's Performance Counselling Policy, or actions that are undertaken to protect you from detriment – such as changing your usual work location.

If you have raised a whistleblower concern and believe you have been or are likely to be disadvantaged in any way by an employee, including your manager, director or third party because you have done so, please contact BEN's Whistleblower Program Officer for assistance.

Note: The BEN Whistleblower Program Officer is BEN's Head of Reward, Performance and Governance.

You may also seek independent legal advice or contact a relevant regulatory body (such as ASIC, APRA or the ATO), if you think you have suffered detriment.

4.4 Support for whistleblowers

We understand that raising a whistleblower concern can be stressful and difficult. Whistleblowers are encouraged to make use of the Employee Assistance Program, a confidential counselling service available to all BEN employees and Community Bank staff at



any time.

You may also contact the Whistleblower Program Officer within BEN, who may appoint an independent support person to assist you in managing your health and wellbeing. Be aware that this action may require you to consent to disclosure of your identity, or information that could lead to the disclosure of your identity.

Anonymous whistleblowers should proactively report any adverse treatment experienced by them, so immediate steps can be taken to rectify this.

4.5 Compensation

You, or any other staff member or individual, can seek compensation and other remedies through the courts if you believe you have:

- suffered loss, damage or injury because of a whistleblower concern you have raised; and
- reasonable steps to prevent the detrimental conduct that you have experienced were not taken by the Community Bank company.

In these circumstances, we encourage you to obtain independent legal advice.

5 IMPLICATED EMPLOYEE PROTECTION

5.1 Confidentiality

BEN's Whistleblower Program Officer and any Investigators must take reasonable steps to protect the confidentiality of the person who is the subject of the whistleblower concern during the assessment and investigation process.

If an investigation does not substantiate the suspected misconduct, the fact that the investigation has been carried out, the results of the investigation, and the identity of the person who is the subject of the whistleblower concern will be kept confidential.

5.2 Information sharing

Subject to any privacy, confidentiality and other legal considerations, the Investigator will make sure that the person who is the subject of the investigation:

- is informed of the substance of any allegations;
- is entitled to respond to any allegations;
- has their position or circumstances set out fairly in any report by the Investigator; and
- is informed of the outcome of any investigation including the adverse recommendations (for example, disciplinary action) where the misconduct is substantiated.

5.3 Support for implicated individuals

We recognise that a person who is the subject of a whistleblower concern should be supported during the handling of the suspected misconduct.

Staff who are the subject of a whistleblower concern are encouraged to make use of BEN's Employee Assistance Program at any time.



They may also contact BEN's Whistleblower Program Officer, who may appoint an independent support person to assist in managing the employee's health and wellbeing.

5.4 Access to the policy

This policy will be made available on our Community Bank company's branch page located on Bendigo Bank's website.



GOVERNANCE

REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every two years to ensure it remains consistent with all relevant legislative requirements and changes.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Related documents which should be read in conjunction with this policy include:

- BEN Code of Conduct
- BEN Complaints Procedure for Employees
- BEN Disciplinary Policy

DOCUMENT CONTROL TABLE

Version No:	Approved By	Date Approved	Date Applicable	Next Review Date	Document Owner
1.0	BEN People & Culture	11/11/2019	27/11/2019	27/11/2021	BEN People & Culture
1.1	BEN People & Culture	05/07/2022	05/07/2022	05/07/2024	BEN People & Culture



APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition			
APRA	The Australian Prudential Regulation Authority.			
ASIC	The Australian Securities & Investments Commission.			
Bendigo and Adelaide Bank / BEN	Bendigo and Adelaide Bank Limited (ACN 068 049 178).			
Eligible Recipient	An individual who can receive a protected disclosure.			
	An individual to whom the whistleblower protections apply.			
Eligible Whistleblower	Note: See RG 270.43–RG 270.44 and s1317AAA of the Corporations Act. Also see s14ZZU of the Taxation Administration Act.			
Emergency Disclosure	The disclosure of information to a journalist or parliamentarian, where the discloser has reasonable grounds to believe that the information concerns a substantial and imminent danger to the health or safety of one or more persons or to the natural environment.			
	Note: The disclosure must meet a number of other criteria to qualify. See RG 270.76 and s1317AAD(2) of the Corporations Act.			
	An Investigator must be suitably trained and have demonstrated competence and experience in conducting investigations.			
	 Receive notification of reports from the Community Bank company and / or BEN Whistleblower Program Officer. 			
	 Carry out investigations into whistleblower concerns referred to them, in accordance with any directions by the Community Bank company and / or BEN Whistleblower Program Officer and / or any BEN policies. 			
	 Report to the Community Bank company and / or BEN Whistleblower Program Officer, including providing investigation reports and recommendations. 			
	 Provide advice and assistance to people on the process for reporting concerns. 			
Investigator	 Impartially assess each whistleblower concern referred to them, including deciding whether an investigation is appropriate. 			
	 Provide protection to a person raising a whistleblower concern (e.g., in relation to confidentiality and record management, the welfare of the person and keeping the person informed). 			
	• If the BEN Whistleblower Service received the initial report, provide regular status reports to be documented in the BEN Whistleblower Service portal, to enable communication between the BEN Whistleblower Service and the reporting person subject to privacy, confidentiality and other legal considerations.			
	 If necessary, seek assistance of specialist advisers as required, such as BEN People and Culture team, the police, legal and forensics advisers. 			
	As appropriate, liaise with the Community Bank company and / or the BEN Whistleblower Program Officer.			



Term	Definition			
Public Interest Disclosure	The disclosure of information to a journalist or a parliamentarian, where the discloser has reasonable grounds to believe that making a further disclosure of the information is in the public interest. The disclosure must meet a number of other criteria to qualify.			
	Note: See RG 270.75 and s1317AAD(1) of the Corporations Act.			
Reportable Conduct	 Reportable Conduct includes an activity, conduct or state of affairs that is illegal, unethical or improper. For example: allegation of criminal activity (including fraud, theft, modern slavery, bribery and corruption); unethical behaviour; failure to comply with a legal obligation, including taxation obligations; significant breaches of the BEN's <u>Code of Conduct</u> policy or other BEN policy, or any policy adopted by our Community bank company; breaking any law administered by ASIC, APRA or the Commonwealth; and activities that represent a danger to the public or the financial system. 			
BEN Whistleblower Program Officer - BEN Head of Reward, Performance and Governance	 Oversight of the BEN Whistleblower service and Policy, including oversight of protection of Eligible Whistleblowers who raise a whistleblower concern via the BEN Whistleblower Service. The contact point for the BEN Whistleblower Service if the 			
	 report involves a concern about a BEN Whistleblower Investigator. Overarching role with visibility of all individual cases, who can 			
	follow up as required, talk to investigators internally, and act as the contact with the external BEN Whistleblower Service provider (Deloitte).			

