

Solving Volunteer Workplace Disputes



Government of South Australia
Department for Communities
and Social Inclusion

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Volunteers are entitled to undertake their volunteer activities in a safe and fair environment.

When disputes occur between volunteers and their organisations, most can be resolved internally, however, outside assistance is available if the problem is more complex and difficult to resolve (cases covered by law such as sexual harassment, bullying or discrimination may need to be dealt with by outside authorities).

Solving disputes internally

In most cases, large volunteer organisations will have a disputes resolution policy available to employees and volunteers in the instance of a dispute.

If a problem arises, it is important to obtain a copy and familiarise yourself with the policy to be able to follow the steps laid out for your complaint.

Internal disputes are typically resolved using:

- intervention with senior management
- mediation with an independent person where both parties have the opportunity to discuss the problem
- a more formal review of the dispute, which will include an investigation of the claims of both parties.

If there is no policy, you may wish to seek guidance from an appropriate person within the organisation such as your supervisor, or a manager.

Unfortunately, not all disputes can be solved (depending on the nature) and in these cases, an external authority will be required.

Solving disputes externally

If the dispute cannot be solved internally, volunteers and volunteer organisations may choose to take the problem to an external authority.

Below is a list of external authorities, which may be able to assist.

For general advice

Fair Work Ombudsman
W: www.fairwork.gov.au
P: 13 13 94

For issues relating to discrimination and harassment

Equal Opportunity Commission
W: <http://www.eoc.sa.gov.au>
P: (08) 8207 1977, for hearing impaired (08) 8207 1911
Outside Adelaide free call 1800 188 163

For issues relating to workplace health and safety

SafeWork SA

W: <http://www.safework.sa.gov.au>

P: 1300 365 255

For legal advice and assistance

Legal Services Commission

W: <http://www.lsc.sa.gov.au>

P: 1300 366 424