

Welcoming and safe volunteer spaces

Managing difficult conversations: discrimination and bias

1. Human Rights and Legislation:

Learn about racism, sexism, ableism, and homophobia to recognise types of discrimination. Reinforce agreed shared values by holding team meetings to talk about case studies highlighting different forms of discrimination and problem solve with your team.

2. Stay calm and observe:

Assess the situation and if safe to intervene, ask the person to stop talking
Observe the interactions and ensure the discussion or situation can stop
Apologise to the person who is being targeted. Assure them you will address the incident and provide them with support
Be calm and remove the person who has made comments into a private area
Suggest they need time to reflect and make a time for a follow up debrief.

3. Offer support:

If safe, approach the person experiencing discrimination in private and express your support
Let them know you acknowledge what they are experiencing and that you are there to help.

4. Speak up:

Take the person aside who spoke inappropriately and make a time with them to discuss the matter.
Make sure all volunteers and staff who saw the event are comfortable and safe
Address the discriminatory behaviour in a calm and assertive way. Explain why it is harmful and not acceptable
Use I statements to express concerns e.g. *I am uncomfortable with the way this conversation is going or, I believe everyone has the right to be treated in a fair and respectful way.*

5. Document the incident:

When safe to do so, document the incident by taking notes or recording relevant details
Information will help when reporting the incident or if further action is taken.

6. Triage the event:

Offer support to the person discriminated against, ensure they feel heard and valued
Encourage them to speak up for themselves if they are comfortable doing so
Provide training and support to address the behaviour, with a timeline of follow ups.

7. Foster inclusivity:

Advocate for and contribute to creating an inclusive environment in the volunteer team
Support open dialogue, diversity training and policies that promote equality and respect.

8. Self-care:

Incidents of discrimination can be confronting and challenging. Your own safety is always a priority
Use your judgment and seek guidance and support from appropriate resources as needed.