

POLICY

WHISTLEBLOWER

PURPOSE

This Policy provides a framework for individuals to report certain types of misconduct or suspected misconduct and receive protection under the Whistleblower Legislation. The purpose of this Policy is to:

- set out the principles, guidelines and procedures governing FVREE's approach to the protection of whistleblowers and the management of Disclosures;
- ensure individuals who make a Disclosure can do so safely, securely and with the confidence that they will be protected and supported;
- ensure Disclosures are dealt with appropriately and on a timely basis; and
- provide transparency around FVREE's procedure for receiving, handling, and investigating Disclosures.

RESPONSIBLE PERSON	Company Secretary	AUTHORISER	Board
LAST APPROVED	26/03/2025	NEXT REVIEW DATE	26/03/2027
APPLICABLE TO	All Eligible Whistleblowers and Eligible Recipients or Other Recipients who receive Disclosures		



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCOPE

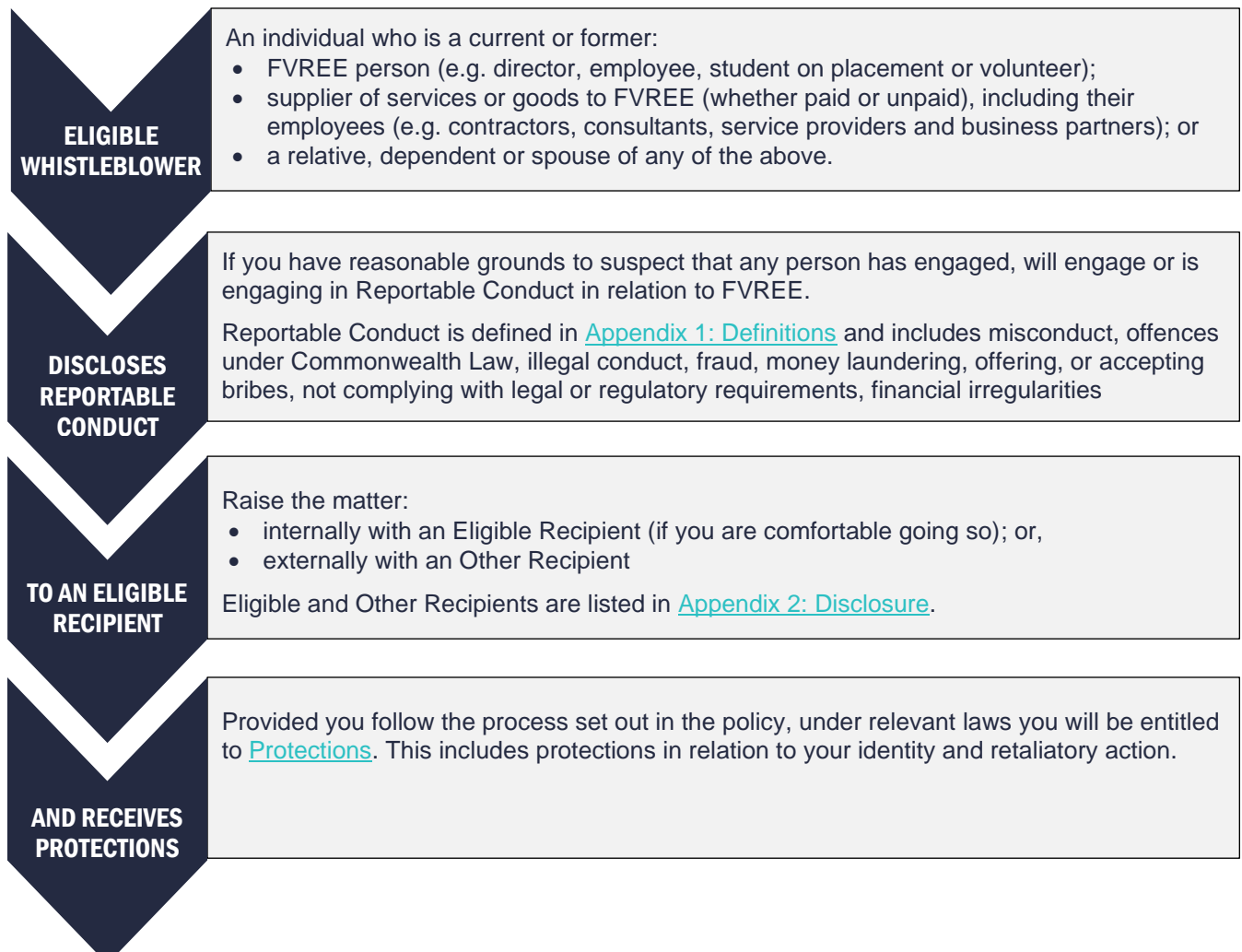
This Policy should be read and understood by, and made available to all directors, officers, employees, contractors, volunteers and service providers of FVREE.

The Policy applies to Eligible Whistleblowers that qualify for protection and Eligible Recipients or Other Recipients who are eligible to receive Disclosures.

This Policy applies only in relation to Disclosures. It is not intended to replace the Grievance Resolution Procedure which is available to all staff to raise any matter they may have in relation to their work or work environment, another FVREE person, or any decision which affects their employment. Disclosures made in relation to personal work-related grievances will only qualify for protection under the Whistleblower Legislation in circumstances where they:

- include information about Reportable Conduct, or forms part of a disclosure which also includes Reportable Conduct;
- concern an Eligible Whistleblower who has suffered, or been threatened with, detrimental treatment for making a Disclosure; or
- are made to a legal practitioner for the purposes of obtaining legal advice about the operation of the Whistleblower Legislation.

1.2 PROCESS



1.3 REVIEW

FVREE may at its sole absolute discretion review and update this Policy, and any procedures and processes under this Policy, as and when required.

The Board will review this Policy at least once every two years to ensure that it is operating effectively and compliant with the Whistleblower Legislation.

1.4 CONTACT

For questions about this Policy, contact the Company Secretary.

2 POLICY STATEMENT

FVREE Ltd (FVREE) is committed to maintaining the highest standard of conduct and ethical behaviour in its operations. FVREE strives for a culture of openness and feedback, in which concerns and complaints are:

- addressed appropriately;
- handled respectfully and fairly; and
- dealt with in a caring, respectful and ethical way.

2.1 REPORTING REPORTABLE CONDUCT

If you are a FVREE Person and have reasonable grounds to suspect that any person to whom this Policy applies has engaged, will engage or is engaging in Reportable Conduct, you must report your claims to a relevant Eligible Recipient or an Other Recipient.

If you are a Non-FVREE Person and have reasonable grounds to suspect that any person to whom this Policy applies has engaged, will engage or is engaging in Reportable Conduct, you are encouraged to report your claims to the relevant Eligible Recipient or an Other Recipient as listed in [Appendix 2: Disclosure](#).

FVREE seeks to identify and address wrongdoing as early as possible. We encourage Eligible Whistleblowers to make a Disclosure to an Eligible Recipient. While it is FVREE's preference that you do so to the Recipients in the order set out in [Appendix 2: Disclosure](#), it is your right to make a Disclosure to any Eligible Recipient or Other Recipient.

You will qualify for protection as an Eligible Whistleblower under Whistleblower Legislation in relation to FVREE if you do any of the following:

- make a Disclosure to an Eligible Recipient or Other Recipient;
- disclose information to a legal practitioner for the purposes of obtaining legal advice about the operation of the Whistleblower Legislation; or
- make an Emergency Disclosure or Public Interest Disclosure.

A Disclosure about matters other than Reportable Conduct suspected on reasonable grounds does not qualify for protection under Whistleblower Legislation but may be protected under other legislation.

Making a disclosure where you do not have reasonable grounds to suspect that there has been Reportable Conduct or knowingly making a false disclosure may constitute serious misconduct.

Any person who engages in serious misconduct or uses this Policy inappropriately may be subject to disciplinary action (which could include termination of employment).

If you wish to obtain additional information before making a Disclosure (including to ascertain whether you would be entitled to the [Protections](#) listed below), please contact FVREE's Whistleblower Protection Officer or an independent legal advisor.

2.2 PROTECTIONS

2.2.1 Protection of informant's identity and anonymity

FVREE is committed to protecting, and is obligated by the Whistleblower Legislation to protect, the confidentiality or anonymity of your identity or information which might identify you, where you make a Disclosure in the manner set out in paragraph 6(d). If you make a Disclosure in accordance with this Policy, you may be entitled to statutory protections as a whistleblower under the Whistleblower Legislation.

- Anonymous Disclosures will still be protected under the Whistleblower Legislation and the statutory protections apply to you even in instances where a claim of Reportable Conduct in your Disclosure can not be substantiated.
- You are not required to disclose your name when making a Disclosure. You can choose to remain anonymous during any investigation into the claim of Reportable Conduct and after it is finalised.
- Anonymous Disclosures can be made to any Eligible Recipient listed in [Appendix 2: Disclosure](#).
- If you make an anonymous Disclosure, you may wish to maintain ongoing communication with the Eligible Recipient so they can ask follow-up questions or provide feedback in relation to your Disclosure. To help protect your anonymity:
 - communications can be made through anonymous telephone hotlines and anonymised email addresses; and
 - you may adopt a pseudonym when communicating with us.
- If you make an anonymous Disclosure, you may refuse to answer questions that you feel could reveal your identity at any time, including during any follow-up conversations with us.
- If you make an anonymous Disclosure, FVREE may not be able to undertake a comprehensive investigation if you have not provided all relevant information that supports your claim or if you have not provided enough information to allow us to continue communicating with you.
- You may decline to pass on your identity to an Eligible Recipient, in which case:
 - the information you disclose (but not your identity) may be disclosed to an investigator for the purposes of investigating any Reportable Conduct you have disclosed; and
 - all reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that any information you have disclosed which might identify you remains confidential.
- FVREE will treat all Disclosures confidentially and information about the Disclosure will not be shared unless:
 - you have provided us with prior consent to do so;
 - we are legally obligated to do so;
 - it is reasonably necessary to do so to investigate the claim of Reportable Conduct (for example, to prevent a serious threat to an individual's health or safety); or
 - we consider it appropriate to make a disclosure to a regulator in accordance with Whistleblower Legislation.

- It is illegal for FVREE or an Eligible Recipient to disclose information that may lead to the identification of an Eligible Whistleblower, outside of the exceptions listed above. A breach of confidentiality or disclosure of the identity of an Eligible Whistleblower may lead to:
 - individuals being exposed to disciplinary action by FVREE; and/or
 - individuals and/or FVREE being exposed to criminal or civil liability under the Whistleblower Legislation.
- You may lodge a complaint in relation to any breach of confidentiality to:
 - any of the Eligible Recipients; and/or
 - a regulator, such as Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC), Australian Prudential Regulatory Authority (APRA), the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) or the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner (OVIC).

2.2.2 Protection of informant and support

FVREE is committed to protecting you if you make a Disclosure.

- An investigator appointed to investigate a claim of Reportable Conduct disclosed by you will take all reasonable steps to ensure that you are treated fairly while the Reportable Conduct is investigated and following the conclusion of any investigation.
- If you disclose Reportable Conduct, any retaliatory action or threats of retaliatory action against you will not be tolerated by FVREE and will constitute serious misconduct by the individual(s) concerned (irrespective of whether you are implicated in the Reportable Conduct you have disclosed).
- At law, you must not be personally subject to any actual detriment or threats to cause detriment or disadvantage as a result of having made a Disclosure, including (without limitation):
 - dismissal;
 - demotion;
 - any form of harassment;
 - discrimination; or
 - current or future bias.
- If you are implicated in the Reportable Conduct you have disclosed, while no retaliatory action may be taken or threatened against you, you may nevertheless be held accountable for your involvement in the Reportable Conduct. Your involvement as an Eligible Whistleblower may be a mitigating factor when disciplinary or other action against you is considered.
- If you believe retaliatory action has been taken or been threatened against you, you may report this to FVREE's Chair of the Board. If you are not confident that this can be dealt with through the FVREE processes, then you may report this to one of the Other Recipients as set out in [Appendix 2: Disclosure](#).
- Under Whistleblower Legislation, you:
 - may be entitled to seek compensation and other remedies through the courts if;
 - you suffer loss, damage or injury due to any Disclosure you have made; and
 - FVREE has failed to take reasonable precautions and exercise due diligence to prevent detrimental conduct; and
 - are protected, in respect of any Disclosure you have made, from civil, criminal and administrative liability (unless you have engaged in the Reportable Conduct).

- These protections apply irrespective of whether you made the report to an Eligible Recipient or Other Recipient, or whether you made a Public Interest Disclosure or an Emergency Disclosure.
- All FVREE Persons and their immediate family members have access to a free and confidential counselling service via our Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Whilst FVREE cannot always provide the same level of practical support to all whistleblowers, FVREE will endeavour to provide support to the extent reasonably possible.

2.3 SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUALS AGAINST WHOM A CLAIM OF REPORTABLE CONDUCT IS MADE

- FVREE will support Respondents who are individuals against whom a claim of Reportable Conduct is made (and whose Reportable Conduct may be investigated). Any investigator appointed to investigate a claim of Reportable Conduct will take reasonable steps to ensure that Respondents are treated fairly while their Reportable Conduct is investigated and upon conclusion of any investigation. Respondents who are FVREE Persons and their immediate family members will have access to FVREE's free and confidential support via our Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
- In addition to the other measures set out in this Policy, FVREE will provide support to Respondents being investigated in circumstances where the allegations against them are not substantiated.

2.4 INVESTIGATIONS AND REPORTS

- If you make a Disclosure pursuant to this Policy, you will receive formal acknowledgement within three business days (provided that you have provided sufficient contact details to enable us to communicate with you).
- Your Disclosure may trigger an investigation into the claim of Reportable Conduct. The investigation process may vary depending on the nature of the Disclosure. However, for a claim to be comprehensively investigated, the Disclosure must include sufficient information about the claim of Reportable Conduct.
- FVREE may at its sole absolute discretion:
 - appoint internal or external investigators to investigate claims of Reportable Conduct;
 - appoint legal counsel to assist with investigations; and
- Each Disclosure will be assessed by FVREE to determine whether:
 - it qualifies for protection; and
 - a formal, in-depth investigation is required, in which case an internal or external investigator will be appointed.
- The objective of an investigation is to determine whether there is enough evidence to substantiate or refute the claim of Reportable Conduct.
- The investigator will, within a reasonable time period after appointment, decide if an investigation is required after properly investigating the claim with the objective of locating and verifying evidence of the claim of Reportable Conduct.
- During any investigation, the investigator must:
 - act fairly and independently in investigating any claim of Reportable Conduct;
 - utilise an investigation method which is flexible and fit for purpose, taking into account the claim and any information available;
 - determine the resources to be allocated to the investigation and may seek independent financial, legal or operational advice as necessary;

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- conduct the investigation in as timely a manner as the circumstances allow;
 - as appropriate in the circumstances, provide you with updates and feedback on the expected timeframes of the investigation;
 - communicate with you, each person being investigated and any other person participating in the investigation clearly and unambiguously;
 - take all appropriate procedural steps, maintain an audit trail relating to investigation activities and document evidence found and critical decisions made during the course of the investigation; and
 - where relevant and appropriate, keep the Chair informed of the progress of the investigation.
- The investigator must take all reasonable steps to safeguard your confidentiality and privacy, each person being investigated and any other person participating in the investigation.
 - The investigator must take all reasonable steps to safeguard the confidentiality of any Disclosure you have made and any information which they have gathered during the investigation.
 - The Chair will, to the extent that it is relevant and appropriate to do so (taking into account confidentiality and privacy considerations), keep you and each person being investigated informed of the outcomes of the investigation.
 - If a claim of Reportable Conduct relating to a Disclosure you make is not substantiated, you will be given an explanation of why the claim was not substantiated, subject to relevant privacy and confidentiality considerations.

2.5 ACCESS TO AND TRAINING IN RELATION TO THIS POLICY

- This Policy will remain accessible on FVREE's website.
- Information and guidance on this Policy will be given to new employees upon induction, to all current employees following material updates to this Policy, and on a regular basis thereafter.
- Training will be provided to all Eligible Recipients on the identification and treatment of Disclosures:
 - upon appointment to that role, and
 - thereafter on an annual basis.

2.6 REPORTING

Information about Disclosures on material or significant matters, the outcomes of those investigations, as well as reporting trends on all Disclosures, will be provided to the Board. Unless consent is provided by the Eligible Whistleblower, reporting will be in a way which preserves the anonymity of the Eligible Whistleblower.

2.7 CONSEQUENCES OF A BREACH OF THIS POLICY

A FVREE Person found to be in breach of the requirements of this Policy may be subject to disciplinary action (including termination of employment) in line with our Discipline Procedure

3 RESPONSIBILITIES

Role/Function	Responsibilities
THE BOARD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be aware of this Policy and understand your obligations as a potential Eligible Whistleblower and potential Eligible Recipient. • Initiate investigation procedures upon receipt of a Disclosure.
WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION OFFICER AND ELIGIBLE RECIPIENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be aware of this Policy and understand your obligations. • Act as FVREE’s primary contact for Disclosures. • Initiate investigation procedures upon receipt of a Disclosure. • Assist with whistleblowing investigations as appropriate.
ELIGIBLE WHISTLEBLOWER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be aware of this Policy and understand your obligations as a potential Eligible Whistleblower.

4 RELATED LEGISLATION AND DOCUMENTS

LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS	Corporations Act 2001 (Cth) Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) Taxation Administration Act 1953 (Cth)
STANDARDS AND REQUIREMENTS	Child Safe Standards, Victoria (2022) ISO 9001:2015 Quality Management System Requirements Rainbow Tick Standards, Rainbow Health Victoria (3rd Edition, 2020) Social Services Standards, Social Services Regulations (2023)
CODES	Code of Conduct Safeguarding Children and Young People Code of Conduct
FRAMEWORKS AND POLICIES	Privacy Policy Risk Management Policy
PROCEDURES	Discipline Procedure Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Procedure Grievance Resolution Procedure

5 APPENDIX 1: DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this Policy:

Term	Definition
APRA	The Australian Prudential Regulatory Authority.
ASIC	The Australian Securities and Investments Commission.
DISCLOSURE	A disclosure by an Eligible Whistleblower of information that they have reasonable grounds to suspect concerns Reportable Conduct.
ELIGIBLE RECIPIENT	Any of the Eligible Recipients listed in Appendix 2: Disclosure .
ELIGIBLE WHISTLEBLOWER	An individual who is a current or former: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FVREE person; • supplier of services or goods to FVREE (whether paid or unpaid), including their employees (e.g. contractors, consultants, service providers and business partners); or • a relative, dependant or spouse of any of the above.
EMERGENCY DISCLOSURE	A Disclosure to a journalist or parliamentarian in the following emergency circumstances: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you have previously made a Disclosure of the information to ASIC or APRA or a prescribed Commonwealth authority; and • you have 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; and • before making the Emergency Disclosure, you have given written notice to the entity to whom you made the Disclosure under this clause that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – includes sufficient information to identify the Disclosure you previously made to that authority; and – states that you intend to make an Emergency Disclosure; and – the extent of the information disclosed in the Emergency Disclosure is no greater than is necessary to inform the journalist or parliamentarian of the substantial and imminent danger.
FVREE PERSON(S)	Any current FVREE director(s), officer(s), employee(s) or volunteer(s).
NON-FVREE PERSON	Any Eligible Whistleblower other than a FVREE Person.
OTHER RECIPIENTS	Any of the Other Recipients listed in Appendix 2: Disclosure .
PERSONAL WORK-RELATED GRIEVANCE	Any matter related to your current or former employment with FVREE which has implications for you personally, but does not have significant implications for FVREE or relate to Reportable Conduct. Examples of Personal Work-Related Grievances include, but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an interpersonal conflict between you and another employee; • a decision relating to your engagement, transfer or promotion; • a decision relating to the terms and conditions of your engagement; and • a decision to suspend or terminate your employment, or otherwise to discipline you.

Term	Definition
PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURE	<p>A Disclosure to a journalist or parliamentarian if the following circumstances apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at least 90 days have passed since the time you made the Disclosure to ASIC, APRA or another prescribed Commonwealth authority; and • you do not have reasonable grounds to believe that action is being, or has been taken, in relation to your Disclosure; and • you have reasonable grounds to believe that making a further Disclosure of the information is in the public interest; and • before making the Public Interest Disclosure, you have given written notice to the authority in paragraph 3(a) above to whom you made the Disclosure that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – includes sufficient information to identify the Disclosure you previously made to that authority; and – states that you intend to make a Public Interest Disclosure.
REPORTABLE CONDUCT	<p>In relation to a FVREE Person includes conduct which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is illegal, dishonest, fraudulent or corrupt; • is negligent, a default, a breach of trust or breach of duty; • is unethical, such as dishonestly altering FVREE's organisational records, engaging in questionable accounting practices or receiving money or gifts in return for favourable treatment or wilfully breaching our Code of Conduct (including bullying and harassment); • is a significant or considerable misuse or mismanagement of FVREE's resources; • is potentially damaging to FVREE or a FVREE person, such as unsafe work practices; • may cause financial loss to FVREE or damage our reputation or be otherwise detrimental to our interests; • a breach of relevant legislation; • constitutes 'misconduct' in relation to a relevant entity; • constitutes serious misconduct or impropriety of any other kind; • constitutes an offence against any of the <i>Corporations Act 2001</i> (Cth), <i>ASIC Act 2001</i> (Cth), <i>Banking Act 1959</i> (Cth), <i>Financial Sector (Collection of Data) Act 2001</i> (Cth), <i>Insurance Act 1973</i> (Cth), <i>Life Insurance Act 1995</i> (Cth), <i>National Consumer Credit Protection Act 2009</i> (Cth), <i>Superannuation Industry (Supervision) Act 1993</i> (Cth), <i>Taxation Administration Act 1953</i> (Cth) or an instrument made under any of these Acts; • constitutes an offence under any Commonwealth law, punishable by at least 12 months of imprisonment; • represents a danger to the public or the financial system; • is prescribed by the <i>Corporations Regulations 2001</i> (Cth); • is an improper state of affairs or circumstances; or • constitutes concealing or attempting to conceal Reportable Conduct.
WHISTLEBLOWER LEGISLATION	<p>The <i>Corporations Act 2001</i> (Cth) or <i>Taxation Administration Act 1953</i> (Cth).</p>

6 APPENDIX 2: DISCLOSURE

If you have reasonable grounds to suspect that an individual has engaged in Reportable Conduct, it is your right to make a Disclosure to any Eligible Recipient or Other Recipient.

ELIGIBLE RECIPIENTS

By law, a Disclosure may be made to:

- any officer or senior manager of FVREE or any related body corporate;
- the internal or external auditor of FVREE or any related body corporate; and/or
- any person authorised by FVREE to receive Disclosures that may qualify for protection.

1. Reporting Internally

If you would prefer to make a Disclosure internally, FVREE has designated the following individuals to receive Disclosures.

Position: Whistleblower Protection Officer
Name: Sasha Eden (General Manager People and Culture)
Email: sasha.eden@fvree.org.au
Phone: (03) 9259 4200
Post: PO BOX 698 Ringwood VIC 3134

Position: Board Chair
Name: Sandie de Wolfe AM
Phone: (03) 9259 4200
Post: PO BOX 698 Ringwood VIC 3134

Position: Company Secretary
Name: Fiona Kelly (Chief Financial Officer)
Email: fiona.kelly@fvree.org.au
Phone: (03) 9259 4200
Post: PO BOX 698 Ringwood VIC 3134

Position: Executive Leadership Representative
Name: Caterina Wooden (General Manager Strategy and Planning)
Email: caterina.wooden@fvree.org.au
Phone: (03) 9259 4200
Post: PO BOX 698 Ringwood VIC 3134

OTHER RECIPIENTS

3. Reporting to Other Recipients

If an Eligible Whistleblower does not wish to raise their concern via any of the above methods, they may still qualify for protection under the Whistleblower Legislation if they make a:

Disclosure to any of the Australian Federal Police, the Commissioner of Taxation (if their report concerns taxation matters), ASIC or APRA (if their report does not concern taxation matters); or

Disclosure of information to an external legal practitioner for the purposes of obtaining legal advice or representation about making a Disclosure under this Policy (even if the external legal practitioner concludes that a disclosure does not concern Reportable Conduct).