SECTION 4 – Policy and Tips for Managing Volunteers

1. Introduction

"Tips for Managing Volunteers" has been included because the effective management of volunteers is a fine art and can be a delicate balancing act. Volunteer organisations are now obliged to follow EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) practices and Occupational Health and Safety guidelines.

We have a responsibility in managing volunteers to ensure they receive high job satisfaction and feel clear and confident in what they are doing. We also have a responsibility to our funding bodies to ensure we maintain our volunteers' commitment to the Program. The largest expenditure section in our budget relates to training volunteers and having systems in place to support them. Thus we need to maintain their involvement in the Program.

We ask tutors to make a commitment of 12 months which equates to approximately 60 hours of tutoring per year. Given that we invest approximately 27 hours in training tutors, this is not exactly a good return of our investment. One of the most effective ways to retain volunteers is by running a professional, well organised system. Volunteers are extremely busy people and do not appreciate inefficiencies. The following tips on managing volunteers are a good start to a well organised system.

The stereotype of volunteers being retired or predominantly women who are full-time homemakers or "empty-nesters", is long gone. The reality is that today, more than ever before, the volunteer workforce is made up of adults of all ages, many working full-time and many with family responsibilities. This changing face of volunteers has resulted in changes to the way we manage volunteers.

In general, today's volunteers want to work on clearly defined programs/projects that are managed by the organisation in a business-like manner. Volunteers have little time to give and they want to feel it is spent meaningfully. Some volunteers will be attracted to *Read Write Now!* because the role of tutor appeals to them.

However, Coordinators should be aware of the potential to attract volunteers highly skilled in other areas who would be happy to take on shorter, more specific tasks, eg promotion, desk-top publishing of newsletters, balancing the accounts or managing the teaching resource materials. There are many options to lighten the Coordinator load and to involve volunteers without literacy training/background.

Some volunteers are happy to donate expertise to a "good cause" but don't particularly care *which* cause. Managing this new breed of volunteers is an exciting challenge. Excellence in the management of people is fundamental to the survival of volunteer organisations such as *Read Write Now!*

2. When in Doubt…

Golden Rule No. 1   The Right Person in the Right Job

In striving toward best practice in volunteer management, *Read Write Now!* follows the principles of interviewing ALL volunteers (and rejecting where necessary) and then providing comprehensive training, monitoring and feedback in a professional and timely manner. Job descriptions and expectations are clearly stated up front so some applicants "self-select themselves out" of the Program if it does not suit them.

The interview process should also "select out" applicants who are not suitable for this area of volunteering. These two strategies make up Golden Rule No. 1 and can save the Coordinator an awful lot of time and avoid potential headaches later on. It is far more difficult and time consuming to remove an unsuitable volunteer than it is to refer them elsewhere in the first place.

Golden Rule No. 2   When the Going Gets Tough…Quote the Policy

All good managers of volunteers have a policy in place that clearly outlines the framework and guidelines that the Program operates within. *Read Write Now!* has a policy and all Coordinators should use it as the backdrop for their decision making if potential issues or uncertainties arise. Use the policy to make your job easier. The policy is set out for you on page 5 in this section of the manual.

Golden Rule No. 3   Moving On

If a volunteer is not carrying out their duties as agreed or has become disillusioned, it is then time for them to be encouraged to move on. A negative volunteer can undermine the morale of others and tarnish the good name of the Program. Refer to the Grievance Procedures on page 17 in this section to find out how to move on a negative volunteer.

Golden Rule No. 4   Saying 'Thank-You' in a dozen different ways

Most volunteers claim they don't need to be rewarded for what they do – that the benefit to the student is enough reward. However, a genuine gesture of thanks never fails to result in a glowing smile on the volunteer's face. Giving due recognition is absolutely critical in volunteer management. This can take the form of compliments, thank-you letters, birthday cards, photos in the local paper, morning teas etc.

Quite often, the more innovative or creative the gesture is, the more it is appreciated. Generally, volunteer organisations are strapped for cash and volunteers do not appreciate funds being spent on what they perceive as expensive gifts.

Please note that the terms of funding does not permit/ allow the purchase of gifts to tutors. This is consistent with Public Sector Guidelines for staff as well. Central Office staff have responsibility for rewards and recognition of volunteer tutor services.

Rewards and Recognition

Why have a system of rewards and recognition for volunteers?

- To say 'thank you' for their services to your organisation.
- To maintain their commitment to your organisation thus returning the investment made in training.
- To demonstrate to the volunteer's family how important and valued the volunteer's work is. This results in family support and alleviates potential conflict.
- The development of the system should create essential data and/ or opportunities for public profiling, reporting and justifying funding applications.

Checklist to use when developing a system of rewards and recognition for volunteers:

- In terms of funding is the initiative sustainable?
- In terms of workload is the initiative manageable?
- Can you be certain that the award/ incentive is fair and equitable?
- Will volunteers see it as 'appropriate"? (not too extravagant and not undervaluing them?).
- Does the initiative relate to a significant milestone in volunteering?

It is recommended that each region hold a Christmas break-up, which may include both tutors and students. We are always interested to hear of innovative ideas from our regional groups.

3. Policy

Having a policy in place makes life much easier for Coordinators. A policy can be daunting to read but it does make things quite straightforward and avoids confusion. When managing volunteers, operate within the Policy guidelines and use them as your back up. A good policy clarifies:

- Our purpose
- Who we service, eligibility/for how long
- When we discontinue our service
- Who funds/supports us
- Who is eligible to become a tutor
- Volunteers' rights within the Program

It gives Coordinators a clear framework to base their decisions on. Often Coordinators get caught in a difficult situation and don't know what answer to give to prospective students, tutors, referral agencies – the policy is designed to overcome such problems.

In a nutshell, why is a policy necessary? **To avoid or resolve conflict.**

Following the Policy Document in full, there is a one page abridged version of the Policy that can be passed on to tutors.

4. Read Write Now! POLICY DOCUMENT

1. Interpretations

The following terms shall have the following meanings:

a. The "Program" means the *Read Write Now!* Program

b. The "staff" means the paid staff

c. The "Coordinators" means the voluntary Coordinators

d. The "volunteers" means the Coordinators, tutors and voluntary administration support people

2. Purpose

The *Read Write Now!* Program exists solely to provide adults with opportunities to access quality one-to-one tuition, free of charge to the student, in order to increase their literacy and/or numeracy skills and fulfill their individual needs and enable them to participate more fully in society.

3. Definition of Volunteer Work within the context of the Read Write Now! Program

Voluntary work may be defined as unpaid work that is chosen freely by a person and is carried out for the benefit of the individual and the community.

Voluntary work does not imply that the work is free from set standards or a regular commitment. Both the standards and time commitment are to be established in consultation between staff and Coordinators to ensure the Program operates effectively.

4. Policy Statement

The scope of the Program is restricted to providing ongoing tutoring services in the areas of literacy and/or numeracy to adults who are making active progress with literacy and/or numeracy skills. The Program will operate within the following parameters:

1. The Program generally defines as adults, people who are over 18 years of age and have left the school system.

2. Any adult wishing to receive tuition is invited to apply without fear of discrimination on the grounds of gender, age, ethnic origin, disability or religion.

3. Students will only be considered for the Program if they have applied under their own volition and are motivated to improve their literacy skills.

4. The RWN Program is designed for potential students who already have basic competent oral communication in English but low literacy. Potential students need to have functional spoken English as a basis for the development of skills in reading writing and spelling and/or basic maths. Where possible, applicants unable to meet these criteria will be directed to other appropriate services that meet their needs.

Coordinator's discretion can be used in special circumstances where no other appropriate services exist.

5. Students will initially be accepted into the Program for a period of 3 months with tutoring sessions of approximately 1.5 hours per week. At the end of this period, the volunteer tutor and student will review the progress made, the student's motivation, the student's level of satisfaction with the Program, further goals of the student and the level of expertise of the tutor to assist the student to reach the further goals. The volunteer tutor and student then decide on the direction they will take. The Coordinator may be asked to assist in this process to recommend options.

6. A student's involvement in the Program may be terminated by the student at any time. The volunteer Coordinator may terminate a student's involvement if the student is not motivated to make progress towards literacy, or if the needs of the student are beyond the level of expertise of volunteer tutors and cannot be met within the Program. Wherever possible, the student will be referred to another agency with the expertise to assist them.

7. The Coordinator will contact both the student and the tutor individually after the first 6 weeks of tutoring to ensure the match is agreeable to both parties.

8. The role of the volunteer is restricted to that of a tutor in the area of literacy and/or numeracy only and must not extend to counselling, social work or the work of a social trainer or any other professional role beyond the scope of the Program. Volunteers should not be seen as depriving others of a livelihood (eg conducting classroom sessions) or constituting a threat to the security and job satisfaction of others or jeopardising the well-being of students by taking on inappropriate roles.

9. The volunteer tutor has the right to decline the offer of being matched with a particular student.

10. Any person wishing to register their interest in becoming a volunteer tutor is invited to do so without fear of discrimination on the grounds of gender, age, ethnic origin, disability, religion or race. However, due to the limited range of work and the type of work to be undertaken and the specific needs of adult learners, not all applicants can be accepted. The success of the Program relies on the principle of "the right person in the right job". Wherever possible, if this Program is not appropriate for an applicant, other options are to be recommended.

11. All tutors must agree to RWN! applying for a Police Check on their behalf. They will sign an Application for Volunteer National Police Check form at the time of interview. Costs involved in obtaining Police Checks will be covered by RWN! when done through our system.

12. If the Police Check shows the applicant has current convictions, the manager has the right to request further information before deciding if the applicant is appropriate for this Program. This request will be made to the applicant by Central Office staff only and may take the form of requesting the applicant to obtain a Police Certificate from a Police Station at their own expense.

13. If tutors have an existing Police Certificate that is less than 2 years old, a copy of this can be submitted to RWN! instead of applying for a new check.

14. Re-checks of Police Checks will be done every three years.

15. For procedures relating to Police Checks please see *Coordinator's manual, Section 6 "Admin", Part 1(b) "Tutors - Police Checks"*.

16. Central TAFE will provide the "RiskCover" insurance policy for volunteers while on duty. Volunteers are not covered while engaging in duties outside their Job Description. See *Section 3 The Tutor - Tutor Job Description.*

17. It is recommended that tutoring takes place in a "neutral venue", eg public library, on TAFE premises, community centres, coffee shops etc rather than in private homes.

18. The Program's funding allows for reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses for volunteer Coordinators only. Telephone and travel expenses can be reimbursed on the production of receipts and a travel log. Other expenses such as catering for Tutor Meetings can also be claimed as long as they fall within the group's budget, and do not include alcohol. The Program does not have the resources to pay out-of-pocket expenses for volunteer tutors.

19. Volunteers are given a "Welcome to New Tutors" brochure upon interview, giving a clear statement of their entitlements, rights and responsibilities. They can also access the Policy and procedures for grievance resolution through the RWN! website, which is listed on the brochure.

20. Volunteers are expected to undertake the high quality training by professional trainers to prepare them for their work and to enable the volunteer to make informed choices on the type of student they can assist within their level of expertise.

21. Volunteers are provided with the necessary teaching resources (within budget).

22. The work of volunteers is recognised with a system of rewards and recognition in return for their efforts based on milestones of continuous active service.

23. All information on students is to be treated as confidential, and only released/discussed with the consent of the student.

5. Procedures

All procedures in relation to the involvement of volunteers and students including interviews, selection, assessments, Police Checks, unsatisfactory performance, grievance procedures and rights and responsibilities are to be clearly documented in plain English and freely available on the RWN! website.

6. Non Profit

The assets and income of *Read Write Now!* shall be applied solely in furtherance of its above mentioned objectives and no portion shall be distributed directly or indirectly to the members of the organisation except as bona fide compensation for services rendered or expenses incurred on behalf of the organisation.

7. Policy Review

This Policy should be reviewed annually. Proposed amendments are to be circulated to all staff and Coordinators four weeks prior to the annual Coordinator's Conference for discussion and acceptance/rejection at the Conference.

5. Abridged Policy for Tutors

Purpose & Role

Voluntary work is carried out for the benefit of the individual and the community. It does not imply that the work is casual or irregular. These principles need to be established and adhered to.

The role of the tutor is to increase the general literacy levels of their students. This is done through one-to-one tuition. The lessons are centred on the individual goals of the student and do not follow a formal curriculum.

Abridged Policy

The following list covers the conditions under which tutor and student agree to work:

1. RWN! students must be 18 years plus

2. Freedom from discrimination (gender, age, ethnicity, religion or disability)

3. Under student's own volition and motivation to learn

4. Three (3) month periods at 1.5 hours per week, then further directions follow

5. The tutor/student relationship ends when students have achieved their goal, or if the student is not able to make literacy progress, or if tutor's level of expertise is inadequate for student

6. The role of tutoring is confined to teaching (not social worker, counsellor, social trainer, carer, babysitter or domestic)

7. The tutor has the right to decline a match

8. The process of selecting tutors must be free from discrimination, however not all applicants can be accepted, especially due to the range and type of work that demands the ability of a particular type of teaching

9. Tutor consent to a Police Check being made on their behalf

10. Central TAFE supplies a "Risk Cover" insurance policy for volunteers while on duty. Volunteers are not covered while engaging in duties outside of the Tutor Job Description

11. The Program does not have the resources to pay out of pocket expenses for volunteer tutors

12. Volunteers are given a "Welcome to New Tutors" brochure which directs them to the RWN! website, where a clear statement of their entitlements, rights and responsibilities is given

13. Volunteers can expect to undertake high quality training by professional trainers to prepare them for work and enable them to make informed choices about the level of expertise where they can assist

14. Volunteers are provided with resources (within the budget)

15. Recommended that tutoring takes place in a "neutral venue", eg public library, on TAFE premises, community centres, coffee shops etc rather than in private homes.

16. Volunteers are recognised with Reward and Recognition for Service

17. Student information is always treated as HIGHLY CONFIDENTIAL

Volunteers who undertake formal training with *Read Write Now!* are requested to remain with the program for at least one years duration of weekly tutoring which entails 1.5 hours tuition and about 1.5 hour preparation and travel. The range of tutors' levels of expertise may vary enormously, as do their students. Great efforts are made to match tutor to student as closely as possible. Our aim is to make tuition stress-free and enjoyable for both parties.

6. Volunteer Tutors Rights and Responsibilities

Tutors have the right:

1. To job satisfaction and to receive all relevant information including a full student assessment to help them perform their duties more confidently and competently.

2. To receive training, and then support and feedback on lessons/programs developed for the student for as long as they require it.

3. To have access to teaching resource materials.

4. To have the support and respect of their Coordinator, co-workers, and the staff of Read Write Now!

5. To be given protection in the form of insurance and personal safety.

6. To have confidentiality from the Program about their own personal details.

7. To be well briefed on the organisation and informed of new developments.

8. To ask for a new student after 6 weeks if the match is not appropriate.

Tutors have a responsibility:

1. To treat students with respect, be sensitive to their self-esteem and their literacy needs.

2. In consultation with their student, plan and prepare lessons that are suited to their interests and abilities. Sessions should be aimed to develop the student's confidence and responsibility for their learning.

3. To be willing to undertake ongoing literacy training.

4. To remember that all personal information is strictly confidential.

5. Maintain frequent and regular contact with their Coordinator.

6. To be dependable and to notify their student if they are unable to keep an appointment.

7. To notify their student if they are planning to go away or finish with the Program.

8. Commit to the Program for at least 12 months

9. To provide their Coordinator with statistics as required.

10. To discuss with their student, their options for future learning and to assist them with any necessary planning.

11. To uphold the policies of Read Write Now!

7. Good Management Of Volunteers

The following systems/procedures are in place:

Volunteer Insurance

The Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 1981 does not apply to volunteers operating within agencies, since they do not meet the definitional requirements of the term "worker" set out in the Act.

However, Central TAFE has an insurance policy, through the RiskCover Managed Fund, which covers all volunteer tutors and Coordinators (for personal accident and public liability) while undertaking volunteer activities. Volunteers are not covered while engaging in duties outside their Job Description. Details of this cover can be obtained from *Read Write Now!* staff at Central TAFE College, Northbridge Campus.

Skills Accreditation

The accreditation of skills of volunteers was raised in The Social Advantage Policy 1992. *Read Write Now!* offers its tutors training that is nationally accredited. Successful completion of the basic training course results in the award of a Certificate in Tutoring an Individual Adult in Literacy and Numeracy.

Security Measures

Read Write Now! acknowledges a duty of care to both its volunteers and students. The Program will at all times attempt to implement procedures to safeguard the safety and well being of both volunteer tutors and students including:

- Providing an insurance policy which covers all volunteer tutors and Coordinators for personal accident and public liability while undertaking volunteer tutoring activities;

- Encouraging tutors to use their freedom of choice when deciding whether or not to undertake tutoring activities and reminding them that as volunteers they do not have to undertake tasks that do not suit their abilities, preferences or time commitments;

- Recommending that all tutoring take place in a public venue, eg a library, community centre, coffee shop etc;

- Establishing a process for conducting security checks on tutors in line with other public sector agencies which use volunteers. This involves

    – the Coordinator conducting an interview with potential tutors in a public place

    – A Police Check being carried out on all volunteers before they are matched with a student

- Under our duty of care we reserve the right to request that a student be required to obtain, at their own expense, a Police Clearance or a Record of Convictions. This option is taken at the Coordinator's discretion and should be done in consultation with Central Office Staff.

- Implementing interview and placement procedures that are not open to abuse or manipulation and which ensure that students within the Program are appropriately placed.

Leave and Resignation

In order to ensure continuity in the delivery of Adult Literacy programs for the community, volunteer literacy tutors and Coordinators are requested to give notice of any periods in which they will not be available for volunteer activities. A tutor should give this information to their Coordinator, who should then include this information on the statistics form that is returned to Central Office. If a Coordinator is taking leave, Central Office needs to be informed of leave and return dates.

This process also applies to tutors and Coordinators to give advance notification of their intention to withdraw from volunteer service. If the tutor is working with a student, the tutor is asked to inform that person.

If a volunteer is returning to the Program after an extended period of leave, the person may be required to undertake refresher training.

Consultation

Read Write Now! considers volunteers have a right to be consulted and given opportunities to participate in decision-making which directly affects them or the clients with whom they work. Therefore, as far as practicable, *Read Write Now!* consults with Coordinators of volunteer tutor literacy groups when significant organisational changes are planned for the Program and before the implementation of any changes. Coordinators are encouraged to put forward the views of their tutors and students as part of this process.

Occupational Health and Safety

According to the Public Service Commission of Western Australia:

"The principles set out in occupational health, safety and welfare (OHSW) legislation, and the obligations imposed thereby upon employers and managers in regard to paid staff, should be seen as applying also to volunteers operating within agencies." The Manager, *Read Write Now!*, will be responsible for overseeing this.

8. Retaining Volunteers

Good volunteers are vital to the success of students in *Read Write Now!* and a major investment of our resources goes into attracting and training volunteer tutors. Hence it makes good sense to do our utmost to retain volunteers in our Program. Volunteer organisations that offer comprehensive training usually aim to achieve a minimum of 2 years service from their volunteers.

Whilst rewards and recognition are an important part of volunteer management, the bottom-line is that unless other key components are in place first, the volunteer won't stay around long enough to be rewarded and recognised.

Critical Components in Retaining Volunteers

Be Highly Organised

This applies to everyone from Central Office to Coordinators to local teams. Coordinators well and truly know that volunteers are busy people and thus their time is precious. There is no quicker way to disillusion a willing volunteer than being poorly prepared. If a volunteer is coming in to help you with administration, don't wait until they arrive to start to get their task organised – they will soon come to resent their time being wasted.

Interview prospective volunteer tutors promptly after receiving their application. Don't keep them waiting unacknowledged for weeks even if a training course is some time away. If they are selected after the interview, keep them informed of the next available training course.

A regional newsletter to tutors to inform them of activities, resources, teaching tips, etc, is a good indication of a professionally run, well-organised region. Well-structured tutor meetings are also a good opportunity for tutors to see first-hand that they belong to a productive group. Meetings should start on time and have a clear purpose. They need to have a fine balance of social interaction and 'getting down to business' as well.

Matching a tutor with a student promptly after the training course is a great motivator and makes the training much more relevant to the tutor (as long as the Police Check has been done, and at least 2 lots of homework have been successfully completed). If a match is not possible, keep the tutor informed in the interim.

Don't be afraid to let new tutors know the expectations upon them to keep in contact and forward progress updates. Encourage them to phone or email you. Some volunteer organisations are reluctant to set standards for their volunteers, or to expect the volunteer to give a regular, ongoing commitment. They have the attitude that because they're volunteers you mustn't set rules for them. Experience has shown this to be far from the truth. Volunteers like having clear guidelines and to have expectations set for them. When these are not in place, the volunteer quickly begins to feel that what they're doing can't be that important after all and their motivation fades.

Being highly organised requires a range of skills that may come naturally to some people, whilst others progressively develop their skills with experience. If you recognise that your skills are not well developed in this area, it probably means you have good skills in other areas. In this situation you can always delegate tasks to committee members with better organising skills, and use your strengths to carry out other tasks.

Sweet Success

We promote that being a volunteer tutor is a 'no-pay' job, but definitely not a 'no-perks' job. The real perks come in being a part of a student's success. This is what makes tutoring worthwhile. Central Office staff and Coordinators can all play a part in helping to ensure that tutors have success with a student, thus their job is personally satisfying and they won't want to give it up.

Tutors leave their training course with mixed levels of confidence and it is vital to support them to get them underway with minimum anxiety. The time invested in a volunteer fresh out of a training course is a good long-term investment of Coordinator/team time (see *Section 2* pg 13 *How the Coordinator can Support the Tutor*).

A tutor who is left to muddle along on their own might do well but this leaves a lot to chance. Some new tutors will be happy left to their own devices but they should still be contacted and an offer of support given. It's also important to give feedback to a tutor so they can know they're on the right track. One of the best ways to do this is to speak to the student and pass on their feedback to the tutor.

Little Things that Make a Big Difference

Build a 'sense of belonging'; get to know the tutor's name, remember who they are and a bit about them personally – eg. family, work, hobbies, interests, etc – so when you speak with them they're not a 'stranger' or just another person on your list. This will help the tutor to feel valued and a part of the team. Birthday cards, or birthday wishes listed in your region's newsletter, also add to the feeling of 'belonging'.

Be sure to keep in regular contact with your tutors. Contact should ideally be more frequent when the tutor is new to the Program. As tutors find their feet the amount of contact will become less, but still on a regular basis. If a tutor phones you, make sure they feel they're not a nuisance and you are happy to give your time to them to assist with their tutoring. You can still tactfully set time limits to phone calls to help manage the occasional 'chatterbox'. Email can also be used.

The ongoing promotion of *Read Write Now!* is also important in retaining volunteers. Everyone loves to be part of a winning team and involved in something that people know about and respect. The more success stories and the higher the image or *Read Write Now!* the greater the sense of pride of everyone involved.

All of these little things add up to what every person needs – to know they're valued, that what they do is important, and that they belong to something bigger as part of a community. These factors combined with a well-organised regional group and success with a student are key components to retaining volunteers in *Read Write Now!*

Monitoring Tutor/Student Progress

If we are to be diligent about the quality of the tutoring service offered by *Read Write Now!* we need to establish ways of monitoring student's progress. This needs to be done sensitively so students don't feel that they are being checked-up on or at risk of passing/failing.

It's important that the message is clear that we are endeavouring to deliver the best possible literacy service and the intention is to find where we may need to be offering more training, more resources, better ways of matching, etc. All new tutors at both the interview stage and during training should be made aware that as part of our routine operation we make contact with the student to ensure they're happy and that the tutor is happy. It is important that Coordinators can convey this message to tutors in a positive way so that tutors are agreeable to this process.

9. Grievance Policy and Procedure

Policy

Volunteers have the right to express grievances, concerns or dissatisfaction with any element of the organisation's practices. *Read Write Now!* is committed to operating within the Organisation's policy, and to providing a fair and equitable process for dealing with issues that impact on volunteer involvement.

Definition

A grievance is a complaint in respect of any matter affecting the relationship between students, volunteer tutors, their Coordinator and/or the staff of the *Read Write Now!* Program. These matters may include issues of policy, working conditions, administrative or staff matters.

Access to Grievance Procedure

All students, volunteer tutors, Coordinators and local team members have access to the Grievance Procedure through either the *RWN!* website, the Coordinator's Manual or by contact *RWN!* staff. More information regarding procedure for students is outlined in *Section 2 - The Student*.

Role of Coordinators and Read Write Now! staff

RWN! staff have a clear responsibility to ensure that Coordinators are managed fairly and equitably. Similarly, Coordinators and local team members have that same responsibility toward volunteer tutors and the students. This can be achieved by:

- Creating a working environment in which all tutors and students receive fair and equitable treatment
- Ensuring that open lines of communication are established so that students and tutors feel free to discuss their concerns with immediate managers
- Treating all concerns of students and tutors seriously and confidentially
- Aiming to resolve grievances to the satisfaction of all parties

Principles

- All matters in relation to grievances must be kept confidential.
- The principles of natural justice will apply – ie
    - The right of all parties to be treated fairly
    - The right to be heard
    - The right to be informed of allegations
- A complainant has the right to withdraw grievances at any time in the process.

Procedure for Coordinators

In the event of a grievance, Coordinators will attempt to resolve the grievance firstly with:

- the person concerned. If not resolved, or if not appropriate, then
- the *RWN!* Manager,

If the grievance is with a member of the *RWN!* staff, the Coordinator may wish to raise the matter formally with the relevant College Executive Director. To initiate this process, the complaint must be made in writing to the Executive Director, along with details of any action already taken.

Procedure for Tutors

In the event of a grievance, tutors will attempt to resolve the grievance firstly with

- the person concerned. If not resolved, or if not appropriate, then
- the local Coordinator. If not resolved, or if not appropriate, then
- a formal complaint may be made in writing to the *RWN!* Manager, who will respond within 14 days of receiving the written notification.

Procedure for Students

In the event of a grievance, students will attempt to resolve the grievance firstly with

- the person concerned. If not resolved, or if not appropriate, then
- their tutor. If not resolved, or if not appropriate, then
- their Coordinator. If not resolved, or if not appropriate, then
- a verbal complaint may be made to the *RWN!* Manager.

Ombudsman Jurisdiction and Grievance Procedure

If the processes above are followed and the person with the grievance is still not satisfied, they have the right to seek assistance from the Ombudsman.

According to the Public Service Commission of Western Australia: 'The Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations (Ombudsman) is empowered to investigate administrative action by most public sector organisations and appointed staff therein, although no reference is currently contained in the relevant legislation in regard to volunteers.'

Read Write Now! recognises that where volunteers are undertaking tasks within the organisation, they can quite reasonably be seen to be acting on its behalf. In this context, the Ombudsman's authority may extend to the investigation of action involving volunteers within public sector agencies.

Record Keeping

Confidential reports of the nature of the grievance should be retained by the relevant person: either the *RWN!* Manager or the Coordinator, on a secure Grievance File and should be accessible to the complainant.

Listed below is an example of the information to be recorded. Keep notes on file documenting the following steps:

Talk about the situation/event, or cause of issue with the tutor

- Agree upon an action(s)
- Set a deadline for a result
- Monitor the change

At the end of the deadline:

- if the situation has been resolved/corrected, offer positive feedback and move on; or
- if the situation has *not* been resolved/corrected, meet again to give a second warning with a new deadline.

At the end of the second deadline:

- if the situation has been resolved/corrected, offer positive feedback and move on; or
- if the situation has *not* been resolved/corrected, using the attached form, begin the Dismissal Procedure

Dismissal

The Dismissal Form is to be used when you have come to the "end of the line"; full grievance procedures have been followed and, despite exploring all other avenues, you believe that no other outcome can come from the situation.

Often these are difficult situations that nobody likes dealing with. You can always contact Central Office for assistance and remember to keep notes on all of your discussions with the volunteer tutor.

10. Finalising a Tutor's Involvement

There naturally comes a time when a tutor is ready to leave the Program. Most tutors do this quite professionally and advise their Coordinator and student accordingly. In this situation, the Coordinator only need thank the tutor for their work and advise Central Office of the change.

In some instances an awkward or vague situation develops where a tutor doesn't respond to the Coordinator's attempts to maintain contact and yet doesn't officially withdraw from the Program.

This creates a rare but real scenario where the tutor has continued to take on students by word-of-mouth and has not operated within the guidelines of the Program. This leaves the good name of the Program at risk, especially if the tutor were to do, or is perceived to do something inappropriate.

In this situation, it is important to send a formal letter to a tutor who does not respond to requests for contact, advising them that they are no longer a part of the Program.

Dear NAME GOES HERE

On checking our records I note that our committee has attempted to contact you on several occasions regarding your role as a tutor in the *Read Write Now!* program.

As we have not heard from you, it would appear that you have chosen to discontinue your volunteer tutoring with this program. Thus, on behalf of the committee, I would like to formalise your cessation of service by passing on our sincere appreciation for the contribution you have made to adult literacy in the LOCATION GOES HERE region.

Yours sincerely

NAME GOES HERE