

Blue Borage – Risk Management Policy & Procedure

Conversation Café & Symposium Events
Version 1.0 | October 2025

Purpose

This policy outlines the procedures Blue Borage will follow to ensure the safety, wellbeing, and dignity of all participants during Conversation Café and Symposium events. It provides clear steps for facilitators and support leads to respond if a participant becomes distressed or unable to maintain agency, including pathways to external support services and crisis intervention.

Scope

This policy applies to all online and in-person Blue Borage events, including Conversation Cafés, Symposiums, and related workshops, guiding all facilitators, volunteers, and participants throughout the pre-event, live, and post-event phases.

Definitions

- ‘Participant at risk’ – Any individual showing signs of emotional distress, dissociation, suicidal ideation, or requesting urgent support.
- ‘Facilitator’ – The lead or co-facilitator responsible for a given session.
- ‘Support Lead’ – The designated person monitoring chat and direct messages, available to move a participant offline and coordinate next steps.
- ‘Immediate risk’ – Situations in which a participant may harm themselves or others and emergency services must be contacted immediately.

Procedure

1. Pre-Event Preparation

- Ensure all event materials (website, registration confirmation, slides) include the 1800RESPECT link.
- Identify a Support Lead (or team) with clear contact information for participants and facilitators.
- Provide facilitators with this policy, an emergency contact list, and guidelines for responding to distress.
- Review the 1800RESPECT service directory: <https://1800respect.org.au/services/about-service-directory>

2. During the Event

- At the beginning of each session, acknowledge the sensitive nature of discussions and remind participants of the available support options and chat protocols.
- The Support Lead will be set with co-hosting permission.
- The Support Lead monitors the chat for distress cues (eg. expressions of fear, hopelessness, or direct statements of intent to self-harm).
- If a participant signals distress:
 - The Support Lead will move the participant conversation to a private chat or a breakout room to check in safely.
 - Ask directly if they are safe and whether immediate help is needed.

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- If there is imminent risk, instruct them (or someone present) to call '000 (Australia)'.
- If not in immediate danger but struggling, refer them to '1800 737 732 (1800RESPECT)' or another relevant service listed in the 1800RESPECT directory.
- The Support Lead will document the incident with time, nature of contact, and action taken (anonymised where possible) via a Direct Chat with the lead facilitator so that it is timestamped and saved after the event for our records and for follow-up.

3. Post-Event Follow-Up

- If consent is given, follow up via email to provide additional counselling and support resources from the 1800RESPECT directory.
- Offer the participant grounding or reflection exercises if appropriate.
- Conduct a debrief with facilitators and the Support Lead to review the event's safety management and identify any gaps or lessons learned.

4. Referral and Resources

Participants and facilitators may be referred to the following as appropriate:

- '1800RESPECT' – 24/7 national sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling service: 1800 737 732
- 'Lifeline' – 13 11 14
- 'Suicide Callback Service' – 1300 659 467
- 'Local emergency services' – 000 (if in immediate danger)
- Additional services listed at <https://1800respect.org.au/services/about-service-directory>

5. Confidentiality and Reporting

- Maintain confidentiality unless there is an immediate risk of harm to self or others.
- Document only essential details, and store securely in Blue Borage's confidential files.
- An anonymised record of incidents will be reviewed for ongoing safety improvement.

6. Responsibilities

- 'Facilitators' – Observe participants for distress, notify the Support Lead, and remain calm and compassionate.
- 'Support Lead' – Initiate private communication, coordinate referrals, document actions, and follow up.
- 'Organisers' – Ensure this policy is visible, current, and integrated into all event preparation and briefing sessions.

7. Review and Training

This policy will be reviewed after each major event or annually, whichever comes first.

Facilitators and Support Leads will complete an annual refresher on trauma-informed response and referral pathways to maintain best practice.

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