linux.conf.au 2019 Code of Conduct Transparency Report

One of the most important parts of dealing with Code of Conduct (CoC) issues is being transparent about what happened during the event. It is tempting to avoid talking about issues and pretend that the event went without any problems, however we believe that this kind of approach does more harm than good.

By being transparent about what happened during the event, we aim to show that the Code of Conduct is taken very seriously by the CoC team. This way we hope people will feel more comfortable to speak up if something's not right.

For this reason, we are publishing the transparency report: an anonymised description of the incidents that happened during the conference.

We strongly believe that Codes of Conduct are an essential part of a conference and we've made a lot of effort to make ours very visible:

- It was linked from the "Attend" menu of the linux.conf.au website

- Reading and agreeing with the Code of Conduct was necessary to register a conference ticket

- We had a dedicated e-mail address (conduct@lca2019.org) listed on the website

- We had an emergency phone number listed on the website as well as on posters around the venue

- We mentioned our Code of Conduct during the conference introduction and in email communication

It's important for us to share the outcome of these policies and what they mean in practice. So in the spirit of transparency, here is an anonymised list of the CoC-related incidents that we acted upon during the conference:

- We reviewed two speakers' presentation slides at their request to determine if they violated our code of conduct, and mitigated this by including appropriate content warnings at the start of these talks

- We received a couple of reports of platform bashing, and as a result, during the opening on a couple of days we reminded attendees that this was not appropriate

- We noticed social media posts from a volunteer that were not quite aligned with the views of the conference, but before we decided to act on this, the account in question was made private, and we deemed this a satisfactory outcome

- One morning, we were alerted to an attendee wearing a potentially offensive and triggering T-shirt, and asked the attendee to change their T-shirt before arriving at the conference venue

- Several sponsor banners had been defaced with stickers; this was announced and discouraged at a conference morning announcement

- An attendee had a bad reaction to something and required medical attention. The attendee was accompanied to hospital, and taken care of by a volunteer afterwards until they felt well and safe

- An attendee and their partner, while on the way to dinner with several others, felt very uncomfortable due to the words and actions of another attendee. The CoC team couldn't reliably identify the alleged perpetrator, we spoke to somebody we thought may have been part of the group but were unable to identify the party members or any further details of the incident. We had insufficient information to take additional action

- We were alerted to the possibility of an attendee interrupting and making a fuss during a speaker's presentation. We stationed a couple of CoC team members in the lecture theatre to step in and tactfully manage any situation that arose, but, fortunately, nothing came up

- One attendee had said that at dinner one night, another attendee was querying the need for a CoC. Others who were present gently explained its necessity, and believed they got their point across. Later, this attendee offered a seat to the reporter, who took it, but the reporter felt uncomfortable due to the attendee's behaviour during the talk, and moved away. The attendee was very surprised by this report, but we made clear that the reporter was uncomfortable, and they seemed to take onboard our request that

they be more mindful of their actions and how they may be perceived; we considered the matter closed

- During the closing ceremony information that the CoC team felt could unintentionally identify attendees was displayed as part of the slide deck. The CoC team requested that these parts of the slide deck and accompanying audio track be masked before the video was published.

We are not publishing this list to shame anyone or pat ourselves on the back. We believe that transparency on this subject is important in order to give everyone some visibility on what happens "behind the scenes". We want to show everyone why our CoC is important but also how it is enforced in practice.

We hope that by making this list public, it will encourage more people to report similar incidents and in turn make our conference a better, more inclusive space for everyone. We would also like to encourage everyone to report incidents even if they aren't sure whether it is a CoC violation, as this allows us to review whether our processes or our CoC need to be amended for the future.

The CoC Team: Clinton Roy, Katie McLaughlin, Matt Cengia, Lilly Ryan, Maia Sauren, Joshua Hesketh, David Bell, Tobias Schulmann

Wording and the format of this report based on Code of Conduct Handbook