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## Complaints and Complaints Handling Policy (Governance and Executive)

### INTRODUCTION

Equitable handling of complaints is an important task for any organisation, and is best regulated through a fair and effective policy and easy-to-use procedures. This policy provides a clear and logical standard to which Islamic Relief Australia (IRAUS) will handle and respond to all external complaints. We make clear the value we place on receiving concerns and complaints in all relevant communications. We advise how a copy of this policy may be obtained and we provide clear information on how complaints may be made. IRAUS is committed to the timely and fair resolution of complaints.

### POLICY STATEMENT

Islamic Relief Australia (IRAUS) recognises the importance and value of listening and responding to concerns and complaints. We are committed to achieving the highest standard we can in every area of our work and to a process of continuous improvement. This applies especially to our aid and development activities, seeking donations and accountability to stakeholders generally. We are committed to working according to or above the standard required by the Code of Conduct of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID). Receiving concerns and complaints is one of the most important ways of learning what we need to do to improve our work.

### SCOPE

This policy covers complaints from community members and all relevant stakeholders affected by our programs including the youth, members of the public, partners and supporters including child sponsors and other donors.

This policy applies to all IRAUS stakeholders including staff and volunteers, and the procedures herein are triggered upon receiving or being involved with a complaint or complaints.

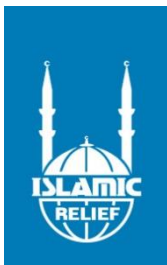
### EXCLUSIONS

This policy does not cover complaints made by IRAUS staff and volunteers. These complaints are covered by Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW) Grievance Policy and Procedures.

### OBJECTIVES

The key objectives of this policy are:

- To clearly publicise information about how and where to complain.
- To ensure that our complaint handling process is as accessible as we can practically make it to all complainants, including children.
- To ensure that we respond to complaints in accordance to our predetermined timeframes.



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- To address all complaints in an equitable, fair and unbiased manner using evidence submitted by both the complainant and our personnel through the complaint handling process.
- To ensure that access to the complaint handling process is free of charge to complainants.
- To commit to keeping strict confidentiality in the complaints handling process.
- To ensure that accountability for and reporting on the actions and decisions with respect to complaint handling is clearly established.
- To commit to the continual improvement of the complaint handling process and the quality of services.

### DEFINITIONS

#### 1. Complaint

An expression of dissatisfaction made to an organisation, related to its products or services, or the complaint handling process itself, where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected.

#### 2. Complainant

A person, organisation or its representative, making a complaint.

#### 3. Inquiry

A request for information or an explanation.

#### 4. Feedback

Opinions, comments, suggestions and expressions of interest in the products or the complaint handling process.

#### 5. Stakeholder or interested party

A person or group having an interest in the performance or success of the organisation.

### POLICY IN ACTION

#### 1. Educating the organisation on the complaint policy and training relevant personnel

Our Complaints Policy has been distributed to all our paid staff, our volunteers, our partners, our contracted service providers and all others acting on our behalf. All IRAUS stakeholders involved in any way with a complaint are obliged to abide by this policy and the procedures herein. IRAUS will run regular induction programs for staff and volunteers. Staff directly involved in complaint handling are fully trained in all aspects of this policy and its implementation.



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## **2. Publicising Our Policy**

We make clear the value we place on receiving concerns and complaints in all relevant communications. We use the word “complaint” or its equivalent in relevant languages other than English. Our website under the ‘contact us page’ has a prominent form to lodge a complaint, which links to this policy. Information on how to make a complaint to the ACFID Code of Conduct Committee available in the website footer.

Where literacy is a constraint we will orally invite expressions of concern and complaint on a regular basis. We will take care to give this invitation in a way that is culturally appropriate recognising that in some cultures people require greater encouragement to make a complaint. We will take special care to facilitate complaints from vulnerable populations including children and marginalised groups. If required we will make use of pictorial means of communication. We ensure that making a complaint to us is as easy as possible. We will take complaints orally in person, over the phone and by any written means. We will do our very best to assist a complainant to put their complaint in writing or to write it down ourselves as faithfully as we can. We will ensure that all relevant communications explain this and explain our procedures for handling complaints including: (Note - e.g. website and annual report)

## **3. Where and How Complaints may be made**

We are able to receive complaints orally in person or by telephone and in writing by post, email or online via our website. Where complaints are made orally we will ensure our write up of the complaint contains all the information the complainant wishes to provide.

Complaints may be made by a friend or advocate of the complainant on their behalf. Where appropriate, for some projects/programmes we may establish complaint committees involving representatives from partner organisations and members of communities we are serving. Where appropriate we may utilise complaint/suggestion boxes. We recognise that in some circumstances complainants may wish to remain anonymous. Because such complaints can alert us to problems that need fixing we will accept them though clearly it may not be possible to provide a remedy to an individual.

## **4. How we will handle complaints**

For all complaints we will:

- i. Receive the complaint in a non-judgmental manner and will record the following details: The name of the Complainant, date, time and location the complaint is received and a brief description of the complaint.
- ii. Seek from the Complainant the outcome/s they are expecting.
- iii. Make an initial assessment of the severity of the complaint and the urgency of action.
- iv. Clearly explain to the Complainant the course of action that will follow.
- v. We will not create false expectations, but assure the Complainant that the complaint will receive full attention.



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- vi. Give an estimated timeframe or, if that is not possible, a date by which we will contact them again.
  - vii. Check whether the client is satisfied with the proposed action and, if not, advise them of alternatives.
  - viii. Ensure the complaint is appropriately addressed as per the procedures in this policy.
  - ix. Follow up where necessary, and monitor whether the Complainant is satisfied.
  - x. We will register all complaints in a complaint register.

### 5. Inquiries, minor complaints and jurisdiction

We will endeavour to deal immediately with inquiries and minor complaints which are made orally by telephone or in person, during the initial phone call or meeting. However, as far as possible, we will ensure that the inquirer or complainant is completely satisfied with the information and or resolution provided.

On receipt of a complaint we will also attempt to determine expeditiously whether investigation is required or not depending on jurisdictional questions and whether the complaint is ill conceived.

If the complainant disputes an assessment that a complaint should not be investigated, the member of staff handling the complaint will refer it to a more senior colleague for review. If such a dispute is unresolvable we will refer the complainant to Code Committee of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID)

### 6. How we will investigate complaints

If the complaint is to a staff member, that staff member will immediately endeavour to resolve the complaint.

If the complaint is about a staff member, the person receiving the complaint will refer the complaint to the immediate line manager of that staff member.

If the complaint is about a volunteer or other associate of the organisation in relation to community engagement, the complaint will be referred to the Community Engagement Manager.

If the complaint is about the organisation as a whole, an intangible aspect of it, or if the complainant so requests, the complaint will be referred to the CEO.

If the complaint is about the CEO or a member of the BOT, the complainant may directly contact the Chair of the BOT on the following email address: [complaints-chair@islamic-relief.com.au](mailto:complaints-chair@islamic-relief.com.au)

If the complaint is about the Chair of the BOT, the complainant may directly contact the secretary of the BOT on the following email address: [complaints-secretary@islamic-relief.com.au](mailto:complaints-secretary@islamic-relief.com.au)

This process will be tracked in the Complaints Registry, accessible only by the HR Manager, the CEO, and the Secretary of the BOT.



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If the complainant feels their complaint is not adequately addressed it will be referred upward for review in the following order:

- The relevant Staff Member
- That Staff Member's Line Manager
- The CEO
- The Secretary of the BOT
- The Chair of the BOT
- The Code Committee of ACFID

### 7. Our timeframes

We will acknowledge written complaints within 3 working days.

We will acknowledge oral complaints immediately.

We will aim to resolve complaints as quickly as possible and within 30 days unless there are exceptional circumstances. If a complaint is not resolved within 30 days we will inform the complainant of progress and keep them informed of progress every two weeks.

### 8. Responding to and closing a complaint

We will communicate our decision on a complaint as soon as is practical. Our communication will be in writing in the appropriate language by email and/or post.

We will encourage the complainant to respond and advise whether or not they are satisfied with our decision. In our decision we will advise that if a complainant is not satisfied we will be prepared to consider any additional information they may provide and to review our decision.

Should the complainant advise that they are satisfied with our decision or withdraw the complaint, we will close the complaint. Should we receive no feedback within 14 days we will assume the complainant is satisfied with the outcome and close the complaint.

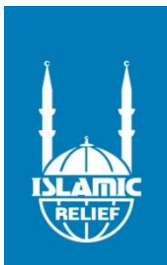
In all cases we will advise that the complaint may be referred to the Code Committee of ACFID. We will provide all necessary information for referral to the Code Committee and offer to assist in referral.

### 9. Outcomes of complaints

We will ensure that all relevant personnel are informed of the outcomes of complaints and the implications for our activities, procedures and processes.

We will take all required remedial action. We will be prepared to change the way in which we operate and improve or undertake further training of staff. Where needed we will counsel or discipline staff or volunteers.

Where appropriate we will consult and take advice from ACFID and/or other relevant regulatory/enforcement authorities.



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## **10. Confidentiality**

We will not reveal a complainant's name or personal details to anyone in or outside our organisation other than staff involved in handling the complaint, without obtaining the complainant's permission.

## **11. Complaint data**

We will register all inquiries and complaints. We will ensure that the following information is contained in written complaints and if not, and in the case of oral complaints, record this information ourselves:

- i. date of receipt
- ii. a description of the complaint and relevant supporting data
- iii. the requested remedy
- iv. the service(s) and/or good(s) and/or practice or procedure complained about
  - i. the due date for a response
  - ii. immediate action taken (if any) to resolve the complaint

## **12. Reporting about complaints**

We will immediately escalate complex and/or major complaints to our Country Director or his/her delegate.

All complaints will be reported at our regular weekly staff meetings and major complaints to our governing board meetings. Minor complaints will be reported in summary form. Major complaints will be reported in detail. An analysis will be included in the complaints report.

Our Annual Report will provide information on complaints.

## **13. Continuous improvement**

On a continuing basis we will monitor the effectiveness of our complaint handling and make improvements as appropriate.

We will maintain data collection on complaints for the purpose of identifying trends for the purpose of enhancing information management and service provided.

We will undertake specific training and retraining of staff to foster better complaint handling practices and we will conduct an internal review of the effectiveness of our complaint handling every year.

We will review of the effectiveness of our complaint handling process after 2 years and then every 4 years.

## **POLICY ANNEXES**

Annex 1: Complaint process flowchart

Annex 3: In-Country Complaints Contact List

Annex 2: Complaint registry



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### Annex 1: Complaint Process Flowchart

