



Islamic Relief
Australia

ISLAMIC RELIEF AUSTRALIA

Complaints Policy v1.2

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Version Control

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1.0		
1.1	28 Dec 2021	Dissect to smaller documents
1.2	24 Apr 2022	Changed the title to Complaints policy (removing the words “complainants handling policy”), inserted minor edits. Added table of contents, adopted new template. Replaced the word “beneficiary/ies” with “right-holder/s”.

Introduction

Equitable handling of complaints is important for any organisation, and is best managed through a fair and effective policy and easy-to-use procedures.

This policy provides the method by 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 by whatever means including via our website and we provide clear information on how complaints may be made. IRAUS is committed to the timely and fair resolution of complaints.

Policy statement

IRAUS recognises the importance and value of receiving and responding to concerns and complaints and is committed to achieving the highest standard we can in every area of our work and to applying 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 IRAUS Grievance Policy and Procedures.

Objectives

The key objectives of this policy are:

- To provide clear information about how and where to make a complaint.
- To ensure that all our stakeholders understand our commitment to address all their concerns and complaints and to set their expectations.
- To ensure that our complaint handling process is as accessible as it is practicable to all potential complainants, including children.
- To ensure that we respond to complaints in accordance with our predetermined timeframes.
- 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 commit to keeping strict privacy and 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	
Complainant	A person, organisation or its representative, making a complaint
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.
Feedback	Opinions, comments, suggestions and expressions of interest in the products or the complaint handling process.
Inquiry	A request for information or an explanation.
Stakeholder or interested party	A person or group having an interest in the performance or success of the organisation.
Serious incident	<p>A serious incident is an adverse event, whether actual or alleged, which results in or risks significant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • harm to the charity’s right-holders, staff, volunteers or others who come into contact with our charity through its work • loss of your charity’s money or assets • damage to the charity’s property • harm to the charity’s work or reputation

Policy in action

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

This Complaints Policy has been distributed to all members of the Board of Trustees, staff, volunteers, partners, 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 which form part of the 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.

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 [Contact Us | ACFID](#).

Where literacy is a constraint, we invite expressions of concern and complaint to be provided verbally. 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 verbally in person, over the phone and by any written means, including email. 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 making this policy available on our website for ease of access.

3. Where and How Complaints may be made

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

Complaints may be made by a friend or advocate of the complainant on their behalf. Where appropriate, some may also arise where we 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 resolution, we will make the appropriate investigation though clearly it may not be possible to provide a remedy to the complainant.

4. How we will handle complaints

For all complaints we will:

- i. Treat 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. Acknowledge receipt of the complaint to the complainant.
- iii. Seek from the complainant the outcome/s they are expecting.
- iv. Make an initial assessment of the severity of the complaint and the urgency of action.
- v. Clearly explain to the complainant the course of action that will follow.
- vi. We will not create false expectations but assure the complainant that the complaint will receive full attention.
- vii. Give an estimated timeframe or, if that is not possible, a date by which we will contact them again.
- viii. Check whether the complainant is satisfied with the proposed action and, if not, advise them of alternatives.
- ix. Check whether the complainant requires additional support (such as counselling) or whether any other related parties require additional support (such as a child or minor).
- x. Ensure the complaint is appropriately addressed as per the procedures in this policy.
- xi. Follow up where necessary and monitor whether the complainant is satisfied.

- xii. We will register all complaints outcomes and complainant satisfaction in a complaint register.

5. Inquiries, minor complaints and jurisdiction

We will endeavour to deal immediately with inquiries and minor complaints which are made verbally 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

Complaints can be made by emailing to the address – complaints@islamicrelief.org.au. The Corporate Services Director will be the first recipient of a compliant email which will then be forwarded for action to the relevant person/department.

Depending on the nature of the complaint, it will be referred to the relevant person to deal with the complaint. This can be a line manager of a staff member if the complaints are about an employee or can be escalated to senior management of the organisation. In all cases IRAUS will ensure that the complaint is handled in the most confidential, sensitive manner and any conflicted person is excluded in the handling of the complaint.

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

If the complainant feels their complaint is not adequately addressed, it will be escalated 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 verbal complaints immediately on receipt.

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 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. In addition, we will assist the complainant to access additional support, such as counselling, should this be required.

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 send a reminder and if no further feedback is received within 7 days of sending the reminder, we will assume that 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.

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
- v. the due date for a response
- vi. immediate action taken (if any) to resolve the complaint

12. Reporting about complaints

We will immediately escalate complex and/or major complaints to our CEO or his/her delegate. All incidents including complaints that are considered as Serious Incidents and will be reported to our governing board. Other major complaints not deemed as serious incidents will be reported to the CEO. The CEO will provide the board of trustees an annual report of all complaints with analysis including lessons learnt.

Our Annual Report will provide information on complaints.

13. Continuous improvement

On an ongoing 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.

Relevant documents

Complaints process flow chart
Compliance Framework
ACFID Contact Us | ACFID

Annex 1: Complaint process flowchart



Annex 2: Complaints Registry

Available at: Complaints Policy Folder/Compliance Files

Managed by: CEO

END OF POLICY DOCUMENT