

ANNEX 1. Policy: Handling Complaints

The Complaints-Handling Policy will be implemented using the following procedures.

1. Raising Complaints

- General complaints about any aspect of *Pacific Aid Australia* and its work can be received by any staff or board member (face to face, email, etc).
- The recipient of a complaint must notify their supervisor or a senior colleague or a Board member of a complaint received in order to assess its seriousness, the steps to be taken, and the need to consult other staff members and/ or the Executive Director.
- As a small organisation with no staff, it is likely that at least two Pacific *Aid Australia* Board members are relevant to solving complaint.
- The responsibility to initiate and coordinate a complaint response will therefore be determined according to the nature of the complaint received, in consultation with a senior officer and/or the Executive Director as deemed appropriate.
- All staff will be responsible to record all serious complaints received and the outcome of responses in a complaints file to be maintained by the Office Manager.

2. Receiving Verbal and Written Complaints

The complainant must be treated with respect at all times.

- It is important that the recipient of a face to face complaint clarifies the issues underlying the complaint, listens to what the complainant has to say

and makes a brief and accurate written summary of the complaint.

- If a complaint is in writing it may be appropriate to write or speak to the complainant to clarify the details of the case.
- The person managing the complaint should ask the complainant what outcomes they are seeking, and outline the possible reasonable outcomes. Always try to resolve complaints assessed as less serious by informal means first.
- If a complaint is considered to be serious or not appropriate to be managed informally, the complainant should be informed of the complaint handling process, and to whom the case will be referred (if this is called for).

3. Acknowledging Complaints

Complainants, who are not anonymous, will receive an acknowledgement of their complaint to confirm that it has been received and an outline of the next steps to be taken by PACIFIC AID AUSTRALIA.

4. Registering Complaints

- All complaints, whether verbal or written, are to be recorded in the complaints file, which is managed by the Chief Executive Officer.
- These records will be used to ensure complaints are dealt with efficiently and effectively and to monitor any trends. It will provide information on the number and types of complaints received.

5. Resolving Complaints

Each complaint will be investigated. The person handling the complaint will establish the

facts and gather the relevant information, and if necessary and/or practicable, interview those involved. If an investigation results in a view that a staff member (or other **Pacific Aid Australia** personnel) has a case to answer, the Executive Director (or the Board of Directors, if more appropriate) will apply appropriate disciplinary and other organisational policies and procedures. These may include the Staff Code of Conduct, Child Protection Policy, Financial Management Policy and Procedures, **Pacific Aid Australia** Constitution.

3. Responding to the Complainants

Complainants, who are not anonymous, will receive a response outlining the outcome of the complaint or, if it is a complex matter, when it will be investigated further and how long it is likely to take. **Pacific Aid Australia** will let the complainant know the outcome, which may include the following.

- Corrective action, which has been taken.
- Timeline for implementation.
- The person/role addressing the issue.

Wherever possible **Pacific Aid Australia** will invite the complainant to outline suggestions for actions the organisation can take to ensure similar complaints do not arise in future.

4. Appeals Process

If a complainant is unhappy about **Pacific Aid Australia's** response or if they believe the corrective action has not been adequately implemented they may appeal to the next level. For example:

- If the complaint is about a matter at management level or governance, then the complainant may appeal to the Chair of **Pacific Aid Australia's** Board of Directors.
- If the complainant is still dissatisfied, after all avenues have been explored to resolve the matter, a letter will be sent to the complainant explaining the steps/actions that have been taken, outlining any changes that have been put in place as a result of the complaint and bringing the matter to a close.