

# Complaints Policy

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The Policy below deals with how we approach complaints or negative feedback about us. It involves five key elements:

- (a) *Culture*. Our aim is to serve our stakeholders to the best of our ability. We accept that we are not perfect. We value complaints and feedback as a means of identifying and understanding how we can do things better.
- (b) *Principles*. Our complaints and feedback system is modelled on biblical principles, including humility, fairness, accessibility, responsiveness, efficiency and integration.
- (c) *People*. Our complaint handling staff will be skilled and professional.
- (d) *Process*. Our complaints handling process involves seven stages - acknowledgment, assessment, planning, investigation, response, review, and consideration of systemic issues.
- (e) *Analysis*. We review information about complaints as part of a continuous process of review and improvement.

We discuss these elements in more detail below:

## **Element 1—Culture**

We are committed to achieving our Mission and Vision. We are equally committed to doing so in the best way possible, and without concern or hurt for any of the people we deal with. We know that despite our best efforts, we are not perfect and that we can always do better. Accordingly, we value complaints and feedback and recognise that effective complaint handling will benefit our stakeholders, our reputation and our administration. We affirm that complaints can highlight weaknesses in our programs, policies and service delivery, and stimulate us to improve our operations. We also affirm that good complaint handling will reassure stakeholders that we are committed to resolving problems, improving relations and building loyalty, and to improving our accountability and transparency.

## **Element 2—Principles**

Our complaint and feedback handling system is based on biblical principles, modelled on principles of fairness, accessibility, responsiveness and efficiency. Complaint handling has the same priority as our core business. All complaints will be investigated with complete impartiality by a staff member or Board member who is not personally involved in the issues, or by an external consultant or adviser. Each complaint will be assessed on its own merits. As far as possible confidentiality and privacy will be maintained and we will be transparent in reporting back results to the complainant as quickly as reasonably possible. It is our aim to resolve all complaints as quickly and efficiently as possible. For example, if they can be resolved over the phone at the time they are made, we will do so.

We will not victimise or treat any person adversely because they have made a complaint. There is no financial charge for making a complaint. If the complainant has special needs (eg non English speaking background or a physical impairment), we will do our best to assist them.

A person may initiate a complaint or feedback by email, letter or telephone call. If they wish to make a complaint or provide feedback anonymously, it will still receive our genuine attention, although of

course we will be unable to report back or seek further information which may be able to assist us in dealing with any issue. We are happy to deal directly with a complainant, or through a parent, guardian, friend or adviser.

### **Element 3—People**

We take complaints and feedback seriously. All complaints will initially be handled by our National Director, unless it is inappropriate for him or her to do so, eg due to absence or a lack of independence, in which case another senior member of staff or a Board member will handle it. If there is any doubt in the mind of the National Director regarding the potential seriousness of the complaint, the Board Chair will be informed and included in subsequent action. In matters of great significance, we may outsource the handling of a complaint to an external adviser or consultant, to whom we will give complete co-operation.

### **Element 4—Process**

Our standard complaint handling procedures are as follows (although we reserve the right to approach a complaint more flexibly if we think it will achieve a more just and efficient outcome):

1. We will acknowledge each complaint promptly and give the complainant the contact details of the person handling the complaint, ideally within 2 business days. If we have not finalised the complaint within 7 days after that, we will contact the complainant to report our progress.
2. We will assess the complaint and assign it priority.
3. If investigation is required, we will plan how the investigation is to be carried out.
4. We will investigate all relevant factual issues and then review the complaint in light of those facts. We will then consider options for complaint resolution.
5. We will contact the complainant to discuss the complaint. In doing so we will inform them of the relevant facts we have identified and ask them to comment and/or give us any other relevant information they may have. We will then discuss with them how we propose to resolve the complaint. If we were wrong or have acted inappropriately, we will apologise.
6. If the complainant is not satisfied with the proposed resolution, our Chair will review the position, and we will contact the complainant appropriately. If they are still not satisfied, and we believe that there are genuine issues involved, we may suggest an externally facilitated mediation via PeaceWise ([www.peacewise.org.au](http://www.peacewise.org.au)) or similar. Alternatively, the complainant may pursue any other action which they believe is appropriate.
7. We will act on any systemic issues that are identified as a result of the complaint or feedback.

(Note – if we reasonably believe that a complaint is vexatious, trivial or not genuine we will inform the complainant accordingly as soon as we form that view. If they wish to take matters further, you may pursue any other action which you believe is appropriate.)

### **Element 5—Analysis**

We appreciate that complaints and feedback can provide an insight into our programs and services, and may show that they are not working as well as they might. We will use information brought to light by any complaints and feedback to improve our service to our stakeholders by:

- highlighting service failings that need to be remedied; and
- revealing problems and trends that can be acted on by management.

We will address at Board level any significant issues which are revealed by our complaints handling and feedback procedures.