



ORDER OF MALTA AUSTRALIA

Australian Association of the Order of Malta Limited Feedback and Complaints Policy as approved at November 2020 (Policy Number: AAOML_P_006)

Effective Date: 27 November 2020

Review Date: 30 November 2024

1 Purpose

This policy aims to ensure that the Australian Association of the Sovereign Order of Malta (the Australian Association) recognises the value of listening to and responding to feedback and complaints, as a key component of ensuring that our program of works accomplish minimum quality standards and accountability to partners and people we work with and for. This policy defines the key principles, minimum requirements, responsibilities and approach of the Australian Association to fulfil our mandatory and ethical commitments to accountability, and managing feedback and complaints relating to our program of works from program partners and people we work with and for to a high standard.

2 Policy Principles

This policy applies to the handling of feedback and complaints on the works of the Australian Association from program partners and people we work with and for (to deliver the Australian Association's program of works) including members, employees, volunteers, stakeholders, donors and the people we work with and for or anybody directly involved in the delivery of our programs.

This policy applies to all the Australian Association's program of works, including long term development programs, humanitarian responses, advocacy and campaign activities, whether implemented in Australia or internationally.

The policy applies equally to programs directly implemented by the Australian Association or those implemented through our corporate entities and partners or other National Associations of the Sovereign Order of Malta.

3 Scope

The Australian Association aspires to make a sustained and significant positive impact on the sick and the poor, and believes it is only through the collective effort of many actors that this goal can be achieved. Accountability to our donors, partners and the people we work with is part of that commitment and this only works if the Australian Association seeks input and feedback from all stakeholders we work with and for on our performance through a range of formal and informal mechanisms.

An important aspect of accountability is the ability for stakeholders to report or lodge a complaint about conduct that breaches the Australian Association's commitments and guiding principles. The Australian Association recognises the importance and value of listening and responding to complaints. This enables donors, partners and people we work with and for to hold the Australian Association to account for our actions and decisions by providing a process where these can be

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queried and a response obtained.

This policy ensures that donors, partners and people we work with and for who identify or suspect the existence of inappropriate behaviour or incorrect practices on the part of the Australian Association are able to communicate these concerns without this having any negative consequences.

4 Approach

This policy aligns the Australian Association's approach with the Sovereign Order of Malta's national and international Codes and Standards of practice. Within the framework of this policy, it is acknowledged that the Australian Association has diverse (formal and informal) approaches to seeking feedback, complaints handling and accountability at the level of donors, partners and people we work with and for. These different mechanisms exist and are managed where programs are implemented, both in Australia and overseas within the Asia Pacific Region. The Australian Association will work to ensure that different and flexible approaches for feedback and complaints handling are used based on specific cultural and country contexts.

5 Relevant Standards, Codes and Obligations

As well as making sure that our work adheres to the Australian Association's Code of Conduct and minimum quality standards identified in the Association's policies and procedures, we constantly seek to improve the quality of our work wherever and whenever we can. To do this, we have subscribed to the following national and international Codes and Standards of practice:

Code/Standard of Practice

ACNC Complaints about Charities Policy
CPS 2012/06

www.acnc.gov.au

Overview of Code/Standard of Practice

The policy and procedure sets out the way the ACNC will deal with complaints from members of the public and other stakeholders about registered charities.

The procedure also covers out-of-jurisdiction complaints.

Code/Standard of Practice

Australian and New Zealand Standard Guidelines for complaint handling in organizations
AS/NZS 10002:2014

www.standards.org.au

Overview of Code/Standard of Practice

Complaint: An expression of dissatisfaction made to or about us, our services, staff or the handling of a complaint where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required. (AS/NZ 10002:2014)

People Focus: Any concerns raised in feedback or complaints will be dealt with within a reasonable time frame (as in AS/NZ 10002).

Code/Standard of Practice

Australian NGO Accreditation Guidance Manual (DFAT/Australian Aid) (2018)

www.dfat.gov.au

Overview of Code/Standard of Practice

NGO Accreditation Criteria Evidence required for Agency profile:

Criterion A2: The Australian NGO effectively manages enterprise risk.

In the Agency Profile, all Australian NGOs are required to have:

- committed as signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct
- a human resources policy
- a staff code of conduct (or equivalent)
- a sexual exploitation, abuse, harassment and misconduct policy (or equivalent safeguarding policy).
- a complaints handling policy or procedures document
- a whistleblowing policy or procedures document
- an Incident reporting policy or procedures document
- a staff safety and security policy

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- an example of completed staff safety and security assessment

Code/Standard of Practice

Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) Code of Conduct (2017)

www.acfid.asn.au

Overview of Code/Standard of Practice

The Code is underpinned by a set of values which inform the behaviours of all Members all the time. The values are translated into high-level Quality Principles that are then translated into specific Commitments and associated Compliance Indicators.

Quality Principle 2 – Participation, Empowerment & Local Ownership

2.2 We promote the empowerment of primary stakeholders.

Quality Assurance Framework – Compliance Indicators

2.2.1 Members have formal mechanisms for primary stakeholders to contribute their ideas, feedback and complaints so that they have a voice in and ownership of their own development and humanitarian initiatives.

Good Practice Indicators (Members to demonstrate progressive compliance)

- Members periodically evaluate and reflect on their approaches and mechanisms designed to empower primary stakeholders e.g. in design appraisal tools or in terms of reference in evaluations.

Quality Principle 4 – Quality and Effectiveness

4.4. We reflect on, share and apply results and lessons with stakeholders.

- Members have mechanisms to ensure results, lessons and findings of work are shared with and feedback is sought from primary stakeholders in accessible and appropriate ways.

Quality Principle 5 – Collaboration

5.1 We respect and understand those with whom we collaborate.

- Members have regular meetings with partners and/or collaborators where open feedback and dialogue is facilitated.

5.2 We have a shared understanding of respective contributions, expectations, responsibilities and accountabilities of all parties. Members periodically review formal agreements with partners through a process which encourages mutual discussion and feedback.

Quality Principle 7 – Governance

7.3 We are accountable to our stakeholders.

7.3.3 Members enable stakeholders to make complaints to the organisation in a safe and confidential manner.

7.3.5 Members seek input and feedback from all stakeholders.

- Complaints mechanisms are adapted to local contexts and provided in accessible formats and languages.

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<p><u>Code/Standard of Practice</u> The Code of Conduct for The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief (1994) www.ifrc.org</p>	<p><u>Overview of Code/Standard of Practice</u> The Red Cross Code of Conduct is a voluntary code outlining key standards for international development and humanitarian programming. The Sovereign Order of Malta is a signatory to the code. Principle 9: We hold ourselves accountable to both those we seek to assist and those from whom we accept resources.</p>
<p><u>Code/Standard of Practice</u> The Sphere Handbook – Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards for Disaster Response (2011) www.sphereproject.org</p>	<p><u>Overview of Code/Standard of Practice</u> Sphere standards apply to humanitarian responses, providing minimum standards of performance and operation. Core Standard 1 - People-centred humanitarian response: People’s capacity and strategies to survive with dignity are integral to the design and approach of humanitarian response. Key action: Enable people to lodge complaints about the programme easily and safely and establish transparent, timely procedures for response and remedial actions.</p>
<p><u>Code/Standard of Practice</u> Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS) (2014) www.corehumanitarianstandard.org</p>	<p><u>Overview of Code/Standard of Practice</u> As a core standard, the CHS describes the essential elements of principled, accountable and high-quality humanitarian action. Standard 5: Communities and people affected by crisis have access to safe and responsive mechanisms to handle complaints.</p>

6 Definitions

For the purposes of this policy and the Australian Association’s approach to feedback and complaints handling for programs, the following definitions apply:

Accountability:	Processes through which an organisation makes a commitment to respond to and balance the needs of stakeholders in its decision-making processes and delivers against this commitment.
People we work with and for::	People who are either directly or indirectly engaged in an Australian Association program and who benefit from the activities of the program. For example, they may receive or benefit from a product or service.
Complainant:	Person or organisation making the complaint.
Partners:	Individuals, groups of people or organisations that collaborate with the Australian Association to achieve mutually agreed objectives in aid and development activities. This may include corporate entities and affiliates.
Feedback:	The systems, processes, attitudes and behaviours by which an organisation can really listen to their stakeholders, to find out if it is meeting their needs, desires, and agreed requirements or standards, which includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • opinions and suggestions • complaints

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Complaint: Complaint: An expression of dissatisfaction made by an individual or organization external to the Australian Association about the standards of service, actions or lack of action by the Australian Association or its members, employees, volunteers or anybody directly involved in the delivery of our program of works. It is a criticism that expects a reply and would like things to be changed.

A complaint must be about an action for which the Australian Association is responsible for or is within our sphere of influence. Complaints could include:

- Concern from someone we work with about the quality of an activity or program delivery.
- Concern about the behaviour of member, employees, volunteers or contractors including abuse of power and exploitation, felonies such as theft or fraud, endangering the environment, etc.

A complaint does NOT include where donors, partners or people we work with and for disagree with our policy/ approach. Moreover, a complaint is not:

- A general query about the Australian Association work
- A request for information
- A contractual dispute
- An internal dispute of the membership

7 Key Principles

This Policy is guided by the following principles:

1. The Australian Association is committed to upholding the highest possible standards of behaviour and minimum quality standards across all activities and programs, and therefore recognises the importance and value of listening to feedback and complaints. This is outlined in the Australian Association's Code of Conduct.
2. The Australian Association will ensure that donors, partners and the people we work with and for have accessible, safe and discreet points of contact through which to raise concerns or complaints.
3. The Australian Association is committed to ensuring that feedback and complaints handling processes are effective, safe, confidential and accessible to all, irrespective of age, gender identity, status, disability, or background and without prejudice to future participation.
4. The Australian Association will proactively provide clear, easily understandable information to donors, partners and the people we work with and for about our complaints handling procedures.
5. The Australian Association recognises the importance of equipping our members, employees, volunteers and consultants with an understanding of the Australian Association's commitment to accountability and approach to feedback and complaints and will support them to effectively implement the relevant policies.
6. The Australian Association will ensure that all complaints handling processes and decisions are responsive, fair and reflect the Australian Association's guiding mission and principles set out nearly a thousand years ago: "*Tuitio Fidei et Obsequium Pauperum*" – Defence of the Faith and Care of the Poor and the Suffering

8 Minimum Requirements for Implementation in all the Australian Association's program of work

In addition to upholding the above-mentioned principles, all the Australian Association's funded program of works will ensure:

- a. Right to provide feedback and make a complaint: Proactively inform stakeholders of this right in an appropriate manner.

In the case that the Australian Association is working through partners, all Partner Working Agreements or equivalent must include clauses which outline:

- safe, accessible and discreet mechanisms for partners and the people we work with and for to submit feedback and complaints to the Australian Association, and the Australian Association's process for handling feedback and resolution of complaints. This clause will be adapted by each Region and activity to list the specific feedback and complaints mechanisms appropriate to that context (for example – an individual point of contact, a phone number, email address and mailing address).
- the partner's responsibility for communicating Australian Association feedback and complaints mechanisms to activity, program and project participants and ensuring that they are aware of how their feedback and complaints will be received, handled and resolved by the Australian Association (in line with this policy).
- the partner's responsibility for establishing and communicating safe, accessible and discreet feedback and complaints mechanisms for activity, program and project participants (for the receipt and response to direct feedback and complaints from activity, program and project participants).

Where the Australian Association is directly implementing activities, programs and projects, safe, accessible and discreet feedback and complaints mechanisms must be established and communicated by the Australian Association's coordinators/employees directly to people we work with and for (as above, in relation to the setup, handling and resolution of feedback and complaints).

- b. Participation in how complaints are managed: Give complainants the opportunity to be consulted in the handling of their complaint.
- c. Accessibility: Partners and people we work with and for should be able to provide feedback and make a complaint as easily as possible.
 - Complaints can be received through written correspondence, e-mail, telephone, verbally or through other communication mechanisms depending on the context (as outlined in the Australian Association's Disability Inclusion Policy).
 - Special attention must be paid to ensure the most vulnerable and disadvantaged stakeholders are able to make a complaint.
 - Where formal complaints are received through non-written forms, Australian Association members, employees or volunteers should take the responsibility to document this appropriately.
 - Where relevant, all feedback and complaints mechanisms should be child friendly and cater to the needs of people with all abilities.
- d. Professionally handled: Appropriate investigation, timely, written response and confidential handling:
 - In case of a complaint, an initial acknowledgement and response must be provided to the complainant within 48 hours of receiving the complaint. This initial response will acknowledge the receipt of the complaint and briefly outline how the Australian Association will handle and resolve the complaint.
 - The relevant Australian Association delegate will determine if and how to investigate the complaint.

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- Formal response must be given (and explained/communicated as necessary) within 15 working days of receiving complaint.
 - Where a complaint resolution takes longer than 15 days, the complainant must be provided periodic updates on the progress made.
 - The Australian Association's definition of confidential is 'need to know' - this will be explained to complainant at time of making complaint.
- e. Learning and accountability: All complaints must be documented, monitored and reported to in line with the Australian Association's and contractual requirements.
- At a minimum, complaints need to be reported quarterly to the National Executive Council of the Australian Association through Quarterly Monitoring Reports (QMRs).
 - At the activity, program and project level, all complaints received should be reported through monthly progress reports.
 - Undertake more frequent monitoring and reporting on serious complaints from, or disputes with donors, partners and the people we work with and for which indicate non-compliance with this policy, are a risk to the Australian Association, or otherwise require a significant response.
 - Undertake a trends analysis and a learning activity across all received complaints at least once a year.
- f. Non-discrimination: Nobody making a complaint against the Australian Association will be discriminated against in any way (as outlined in the Australian Association's Whistleblower Policy).

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8 Responsibility and Authority

Responsible Officer

Activity/Program
Coordinator

Activity

- Responsible for ensuring that these policy guidelines and minimum requirements for implementation are adhered to through Australian Association funded activities and programs, and that the required capacity to implement is built into each activity and program.
- Responsible for sharing this Policy and minimum requirements for implementation with relevant implementing partners.

Responsible Officer

Regional Hospitaller

Activity

- Responsible for ensuring relevant Activity/Program Coordinators, members and employees have adequate awareness, capacity, and support to effectively implement this policy.
- Responsible for incorporating consideration of this policy in regional level planning, budgeting and resource allocation.
- Responsible for ensuring all feedback and complaints received relating to regional-led programs and partners are resolved appropriately.
- Escalating complaints to the National Executive Committee of the Australian Association as required and reporting on all serious complaints.

Responsible Officer

National Hospitaller

Activity

- Responsible for ensuring that all activities and programs, and public policies and statements meet the principles and expectations outlined in this policy.

Responsible Officer

Vice-President

Activity

- Responsible for ensuring relevant activities and programs operated outside of Australia and New Zealand, but in the name of the Australian Association are adequately equipped to provide awareness, capacity, and support to effectively implement this policy.
- Responsible for holding the relevant Activity/Program Coordinators, members and employees operating outside of Australia and New Zealand accountable to implement this policy and promoting policy principles, as appropriate.
- Responsible for incorporating consideration of this policy in overseas level planning, budgeting and resource allocation.
- Responsible for ensuring all feedback and complaints received relating to overseas-led programs and partners are resolved appropriately
- Escalating complaints to the National Executive Committee of the Australian Association as required and reporting on all serious complaints.

Responsible Officer

President

Activity

- Responsible for holding the National Hospitaller and Regional Hospitallers accountable to implement this policy and promoting policy principles, as appropriate, in the Regions of the Australian Association and activities, programs and projects throughout the wider Asia Pacific Region.

9 Complaint Handling Procedure

When responding to complaints, the responsible office must act in accordance with complaint handling procedures as well as any other internal documents providing guidance on the management of complaints.

The responsible officer should also consider any relevant legislation and/or regulations when responding to complaints and feedback.

The five key stages in our complaint management system are set out below



9.1 Receive

Unless the complaint has been resolved at the outset, we will record the complaint and its supporting information. We will also assign a unique identifier/number to the complaint file.

The record of the complaint will document:

- Contact information of the complainant and the date received;
- Issues raised by the complainant and the outcome/s they want;
- Any other relevant information; and
- Any additional support the complainant requires.

9.2 Acknowledge

We will acknowledge receipt of each complaint promptly, and preferably within 48 hours. When appropriate we may offer an explanation or apology.

Consideration will be given to the most appropriate medium (e.g. email, letter) for communicating with the complainant (as outlined in the Australian Association's Disability Inclusion Policy).

9.3 Assess and investigate

9.3.1 Initial assessment

After acknowledging receipt of the complaint, we will confirm whether the issue/s raised in the complaint is/are within our control. We will also consider the outcome/s sought by the complainant and, where there is more than one issue raised, determine whether each issue needs to be separately addressed.

When determining how a complaint will be managed, we will consider:

- How serious, complicated or urgent the complaint is;
- Whether the complaint raises concerns about people's health and safety;
- How the complainant is being affected;
- The risks involved if resolution of the complaint is delayed; and
- Whether a resolution requires the involvement of other organisations.

9.3.2 Investigating the complaint

After assessing the complaint, we will consider how to manage it.

We may:

- Give the complainant information or an explanation;
- Gather information about the issue, person or area that the complaint is about; or
- Investigate the claims made in the complaint.

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We will keep the complainant up-to-date on our progress, particularly if there are any delays. We will also communicate the outcome of the complaint using the most appropriate medium. Which actions we decide to take will be tailored to each case and take into account any statutory requirements.

9.4 Determine outcome and provide reasons for decision

Following consideration of the complaint and any investigation into the issues raised, we will contact the complainant and advise them:

- The outcome of the complaint and any action we took;
- The reason/s for our decision;
- The remedy or resolution/s that we have proposed or put in place; and
- Any options for review that may be available to the complainant, such as an internal review, external review or appeal.

9.5 Close the complaint: document and analyse data

9.5.1 Document

We will keep records about:

- How we managed the complaint;
- The outcome/s of the complaint (including whether it or any aspect of it was substantiated, any recommendations made to address problems identified and any decisions made on those recommendations); and
- Any outstanding actions to be followed up, including analysing any underlying or root causes.

9.5.2 Analyse data

We will ensure that outcomes are properly implemented, monitored and reported to the responsible officer and the National Executive Committee of the Australian Association.

10 Related Policies and Documents

1. Code of Conduct
2. Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Code of Conduct Code of Conduct
3. Disability Inclusion Policy
4. Privacy Policy

11 Policy Review

This Policy will be reviewed periodically and updated when required.

The Chancellor and Company Secretary is responsible for overseeing the review, and recommending changes to the National Executive Council.

This Policy is approved by the National Executive Council.