

# ADI COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

## 1 ADI Complaints Policy

### 1.1 Commitment to good handling of feedback

Australian Doctors International Inc. (ADI) is committed to actively encouraging feedback and responding to complaints in an effective and clearly defined manner. As a learning organisation, ADI welcomes suggestions and comments that will lead to improvements in our activities.

ADI believes that our stakeholders in Australia will hold us accountable for the delivery of a high quality of service, bringing health improvements to the people of Papua New Guinea. As well, ADI **expects that its beneficiaries and those living in the communities where we work hold us** accountable for the quality of our services. ADI relies on the experience of in-country partners and regularly conducts meetings with them, incorporating their suggestions into strategic planning.

### 1.2 No retaliation

A person who, in good faith, reports misconduct or suspected misconduct will not suffer retaliation. Retaliation means any direct or indirect detrimental action threatened or taken against an individual. Any person who retaliates against someone who has reported misconduct will be liable to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

Individuals who believe that retaliatory action has been taken against them because they have reported misconduct should forward all information and documentation to support their belief to the Chief Executive or the Finance Director for investigation.

If the retaliation involves the CEO, the report may be made directly to the President of the Board.

### 1.3 Acting in good faith

Anyone making a complaint alleging misconduct must act in good faith and have reasonable grounds for believing the information disclosed indicates wrongdoing. Allegations which prove to have been made maliciously or knowingly to be false could result in disciplinary action.

### 1.4 Confidentiality

ADI is committed to ensuring that all information related to complaints and their resolution will remain confidential. The privacy of individuals will be maintained, and personal information will not be divulged.

### 1.5 Procedural Fairness

ADI will ensure fair and proper procedures are used when making a decision in relation to all complaints. This will involve providing a fair and reasonable opportunity to respond to matters, evidence or decisions that ADI believe may justify terminating their engagement with ADI or other appropriate consequences. ADI will allow for an observer or support person where appropriate.

### 1.6 Scope of the Policy

This policy is intended to apply to any complaint or feedback regardless of who makes it. We regard a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction about any aspect of our organisation, our staff, our volunteers, our partners, our contracted service providers or someone else acting on our behalf. A complaint may be made by a person to whom we deliver services or who is affected by our services, a partner, a local organisation with whom we work, our staff, volunteers, donors or a member of the public

This policy applies if:

- A member of the public contacts us to express their concern about the way in which we have conducted a fundraising event, portrayed our activities, or the actions of one of our staff, volunteers or contractors;
- A local person or partner raises with us concerns about one of our programs or the actions of one of our staff, volunteers or contractors;
- A member of the in-country community where we work has a complaint about an ADI activity or the actions of an ADI staff member; or

- A staff member of ADI makes a complaint about any matter.

## **1.7 Publicising this Policy**

The ADI Complaints Policy is included in the ADI Governance Handbook which is distributed to all staff, at induction and as updated. There is a requirement for a document to be signed which indicates the person has read and understood the contents of the handbook and they will be trained in the expectation of their role in implementing the Complaints Policy. Information about this policy will be incorporated in all Partnership Agreements with partners in- country and will be available on our website [www.adi.org.au](http://www.adi.org.au) .

A bilingual notice advising partners and stakeholders of ways to report complaints or compliments to ADI is displayed in all in-country offices in a culturally appropriate format. It will also be inserted in written material distributed in in-service training manuals. ADI and partners will ensure that beneficiaries are made aware of the policy and process through appropriate methods of communication taking into account local language and customs.

People in PNG who wish to provide feedback can approach an ADI staff member or a member of our partner organisation who will assist with recording the complaint/compliment and forwarding it to the ADI Sydney office. Where there is a language barrier, ADI will engage the services of an interpreter to ensure that the complaint is fully understood, and the complainant is aware of the action that will be taken.

The ADI newsletter invites feedback from all its recipients.

**Review:** The ADI Complaints Policy will be reviewed every two years.

## **2 ADI Complaints Procedures**

### **2.1 How to make a compliment or complaint?**

You can submit a complaint via the following methods:

- Phone: Sydney office on +61 2 9907 8988
- Email: [adioffice@adi.org.au](mailto:adioffice@adi.org.au)
- Fill out the online feedback form on [www.adi.org.au](http://www.adi.org.au)
- Send a letter: PO Box 324, Seaforth, NSW, Australia, 2092

Complaints can be made in person to an ADI staff member or any person associated with ADI partner organisation or government official. The ADI staff member will refer the complaint to the CEO within 2 working days of receiving it.

If you believe the complaint involves a breach of the Australian Council of International Development (ACFID) Code of Conduct you may refer the matter to the ACFID Code of Conduct Compliance Committee via the following methods:

- Phone: ACFID on +61 2 6285 1816 or Fax: +61 2 6285 1720
- Email: [main@acfid.asn.au](mailto:main@acfid.asn.au)
- Post: Private Bag 3, Deakin, ACT 2600, Australia

### **2.2 If you are making a compliment**

If you are making a compliment to the organisation, commenting on something we have done well, we will acknowledge your communication within 7 business days. Where practical and appropriate, ADI will convey the compliment to the relevant person or team responsible.

### **2.3 If you are making a complaint**

To ensure that ADI can give fair and efficient consideration to your complaint as much relevant information as possible should be provided. Be specific and include attachments if relevant. At a minimum please provide:

- Your name
- Address – postal and/or email
- Telephone number
- The name of the ADI staff member (if relevant)

- Details of the complaint
- The remedy or outcome you would like to see as a result of your complaint

Anonymous complaints are accepted but they will only be considered if sufficient information is provided. No correspondence can be entered into with an anonymous complainant. If you are making a complaint or enquiry on behalf of a stakeholder, please be mindful that ADI will need to contact that stakeholder and obtain their permission for us to speak with you.

We will decline to accept a complaint where we deem it to be frivolous, vexatious, not made in good faith, misconceived or lacking in substance. We will provide you with information as to why the complaint has been rejected.

It is expected that a complaint will be made as soon as practicable **and within three months** to ensure the details of the complaint are still fresh and relevant. Serious complaints should be actioned as soon as practicable to enable an appropriate review and response.

## **2.4 Assessing a complaint**

When a complaint is received, an assessment must be made about the appropriate course of action:

The CEO will determine if no action is required as there is no real basis for the complaint. The reasoning will be communicated clearly to the person making the complaint;

If the complaint is about a service, procedure or system then Remedy and Systems Improvement will apply;

If the complaint is about the conduct, performance or relationships between staff then it will be managed according to the procedures on Staff Performance and Conduct; or

If the complaint alleges what could be criminal conduct then the matter will be referred to the Police following consultation with the President of the Board.

A matter is considered less serious if it involves a minor breach or omission and is not seen to be part of a pattern of conduct that would lead to disciplinary/remedial action.

A serious breach is one which, if proven, could amount to serious misconduct and could include:

- a breach of policy, procedure or contract likely to lead to disciplinary/remedial action, or
- conduct of a criminal nature.

## **2.5 Informing complainant of outcome**

Once the complaint has been resolved, the complainant will be advised of the outcome ensuring the privacy of any individual involved in the matter.

## **2.6 Remedy or System Improvement**

At times, remedy and systems improvement may arise out of a complaint. This procedure will be initiated by the CEO using the following steps. It also applies to suggestions.

- Assess if remedy and/or systems improvement is warranted or no action is required.
- Implement immediate remedy/system improvement or plan future implementation of remedy/system improvement.
- Inform complainant of outcome

Remedy is action taken to correct or rectify a situation for an individual where it identified he/she has been treated poorly or unfairly by the system. Remedy may involve one or more of:

- providing explanation and reasons if not previously provided
- dismissing the complaint if the decision accords with relevant policy or procedure
- concluding that the complaint has been substantially resolved
- reaching a compromise solution
- giving an apology or providing a service not previously provided
- addressing or referring the issue for system improvement.

Systems improvement is an opportunity to improve policies, procedures, organisational culture, or similar issues to prevent future problems. Systems improvement may involve one or more of:

- referral for consideration of policy change
- policy development or revision
- process improvement, such as changes to procedures and workplace practices
- program review
- expert assistance, staff development or performance improvement
- improved implementation, such as issuing updated documentation or reminders
- monitoring compliance
- other action to ensure that the matter is handled appropriately in future.

## 2.7 Informal resolution Framework

Informal resolution can be used for any matter that is assessed as 'less serious', such as minor complaints and differences of opinion.

The CEO has specific responsibility for managing the resolution of such matters. However for informal resolution to succeed, both parties need to recognise that there is a problem, be prepared to be conciliatory and accept that resolution may require compromise on both sides. ADI's Code of Conduct clarifies the standards of behaviour that are expected of staff members in the performance of their duties.

The following procedure is a framework for mediation/negotiation which can be used as a form of informal resolution. It is suggested is that the parties be provided the opportunity to:

1. state the cause of their concern
2. exchange facts and beliefs
3. clarify events
4. listen
5. apologise for any behaviour that may have distressed the other party
6. explain their point of view
7. consider the other person's point of view
8. recognise this as an opportunity to change behaviour that is perceived as unsuitable or hurtful to another.

When negotiation is used, then confidential notes of the agreed outcomes should be kept.

## 2.8 What if you are not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint?

In the most unusual circumstance when the complainant is not satisfied with the response from the ADI Board of Directors, he/she may have the matter referred to ACFID or other relevant organisations. These organisations will be able to provide a third-party voice and opinion on the matter.

## 2.9 Recording complaint data

**A complaint register is maintained in the Sydney office.** It is a detailed written record of the date, time, description of the incident, names and contact details of the complainant and the people involved, who in ADI reported on the complaint and summary of the response. All feedback is reported to the next ADI Board meeting where there is a permanent item on the Agenda, or if urgent, is brought immediately to the attention of the President or Secretary of the ADI Board.

## 2.10 Continuous improvement

Each complaint will be actioned in an open, fair and unbiased manner. In responding to feedback ADI will be objective and ensure confidentiality of all personal details.

ADI is committed to resolving complaints and learning from their outcomes.