

4.0 Policies Related to Staff and Clients

4.11 Policy on Complaints and Feedback

Commitment to good complaints handling

Receiving feedback and responding to complaints is an important way for Hagar Australia to demonstrate accountability to its supporters. Hagar Australia is committed to responding appropriately to feedback and complaints about the organisation's work or practices.

Hagar Australia's complaints process is fair and transparent and has regard to the principles of natural justice.

Scope of policy

Hagar Australia regards a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction about our organisation, our staff, our volunteers, our partners, our contracted service providers or anyone 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 which we work, our staff, volunteers, donors or a member of the public.

Children and young people under 18 can make a complaint directly to Hagar Australia without requiring the permission of their parents or guardians. Parents, guardians or other concerned members of the public may make a complaint on behalf of a child or young person but should seek their permission to do so.

The process for managing complaints and feedback relating to in-country programs and clients is addressed in Hagar Australia's Policy on Client Protection Including Children (2.1).

Publicising this policy

Hagar Australia's website will communicate ways in which members of the community, including donors, children and young people, can provide feedback or make a complaint (see www.hagar.org.au/complaints). This information will be made available in easy to understand language with clear steps outlining our complaint handling process.

Staff and volunteers will be made aware of Hagar Australia's complaints handling process on induction. The full policy on Complaints and Feedback will be available to all staff and volunteers.

How complaints may be made

Complaints or feedback regarding Hagar Australia can be made directly to the CEO through Hagar Australia's website (<http://www.hagar.org.au/complaints>), by sending an email to supporter.care@hagar.org.au or by sending a letter to:

CEO
Hagar Australia
SH1.09 Level 1, Sacred Heart Building
Abbotsford Convent
1 St Heliers Street
Abbotsford
VIC 3067.

Complaints about the CEO can be made directly to the Chair of the Board by contacting board@hagar.org.au.

As a member of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID), complaints or feedback about Hagar Australia can be made directly to ACFID in regard to breaches of the Code of Conduct. Complaints to ACFID can be made through their website (<https://acfid.asn.au/content/complaints>) or by writing a letter to:

Chair, ACFID Code of Conduct Committee
Care Of ACFID
Private Bag 3
Deakin ACT 2600

How we will handle minor and complex complaints

Complaints and feedback will be handled in the first instance by Hagar Australia's CEO. Any serious complaint involving the CEO may be referred directly to the Chair of Board of Directors of Hagar Australia. If necessary, a complaint may be escalated to the CEO or Board of Directors of Hagar International.

Hagar Australia's CEO will manage the complaint in a fair way including the choice of those involved in the investigation, the information gathered and the extent of the investigation. Information on the investigation process will be communicated in easy to understand language and with clear timelines.

At any time during the complaint process, Hagar Australia's CEO may consult with people with particular skill or expertise to provide advice as needed on the complaint being investigated.

The complaints process will permit all parties reasonable opportunity to provide any information they believe will assist the investigation and parties will be given an opportunity to respond to information provided by the other party.

Hagar Australia's CEO will keep the parties informed as to progress of the investigation and any consideration of the matter. Complaints will be responded to in writing with verbal follow up as necessary.

Conflict Resolution

The principles and guidelines to be applied for conflict resolution investigations are as follows.

A person or body called upon to investigate, mediate, adjudicate or exercise discretion shall:

- Act fairly, in good faith, without bias and in a dispassionate manner.
- Give each party the opportunity of adequately stating their case and of correcting or contradicting any relevant statement prejudicial to their case.
- Not receive information except as part of its investigation.
- Presume innocence until guilt is proven.

A person who is involved in handling the complaint is obliged to declare any interest in the matter or any personal connection or relationship with either party.

A person called upon to answer a complaint is entitled to know the particulars of the complaint being made.

Each party has the responsibility to respond to statements made by the other.

Timeframes

Complainants will normally receive a response within ten working days. If the process of responding is expected to take longer, the complainant will be informed of the reason for why it will take longer and an expected timeframe for a response.

Confidentiality

Once the investigation report has been presented to the CEO, the discussion of the merits of the matter will be confined to the CEO (and the Board of Directors if necessary) (excluding any person directly involved in the investigation).

The identity of complainants and the content of feedback or complaints will be kept confidential by Hagar Australia.

However, as stated above, Hagar Australia may consider that it is necessary to disclose information relating to the complaint to third parties (e.g. Hagar International) in order to investigate or resolve a complaint. This will be decided on a case-by-case basis, and will be done in discussion with the complainant.

Recording complaint data

A complaints register will be maintained, including date of receipt, summary of complaint, type of complaint and resolution of complaint.

Continuous improvement

A summary of complaints is provided to the Hagar Australia Board on a yearly basis. The complaints process will be reviewed following each complaint to ensure complaints are adequately responded to and Hagar Australia’s integrity is upheld.

Resources

- ACFID Code of Conduct: D.6 – Complaint-handling within signatory organisations
- Australian Standard: Customer satisfaction – Guidelines for complaints handling in organisations.
- Hagar Australia Complaints Register

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