

# Complaint Management Policy

Policy Owner	National Human Resources Manager
Effective Date	30 April 2020
Last Revised	19 July 2020
Replaces	
Approved by	Geoff Evans, Chief Executive Officer

## Preamble

Disaster Relief Australia (DRA) is a professional disaster relief organisation with a unique culture and history. We are dedicated to the service of communities in need and each other, and governed values that place a high value on servant leadership, maturity, integrity, team work and determination. In the context of our work, our team will regularly be placed in stressful situations, often whilst living in austere conditions. The attitude, humour and maturity of our people is what helps us to our objectives despite adversity. This policy does not seek to change our cheeky, 'get-it-done' attitude. We expect that our people are resilient and respectful, that they will behave as adults, and that everyone is well intentioned.

## Purpose

We acknowledge that sometimes we may get a decision wrong or something might go awry with one of our processes. At other times there might just be the perception of a mistake. It is important in these instances that we receive a complaint as they serve as information to identify the source of problems, resolve them where we can, and to identify improvements.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that our complaints handling process reflects the importance we place on listening and responding to concerns and complaints from our supporters, partners and the communities we serve.

We will address all complaints in an equitable, fair and unbiased manner using evidence submitted by both the person making the complaint and our staff and volunteers. We will observe strict confidentiality in complaint handling and ensure that the process is as accessible as possible to all complainants.

## Scope

This policy is specifically to address the mechanism of complaints by our supporters, partners and the communities we serve.

The following must comply with this Policy in the course of their work and when representing DRA (and will be referred to generally in this policy as *staff*):

- DRA employees, members and board members
- all spontaneous and corporate volunteers coordinated by DRA
- any contractors, members of partnered organisations accompanying DRA

This policy applies to all DRA Members, contractors and our governing body, receiving or managing complaints from the public and clients made to or about us, regarding our products, services and staff, or our complaint handling process.

**Note:** DRA Members complaints, grievances, complaints of unacceptable behaviour are dealt with through other policies and procedures in the DRA Human Resources Manual and the DRA Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Discrimination Policy.

## Definitions

**Complaint:** An expression of dissatisfaction made to or about us, our services, members or the handling of a complaint where a response or resolution is explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required. (AS/NZ 10002:2014). As well as complaints being made directly to our organisation, some complaints (or at least negative comments) may at times be made on social media and DRA should respond where practicable.

**Complaint handling/management system:** All policies, procedures, practices, staff, hardware and software used by us in the management of complaints.

**Dispute:** An unresolved complaint escalated either within or outside of our organisation.

**Feedback:** Opinions, comments and expressions of interest or concern, made directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, to or about us, about our services or complaint handling system where a response is not explicitly or implicitly expected or legally required.

**Policy:** A statement of instruction that sets out how we should fulfil our vision, mission and goals.

**Procedure:** A statement or instruction that sets out how our policies will be implemented and by whom.

## Policy

An effective complaint handling system must be modelled on the principles of fairness, accessibility, responsiveness, efficiency and integration into DRA's organisational culture. We are committed to seeking and receiving feedback and complaints about our services, systems, practices, procedures, products and complaint handling. Any concerns raised in feedback or complaints will be dealt with within a reasonable time frame.

People making complaints will be:

- provided with information about our complaint handling process
- listened to, treated with respect by staff and actively involved in the complaint process where possible and appropriate, and
- provided with reasons for our decision/s and any options for redress or review.

## **No detriment to people making complaints**

We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that people making complaints are not adversely affected because a complaint has been made by them or on their behalf.

## **Complaints regarding ACFID members**

DRA is a member of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and a Signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct. A complaint can be made to ACFID, against any ACFID member when it is believed that they have breached the Code. There are no restrictions on who can initiate a complaint, although generally complaints must first be raised with a respondent organisation prior to engaging ACFID. If a complainant is dissatisfied with the way in which DRA has handled their complaint, and it is related to a breach of the Code, a complaint can be made a complaint directly with ACFID through the [complaint process](#).

## **Making a complaint**

In order to provide the sufficient information for us to investigate, complaints should be made using the form included at Annex B. It can be emailed to [feedback@disasterreliefaus.org](mailto:feedback@disasterreliefaus.org), by telephone on +61 (02) 8072 9130, or by post to:

Disaster Relief Australia  
1/299 Elizabeth Street  
Sydney NSW 2000 Australia

Complaints can also be made verbally to any DRA leadership personnel, unless the complaint is about the particular person. Where the complainant requires assistance in making the complaint, our personnel should assist where this is reasonable to do so.

We accept anonymous complaints if there is a compelling reason to do so and will carry out a confidential investigation of the issues raised where there is enough information provided.

## **Responding to complaints**

### **Early resolution**

Where possible, complaints will be resolved at first contact with us. When appropriate we may offer an explanation or apology to the person making the complaint. Where practicable and safe to do so, persons/ parties are encouraged to maturely address their concerns with the persons/ parties involved in order to responsibly resolve their concern prior to escalating via the complaints process.

### **Responsiveness**

We will promptly acknowledge receipt of complaints. We will assess and prioritise complaints in accordance with the urgency and/or seriousness of the issues raised. If a matter concerns an immediate risk to safety or security the response will be immediate and will be escalated appropriately.

We are committed to managing people's expectations, and will inform them as soon as possible. We will advise people as soon as possible when we are unable to deal with any part of their complaint and provide advice about where such issues and/or complaints may be directed (if known and appropriate). We will also advise people as soon as possible when we are unable to meet our time frames for responding to their complaint and the reason for our delay.

### **Objectivity and fairness**

We will address each complaint with integrity and in an equitable, objective and unbiased manner. We will ensure that the person handling a complaint is different from any DRA Member whose conduct or service is being complained about.

Conflicts of interest, whether actual or perceived, will be managed responsibly. In particular, internal reviews of how a complaint was managed will be conducted by a person other than the original decision maker.

### **Responding flexibly**

DRA Members are empowered to resolve complaints promptly and with as little formality as possible. We will adopt flexible approaches to service delivery and problem solving to enhance accessibility for people making complaints and/or their representatives. We will assess each complaint on its merits and involve people making complaints and/or their representative in the process as far as possible.

### **Confidentiality**

We will protect the identity of people making complaints where this is practical and appropriate. Personal information that identifies individuals will only be disclosed or used

by us as permitted under the relevant privacy laws, secrecy provisions and any relevant confidentiality obligations.

### **Managing unreasonable conduct by people making complaints**

We are committed to being accessible and responsive to all people who approach us with feedback or complaints. At the same time our success depends on:

- our ability to do our work and perform our functions in the most effective and efficient way possible
- the health, safety and security of our Members
- our ability to allocate our resources fairly across all the complaints we receive.

When people behave unreasonably in their dealings with us, their conduct can significantly affect the progress and efficiency of our work. As a result, we will take proactive and decisive action to manage any conduct that negatively and unreasonably affects us and will support our staff to do the same in accordance with this policy.

### **Complaint process awareness**

DRA will ensure that our leaders have awareness of the complaints process, and how they can direct complainants to this policy and assist them in making the complaint where it is reasonable to do so. The complaint process will be managed by the DRA administrative and human resources teams.

DRA will work with our partners to ensure they are equipped to understand and implement this policy. We will also provide information to all stakeholders, including to members of the communities where we conduct our activities, about the reporting and complaints procedure.

### **Related Policies**

- DRA Code of Conduct
- DRA Child Safeguarding Policy
- DRA Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- DRA Human Resources Manual
- DRA Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Discrimination Policy
- DRA Quick Assessment and Investigation Procedures
- DRA Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Policy
- DRA Whistleblower Policy

## Annex A

# Complaint Management Procedures



When responding to complaints, staff should act in accordance with these complaint handling procedures. Staff 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.

## Receipt of complaint

Any DRA Members in a designated leadership position can receive a complaint, with the receiver notifying the DRA Chief Operating Officer (COO) and National Human Resources Manager as soon as practicable. Complaints can also be emailed direct to [feedback@disasterreliefaus.org](mailto:feedback@disasterreliefaus.org) using the form at Annex B.

Unless the complaint has been resolved at the outset, we will record the complaint and any supporting information. The National Human Resource Manager will send the complainant a Complaint Report Form (Annex B to this policy). We will also assign a unique identifier to the complaint file.

The record of the complaint will document:

- the contact information of the person making a complaint
- issues raised by the person making a complaint and the outcome/s they want
- any other relevant
- any additional support the person making a complaint requires.

## Acknowledgement of complaint

We will acknowledge receipt of each complaint promptly, in writing by email, and preferably within five working days. The Manager who receives the complaint is to advise that the complaint has been escalated accordingly. Any further queries from the complainant are to be directly to the COO and or the National Human Resources Manager.

## **Assessment and investigate complaint**

### **Initial assessment**

After acknowledging receipt of the complaint, the National Human Resource Manager 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 person making a complaint 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 person making the complaint is being affected.
- The risks involved if resolution of the complaint is delayed.
- Whether a resolution requires the involvement of other organisations.

Serious incidents that need to be escalated immediately with notification to the CEO and COO include those listed in the DRA Quick Assessment and Investigations policy:

- death or serious injury of a DRA member or support recipient
- allegations of conduct contrary to the DRA Child Safeguarding Policy
- allegations of conduct contrary to the DRA Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Policy
- significant damage to the property of DRA or the supported community
- Instances of fraud or theft

If concerns about child safety, sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment are raised during the initial assessment, the DRA Focal Person for these issues (DRA National Human Resource Manager) will be notified and engaged immediately in the handling of the complaint. This will be in accordance with the DRA Child Safeguarding Policy or DRA Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Policy as applicable.

### **Addressing complaints**

After assessing the complaint, we will consider how to manage it. To manage a complaint we may:

- give the person making a complaint information or an explanation
- gather information from the product, person or area that the complaint is about
- investigate the claims made in the complaint.

We will keep the person making the complaint 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.

## **Providing reasons for decisions**

Following consideration of the complaint and any investigation into the issues raised, the National Human Resource Manager will contact the person making the complaint 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

If in the course of investigation, we make any adverse findings about a particular individual, we will consider any applicable privacy obligations before sharing our findings with the person making the complaint.

## **Closing the complaint, record keeping, redress and review**

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)
- any outstanding actions that need to be followed up.
- we will ensure that outcomes are properly implemented, monitored and reported to the complaint handling manager and/or senior management.

DRA may accept anonymous complaints, and will de-identify complaints at the request of the complainant or survivor.

Where a person making a complaint is dissatisfied with the outcome of DRA's review of their complaint, they may seek a review of our decision in writing to the DRA Chief Executive Officer.

DRA is a member of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) and a Signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct. A complaint can be made to ACFID, against any ACFID member when it is believed that they have breached the Code. If a complainant is dissatisfied with the way in which DRA has handled their complaint, and it is related to a breach of the Code, a complaint can be made a complaint directly with ACFID through the [complaint process](#).

## **Survivor support and assistance**

DRA will ensure that all responses are developed in a manner that balances respect for due process with a survivor-centred approach in which the survivor's wishes, safety and



wellbeing remain a priority in all matters and procedures. Furthermore, all actions taken should be guided by respect for choices, wishes, rights and dignity of the survivor.

Survivors will be provided with information on the progression of an investigation and final outcomes. Where appropriate, DRA will provide assistance or referrals to medical, social, legal or financial support. If DRA becomes aware of serious complaints beyond the scope of this policy (for example, a support beneficiary with significant property damage caused by another organisation), DRA will seek to offer support by referring the complainant to relevant organisations or authorities in the area of operations.

**Annex B**

## Complaint Management Form

This form is intended for the documentation of reportable activities. If possible, this report should be completed as soon as possible after the reported activity. This forms a preliminary report that may lead to an investigation by designated leadership of Disaster Relief Australia (DRA).

Completed Forms to be converted to PDF and emailed to [feedback@disasterreliefaus.org](mailto:feedback@disasterreliefaus.org).  
Note, all information requested is optional – you may submit this form anonymously

Name	
DRT Manager/ Direct Report (if applicable)	
Contact Telephone	
Address	
E-mail	
Are you a member of DRA or how did you become involved with DRA?	

*DRA will treat all reports made under this policy as confidential as much as is possible to be consistent with conducting a full and fair investigation. Even if you disclose your identity through this report, we will seek to keep it confidential. Once a formal investigation is launched your identity may be disclosed to the other staff only to the extent it is necessary to conduct a thorough and fair investigation.*

1. Describe in detail the Reportable Activity: (if you require more space please indicate that you have attached additional information and attach it to this complaint)

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Date you became aware of Reportable Activity:

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Reportable Activity is (please check):

- Ongoing
- Completed
- Unclear whether ongoing or completed



4. Where did the suspected of Reportable Activity occurred:

Operation \_\_\_\_\_

Event \_\_\_\_\_

DRT \_\_\_\_\_

5. Member(s) suspected or involved of Reportable Activity:

\_\_\_\_\_

6. How did you become aware of the Reportable Activity?

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Describe steps, if any, you took prior to completing this Report (e.g., informed Direct Report).

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Describe what happened after you reported your concern to DRA.

\_\_\_\_\_

9. What do you want to happen for your Complaint/Grievance/Dispute to be resolved?

\_\_\_\_\_

10. Are you making this report on behalf of another person? (Y/N) \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please provide the following information

Name	
Contact Telephone	
E-mail	
What is your relationship to the person you are referencing?	
Is this person a member of DRA or what is their relationship to DRA?	

*In the absence of a written consent or evidence that you are the guardian, we may not be able to provide personal information about the affected person in response to your complaint.*

Please attach additional pages as required

Signature/(E-Signature) \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_