

Complaints Policy

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Definitions and Abbreviations

Complaint: in this policy a complaint means an expression of dissatisfaction by any YWAM staff, student or any beneficiary of YWAM MSA programs or activities, including community members engaged.

YWAM staff: A permanent or semi-permanent volunteer engaged by YWAM Medical Ships

YWAM student: Any registered student on any training school

Complainant: Any person, organisation or its representative, making a complaint.

Inquiry: A request for information or an explanation

Feedback: Opinions, comments, suggestions and expressions of interest in the services provided or the complaint handling process

Stakeholder or interested party: A person or group having an interest in the performance or success of the organisation

YWAM MSA: YWAM Medical Ships – Australia

Partners: Organisations associated with YWAM MSA through a partnership agreement or memorandum of understanding (MOU)

1. Introduction

YWAM MSA is committed to maintaining satisfaction with its programs and an environment that promotes unity. YWAM MSA also seeks to maintain and enhance our reputation of providing high quality humanitarian services.

We are committed to conducting our activities according to the standards of the Code of Conduct of the Australian Council for International Development (ACFID).

Guiding principles for this policy

- **Visibility** - We clearly publicise information about how and where to complain.
- **Accessibility** – We will ensure that our complaint handling process is as accessible as we can practically make it to all complainants.
- **Impartiality** – We will address all complaints in an equitable, fair and unbiased manner.
- **Confidentiality** – We will observe strict confidentiality in complaint handling and protect your privacy.
- **Empathy** – we will show empathy but not attempt to take sides, lay blame or become defensive.

2. Purpose of Policy

We value complaints as they assist us to improve. YWAM MSA is committed to being responsive to the needs and concerns of our beneficiaries, staff and students and to resolving your complaint as quickly as possible. Access to a just and equitable process for dealing with complaints and appeals will be provided at all times.

YWAM MSA aims to address complaints and appeals as efficiently and effectively as possible.

This policy has been designed to provide guidance to anyone in working with and in contact with YWAM MSA on the manner in which YWAM MSA receives and manages your complaint.

The objective of this policy is to ensure:

- You are aware of our complaint processes

- Your complaint is investigated impartially with a balanced view of all information or evidence,
- We take reasonable steps to actively protect your personal information,
- Your complaint is considered on its merits taking into account individual circumstances and needs.

Please note that a repetition of the complaints policy with particular regard to complaints conducted by children is also in the Child Protection Policy.

3. Scope of Policy

This Policy applies to the following:

All personnel and associates of YWAM MSA, not limited to but including:

- Permanent and casual staff
- Individual contractors and consultants
- Volunteers of all ages
- Board members
- Partners that have a formal relationship with YWAM MSA
- YWAM students
- Communities engaged

4. Implementation and review

- 4.1. Key staff for the implementation of this policy are YWAM MSA program managers and the Board of Directors. This is included in position descriptions.
- 4.2. This policy will be reviewed every two years.

5. Training of organization on complaints policy

- 5.1. Information on complaints and appeals will be given to YWAM staff, students and volunteers as part of the orientation process.
- 5.2. To familiarise them with this policy we run induction programs for our governing board members and all relevant personnel.
- 5.3. Personnel directly involved in complaint handling are fully trained in all aspects of this policy and its implementation.
- 5.4. We take special care to train our field personnel to encourage, receive and handle complaints taking account of language issues and cultural sensitivities.
- 5.5. Staff engaging in our partnerships (formalised by MOU) will be made aware of complaints inclusions in such agreements.

6. Publicising our policy

- 6.1. **Due to our principles, we aim to make the complaints handling process as visible and accessible as possible through:**
 - Our website which has a link to this policy and information on how to make a complaint in English (an official language of our main engagement nations of Papua New Guinea and Australia)

- All relevant oral and written communications (such as our annual report, partnership agreements, staff policies) will explain our procedures for handling complaints
- In addition to the general reviews of our complaint handling, we will monitor how effectively we are publicising our complaints policy on a continuing basis and make necessary improvements in its communication.

6.2. Special provisions in publicising to local communities

- Where language is a constraint we aim to make complaint information available in the local language (mainly through use of local translators)
- Where literacy is a constraint we will orally invite expressions of concern and complaint on a regular basis. We will take care to give this invitation in a way that is culturally appropriate recognising that in some cultures people require greater encouragement to make a complaint.
- If required we will make use of pictorial means of communication.

6.3. Special provisions in publicising to children

- We will take special care to facilitate complaints from vulnerable populations including children and marginalised groups. In order to include the most vulnerable and marginalised the Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People's Complaints Guidelines¹ make suggestions that YWAM MSA aims to adhere to:
 - A complaints system that is highly visible, accessible, easy to locate and clear and has been explained to children
 - Any complaint by a child is always taken seriously which is repeatedly told to children
 - Boundaries of confidentiality are carefully explained to avoid breaches of trust
 - Staff are trained in policies and procedures with particularly sensitivity to children
 - Regular checks are held that ensure that children understand the complaints system
 - Text and email feedback mechanisms are advertised
 - Any publications to young people and children will include non-threatening information about how to raise a complaint about YWAM MSA

7. How complaints can be made

Ways of contacting us

If any complainant is dissatisfied with any service provided by us, they should in the first instance consider speaking directly with the staff member/s they have been dealing with. If they are uncomfortable with this or consider the relevant staff member is unable to address their concerns, **a complaint can be lodged in the following ways:**

- By completing a feedback form on our website <http://www.ywamships.org.au> which has the option of being anonymous. Any anonymous complaints can alert us to problems that need fixing, therefore we will accept them though clearly it may not be possible to provide a remedy to an individual.

¹ Commissioner for Children and Young People: Complaints Guidelines (June 2013)

- By telephoning <+61 7 4771 2123>
- By writing <addressed to PO Box 1969, Townsville, QLD 4810, Australia>
- By emailing <info@ywamships.org>
- In person by speaking to any of our YWAM staff members either in the field or at headquarters in Townsville
- We may utilise complaint/suggestion boxes
- If we receive complaints verbally and we consider it appropriate, we may ask the complainant to put the complaint in writing.
- For increased accessibility in Papua New Guinea, complaints can also be received directly via the YWAM Training and Medical Ship, MV YWAM PNG, either in person to the Ship Manager (or appropriate delegate) or in writing delivered in person or via post to <PO Box 1217, Port Moresby>

Special provisions for the vulnerable and marginalized

7.1. Third party involvement for added support in Townsville

- The complainant has the right to utilize a support person (nominee) in all proceedings.
- If a complainant needs further assistance outside of a YWAM Medical Ships staff member, we will provide information on accessing an impartial third party who can be contacted.

7.2. Children

- We will give the children the option how and when they want to be kept informed of the progress of the investigation into their complaint
- Children are always able to lodge a complaint face-to-face
- The process will be as flexible as possible for children and responsive to their needs
- YWAM Medical Ships will have the capacity to accept complaints via advocates. Advocates are available to raise complaints on behalf of children and are pointed out to children. Key staff will be available to be an advocate and someone easy to approach (ie they will have experience in working with children, they will be helpful and understanding and responsive)

7.3. Special needs of Aboriginal Communities

- Any complaint written in a local language is acceptable
- We will give any member of the Aboriginal community the option how and when they want to be kept informed of the progress of the investigation into their complaint
- YWAM Medical Ships will have the capacity to accept complaints via advocates. Advocates are available to raise complaints on behalf of any member of the Aboriginal community.

8. How complaints are handled

8.1. We listen

- We will fully listen to / read any complaint that is made to YWAM Medical Ships.
- To help us respond to your complaint quickly and efficiently we may ask you for the following information to help with ongoing communication:
 - Your name and contact details,
 - The name of any YWAM staff member you have been talking to
 - The nature of the complaint,

- Details of any steps you have already taken to resolve the complaint,
- Details of conversations you may have had with us that may be relevant to your complaint,
- Copies of any documentation which supports your complaint.

8.2. We acknowledge

- Within three business days of receiving your written complaint we will acknowledge receipt of your complaint.
- Oral complaints will be acknowledged immediately.

8.3. We review

- We undertake an initial review of your complaint and determine if any additional information or documentation may be required to complete an investigation
- On receipt of a complaint we will also attempt to determine expeditiously whether investigation is required or not depending on jurisdictional questions and whether the complaint is ill-conceived.
- A Complaints and Appeals Form should be completed at this point.
- We will assess whether there is more than one issue raised in your complaint and whether each needs to be separately addressed.
- We will assess the urgency of action based on the following criteria:
 - severity;
 - health (including mental health) and safety implications;
 - financial implications for the complainant or others
 - complexity;
 - impact on the individual, public and organisation;
 - potential to escalate;
 - systemic implications
 - need for and possibility of immediate action
- We may seek from the complainant any information on the outcomes they are expecting
- We will clearly explain the course of action that will follow

8.4. We investigate

- Within 30 business days of receiving your complaint we will investigate your complaint objectively and impartially, by considering the information you have provided us, our actions in relation to your dealings with us and any other information which may be available, that could assist us in investigating your complaint.

8.4.1. Overseas

- If the complaint is received from overseas, investigation may require more time.
- For overseas volunteers on volunteer visas, wherever possible, a resolution will be sought prior to a volunteer's departure from the country where complaint was laid.

8.4.2. Complaints about one of our staff

- If you complain about a member of our staff, we will treat your complaint confidentially, impartially and equally (giving equal treatment to all people). We will investigate your complaint thoroughly by finding out the

relevant facts, speaking with the relevant people and verifying explanations where possible.

- We will also treat our staff member objectively by:
 - Informing them of any complaint about their performance,
 - Providing them with an opportunity to explain the circumstances,
 - Providing them with appropriate support,
 - Updating them on the complaint investigation and the result.
- YWAM MSA Staff and Volunteers and YWAM students are subject to a Code of Conduct & Behavioural Management Process. Complaint handling processes will be practically managed within this framework. There are 3 stages:
 - The Informal Stage - This stage is to give understanding, orientate volunteers and give clarity of our vision, values and culture: to care, connect, serve and build. This stage is to be utilised to reinforce a person's value, to encourage gifts and talents, to build up, and to clarify the outcomes of their actions. This includes affirmation, encouragement, confronting, mentoring and coaching.
 - The Formal Stage - The Formal Stage is to be actioned when all avenues in the Informal Stage have been exhausted or when a person's behaviour needs addressing. While the Formal Stage does have aspects of being a disciplinary level it should still be considered a part of mentorship. The formal stage includes 3 distinct steps: 1. Formal meeting 2. Written reminders 3. Time out
 - The Exclusion Stage - Exclusion Stage is to be used in the following instances:• As a result of the decision made during the Formal Stage, or • A major incident/breach of the vision and values occurs.
 - The model used shouldn't be seen as a disciplinary one, but as a mentoring one that highlights our choices. Our aim is to encourage everyone to pursue excellence, and to work with common vision and purpose with one another.

8.5. We respond

- Following our investigation we will notify you of our findings and any actions we may have taken in regards to your complaint within 35 business days.
- Our Managing Director, or a senior manager delegated by him/her, will normally make the decision on a complaint that has required investigation (that is not a minor complaint).
- Decisions on serious complaints may be referred to our governing board.
- We will communicate our decision on a complaint as soon as is practical. Our communication will be in writing in the appropriate language, by email and/or by post.
- Where appropriate, such as in the case of a complaint being made by a local community member, we will also communicate our decision orally and again in the appropriate language.
- We will encourage the complainant to respond and advise whether or not they are satisfied with our decision. In our decision we will advise that if a complainant is not satisfied we will be prepared to consider any additional information they may provide and to review our decision. Please note the escalation process.
- In all cases we will advise that the complaint may be referred to the Code Committee of ACFID. We will provide all necessary information for referral to the Code Committee and offer to assist in referral.

8.6. We take action

- Where appropriate we amend our practices or policies.
- We will be prepared to change the way in which we operate and improve or undertake further training of staff.
- Where needed we will counsel or discipline staff or volunteers.
- We will ensure that all relevant personnel are informed of the outcomes of complaints and the implications for our services, procedures and processes.
- Where appropriate we will consult and take advice from ACFID and/or other relevant regulatory authorities.

8.7. We record

- When taking a complaint, we will record your name and contact details. We will also record all details of your complaint including the facts and the cause/s of your complaint, the outcome and any actions taken following the investigation of your complaint. We will also record all dates and times relating to actions taken to resolve the complaint and communications between us.
- As part of our on-going improvement plan, complaints will be monitored for any identifying trends by management and rectification/remedial action taken to mitigate any identified issues.
- If you lodge a complaint we will record your personal information solely for the purposes of addressing your complaint. Your personal details will actively be protected from disclosure, unless you expressly consent to its disclosure.

9. Minor complaints and law enforcement

9.1. Minor complaints

- We will endeavour to deal immediately with inquiries and minor complaints which are made orally, by telephone or in person, that is during the initial phone call or meeting.
- As far as possible, we will ensure that the inquirer or complainant is completely satisfied with the information and/or resolution provided.

9.2. When we do not respond to a complaint

- There may be rare occasions when YWAM MSA chooses not to respond to a complaint at all. These include:
 - When a complaint is about something that YWAM MSA has no direct connection to or is not in a position to comment on. We may choose to reply to clear our name but we are not obliged to.
 - When someone unreasonably pursues a complaint that we have already responded to. They will be given escalation points but we may choose not to reply again, we will always inform you of our decision to do this.
 - When a complainant is being obviously abusive, prejudiced or offensive in their manner.
 - When a complainant is harassing a staff member.
 - When a complaint is incoherent or illegible.
 - When a complaint has clearly been sent to us and numerous other organisations as part of a bulk mailing or email. In this instance we can choose whether it is necessary for us to reply.

- YWAM MSA cannot respond to complaints made anonymously. However, we will investigate the complaint and use the information to improve in any way that we can.

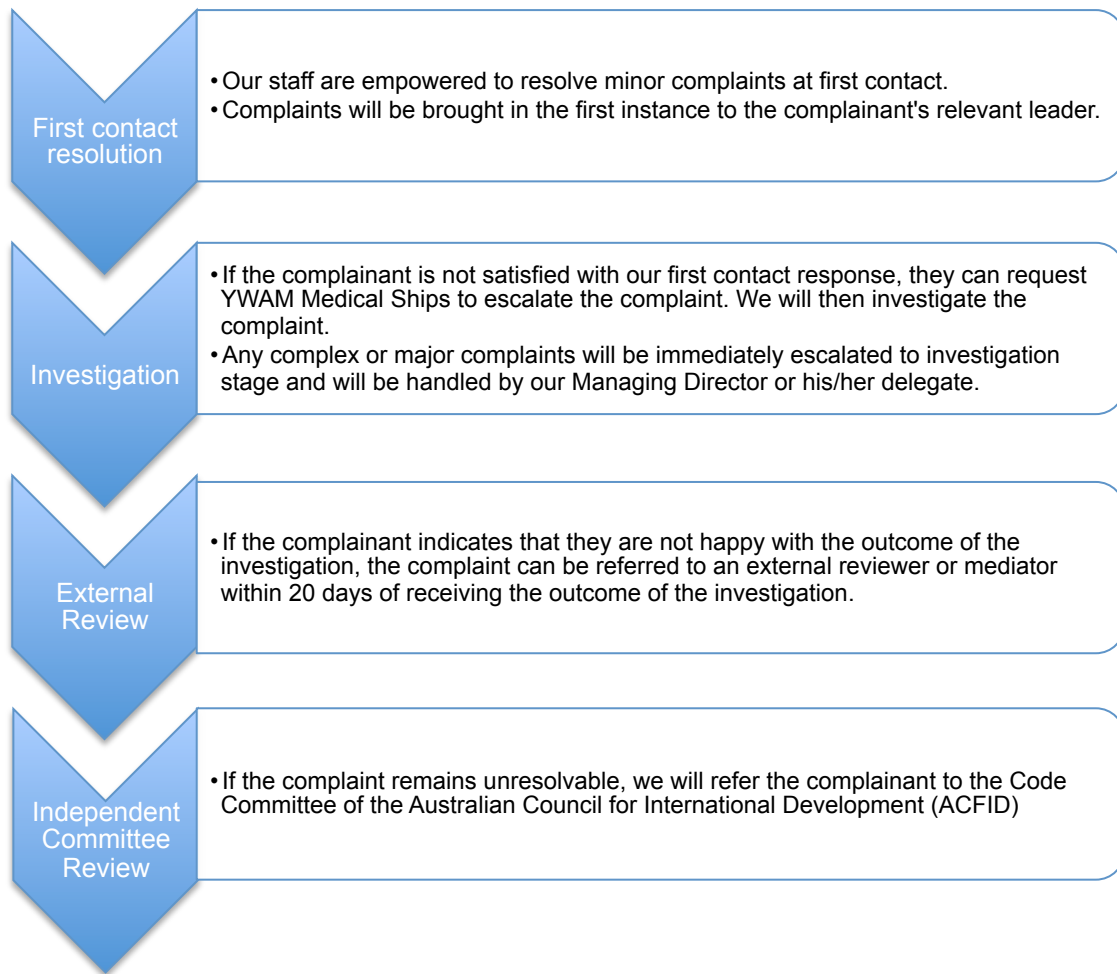
9.3. Law enforcement

- If your complaint is currently being investigated by a relevant national, state, territory or provincial regulator or law enforcement agency we may cease to take further action in relation to your complaint pending finalisation of their investigation. We will assist any agency with their investigations where appropriate.

10. Confidentiality & Complainant protection

- We will not reveal a complainant's name or personal details to anyone in or outside our organization other than staff involved in handling the complaint without obtaining the complainant's permission.
- We will ensure that a complainant is not required to express their complaint to a person implicated in their complaint.
- We will also ensure that a person implicated in a complaint is not involved in any way with the handling of that complaint.
- This process does not circumscribe the volunteer's right to pursue other legal remedies.
- Either party may consult an independent Conciliator at any stage.

11. Complaints Escalation Process



12. Reporting about complaints

- All complaints will be reported at our regular management team meetings and our governing board meetings.
- Minor complaints will be reported in summary form. Major complaints will be reported in appropriate detail.
- Our Annual Report will provide de-identified information on complaints.

Resources for Staff

- Commissioner for Children and Young People (Western Australia) – Resource on how to make a complaints process more accessible to young children
<http://www.cyp.wa.gov.au/files/Other%20resources/Are%20You%20Listening%20-%20Guidelines%20for%20making%20complaints%20systems%20accessible%20and%20responsive%20to%20children%20and%20young%20people%20-%20Updated%20June%202013.pdf>
- ACFID document on writing a complaints policy
- The Australian Standard Customer satisfaction: Guidelines for complaints handling in organisations (AS ISO 10002 - 2006)
www.standards.org.au
- Complaints mechanism in local communities
<http://www.odihpn.org/humanitarian-exchange-magazine/issue-52/community-feedback-and-complaints-mechanisms-early-lessons-from-tearfunfs-experience>
- <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/4A736E8A2A06FB1DC12574A3004B930F-tearfund-feb2008.pdf>
- Save the Children Complaints procedure on their website
<http://www.savethechildren.org.au/about-us/contact-us/complaints-procedure>