

AVI Complaint Handling Policy	Effective date	Feb 2019
	Next review date	Jan 2021
	Sponsor	Executive Manager, International Services
	Board committee	FARM
Level / Class Corporate Organisation	Approval / authorisation	Board

1. REVISION HISTORY

Date	Revision Number	Change(s)	Reference Section(s)
12 Sep 2012	1.0	New policy	
28 May 2014	1.1	Minor wording amendments	3, 5, 6.2
6 Feb 2015	1.2	Definitional updates; clarification of awareness, training and in-country aspects; procedural update	5, 6, 8
7 Feb 2017	1.3	Sponsor and Board committee update	-
6 Dec 2018	1.4	Updated sections and word amendments	3, 6, 7, 8, 9

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to articulate the intent and approach of Australian Volunteers International (AVI) in relation to the handling of complaints and establish an explicit framework for their management.

3. SCOPE / PERSONS AFFECTED

The scope of this policy covers all AVI stakeholders within Australia and overseas, including: the Board, the President (when appointed), Members, Executives, Employees, partner organisations, program participants including on the Australian Volunteers Program, supporters of AVI and any other interested members of the public.

Appropriate consultation (tick for 'yes', otherwise leave blank)

4. PRINCIPLES

This policy is based upon the principles underpinning the ACFID Code of Conduct, certain principles specified in the ACFID Code of Conduct in relation to complaint handling (sections D.6 and E.3) and AVI's articulated values of equity, social justice, diversity, inclusion, partnership and respect for human rights.

5. POLICY

5.1 AVI acknowledges its accountabilities to its various stakeholders and is committed to stakeholder engagement and responding to complaints in an effective and clearly defined manner.

5.2 Accordingly, AVI will:

- ensure this policy is available to all stakeholders via the AVI website and internal communication channels for Melbourne and in-country personnel;
- provide clear and easily understandable information to all stakeholders about how to make complaints, both in Australia and the countries where AVI works;
- include in its induction and orientation processes for employees, program participants and Australian and in-country partners, appropriate references to its complaint handling policy and application;
- ensure that personnel directly involved in complaint handling, in Australia and overseas, are fully trained in the policy and associated processes;
- ensure complaint handling processes are responsive, thorough and fair;
- provide accessible, safe and discreet points of contact for stakeholders in Australia and countries where AVI works;
- at its discretion, only consider anonymous complaints if sufficient information is provided;
- in cases where a person or entity is making a complaint on behalf of a stakeholder, need to contact the stakeholder for permission to communicate with the person or entity;
- aim to resolve complaints at the initial point of dissatisfaction or concern, quickly and efficiently. If a complaint cannot be resolved immediately, AVI will acknowledge the complaint within 5 business days;
- assess the nature of any complaint. AVI may reject a complaint if it is deemed to be frivolous, vexatious, not made in good faith, misconceived or lacking in substance;
- ensure confidentiality of all personal details and expects all other parties involved in the process to do the same;
- ensure the handling of a complaint takes into account the needs of the most vulnerable and considers minority and disadvantaged stakeholders;
- review a complaint on appeal or claim of dissatisfaction with respect to an outcome;
- advise complainants of their right to make a complaint regarding an alleged breach of the Code of Conduct by the organisation to the ACFID Code of Conduct Committee.

5.3 In the event of a complaint being lodged with the ACFID Code of Conduct Committee, AVI will:

- comply with the complaints handling process as set out in the ACFID Code of Conduct Guidance;

- comply with ACFID Code of Conduct Committee requests for information within all reasonable time limits set;
- comply with any corrective and disciplinary action agreed with the ACFID Code of Conduct Committee, in the case of a breach of the Code;
- comply with requirements set by the ACFID Code of Conduct Committee to put in place measures to minimise the risk of the breach recurring.

6. DEFINITIONS

ACFID	Australian Council for International Development
ACFID Code of Conduct	A voluntary, self-regulatory sector code of good practice that aims to improve international development outcomes and increase stakeholder trust by enhancing the transparency and accountability of signatory organisations. AVI is a signatory to the Code and is therefore obligated to meeting all Code requirements.
Complainant	A person or party making a complaint.
Complaint (grievance)	An expression of dissatisfaction or concern relating to a decision, action or activity of the organisation or one or more of its representatives in the course of their duties.
Complaint handling	The process of dealing with complaints with a view to their resolution in a way that satisfies all parties concerned (although this may not be possible in all cases). Also known as dispute resolution or dispute settlement.
Interest	Relevance, significance or consequence. This is a subjective term, which must be considered from the interested party's perspective and means that concerns or complaints could come from anyone. The source of these should not be discounted; however, the nature of a concern or complaint may lead to it being rejected if it is deemed to be frivolous, vexatious, not made in good faith, misconceived or lacking in substance.
Representative	An Officer, Employee or any other agent engaged by AVI to undertake certain duties for, or otherwise represent, the organisation.
Stakeholder	An organisation or person within Australia or overseas with an interest in AVI. Stakeholders include: the Board, the President (when appointed), Members, Executives, Employees, partner organisations, AVI program participants including the Australian Volunteers Program, supporters of AVI or any other interested members of the public.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES

The Board of Directors has ultimate responsibility for ensuring AVI's compliance with federal and state laws and any contracts, agreements or other mechanisms that are binding upon the organisation.

This policy reflects certain ACFID Code of Conduct requirements to which AVI, through its officers and employees, is duty-bound.

AVI's Organisational Leadership Team (OLT) and managers are responsible for ensuring this policy is effectively communicated and followed. Employees of AVI are responsible for carrying out their duties in line with this or any other AVI policy.

7.1 GUIDELINES

- 7.1.2 For Employees, the Formal Dispute/Grievance Procedure should be followed, as specified in the AVI Enterprise Agreement 2014 and individual employment contracts.
- 7.1.3 For program participants, the relevant complaint/grievance handling or dispute settlement processes should be followed, according to the program-specific code of conduct, handbook or agreement; otherwise AVI's general complaint handling procedure (see section 8 below) can be followed.
- 7.1.4 For other stakeholders, AVI's general complaint handling procedure (see section 8 below) should be followed. AVI has a designated Complaints Officer who has responsibility for receiving and acting on complaints.
- 7.1.5 If any complaint entails an alleged breach of the ACFID Code of Conduct, the complainant should be advised of their ability to lodge a complaint with the [ACFID Code of Conduct Committee](#).
- 7.1.6 A complainant may also contact [DFAT directly](#).

8. PROCEDURES / GUIDELINES

The following procedure relates to general complaint handling.

- a) A complaint should be lodged by filling out the complaint form accessible via the [AVI website](#) or [Australian Volunteers Program website](#).
- b) Formal lodgement of a complaint is made directly to the Complaints Officer at:

In-person	88 Kerr Street, Fitzroy, Victoria
Web	Via the ' Contact us ' section of the AVI website
Letter	PO Box 350, Fitzroy, 3065, Australia

- c) In cases where the complainant is present, in-person or on the phone, the AVI Complaints Officer shall ask the complainant to complete the Complaint Form or obtain permission to complete it on their behalf.
- d) Assistance with translation and completing the form may be required for some complainants and should be provided whenever required and possible.

- e) Where the complainant is present / in-person, a copy of the completed form shall be given to the complainant, together with a copy of the Complaints Handling Policy; otherwise these may be posted or emailed to the complainant.
- f) If the Form has been completed by anyone other than the AVI Complaints Officer, then the completed complaint form or details shall be directed to the Complaints Officer.
- g) Any complaint deemed to be a concern regarding fraud or corruption will be managed in accordance with AVI's Fraud and Corruption Control Policy.
- h) The Complaints Officer shall record the complaint details in the AVI Event Register.
- i) Other than for the exceptions listed hereafter, the Complaints Officer will be the person responsible for handling the complaint and shall record the complaint details in the AVI Event Register. If the complaint is about the Complaints Officer or there could be a perceived conflict of interest for the Complaints Officer it shall be referred to the CEO (or another duly authorized representative) who will be the person responsible for handling the complaint. If it is about the CEO, it shall be referred to the Board Chair, or a Director nominated by the Chair, who will be the person responsible for handling the complaint.
- j) Upon receipt of the complaint, where the complaint is in relation to or affects a program such as the Australian Volunteers Program or an AVI International Services Program – the Complaints Officer will inform the Program Director, Australian Volunteers Program; or Executive Manager, International Services in terms of the nature of the complaint received. This is to ensure that the Head of the program can liaise and manage any queries with relevant internal and external stakeholders in a timely manner.
- k) As appropriate and where the complaint relates directly to the Australian Volunteers Program, the Program Director, will notify the relevant person within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) of the complaint. Regular updates will be provided as need be and as per AVI's Privacy Policy.
- l) As appropriate and where the complaint relates directly to programs under International Services, the Executive Manager International Services will notify the relevant 'donor' of the complaint. Regular updates will be provided on an as needs basis and as per AVI's Privacy Policy.
- m) The person responsible for handling the complaint shall acknowledge the complaint within 5 business days in writing and (with assistance, if required) shall assess the validity of the complaint (i.e. test that it is made in good faith and not frivolous, vexatious, misconceived or lacking in substance).
- n) The person responsible for handling the complaint shall take or delegate, where necessary and appropriate, required action to resolve or reject the lodged complaint (which could take some time depending on the nature of the complaint and any further investigative work required). Where a complaint is to be resolved such action shall include giving the complainant and the subject of the complaint the opportunity to be heard, either orally or in

writing, before a decision is made. The person investigating must keep a record of the main points made by each party.

- o) The outcome (resolution or rejection) of the complaint shall be communicated in writing to the complainant by the person responsible for handling the complaint, within 5 business days of the outcome being decided.
- p) In the case where a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, the CEO or the Board Chair, or a Director nominated by the Chair, as appropriate to the circumstances shall, within 30 days, review the complaint, make a decision and the final outcome shall be communicated within 5 business days of the outcome being decided.
- q) The person responsible for handling the complaint shall ensure a review of the complaint, outcome and associated risk factors, along with any measures to mitigate the recurrence of the causes of the complaint.
- r) As with other events entered in the Event Register, complaints shall be reviewed, analysed and reported to the Board's Finance, Audit & Risk Management Committee (FARM) and then the Board through the minutes of FARM.

9. RELATED POLICIES

- AVI Enterprise Agreement 2014 (Section 34: Dispute and Grievance Resolution)
- Australian Volunteers Program Guidebook
- AVI Privacy Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Equal Opportunity and Diversity Policy
- Fraud and Corruption Control Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Australian Volunteers Code of Conduct
- Student Program Code of Conduct
- Social Media Policy
- Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Policy
- Whistle-blowers Policy

10. REFERENCES

- ACFID Code of Conduct
- ACFID Code of Conduct Implementation Guidance

11. EVALUATION AND PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

Compliance with this policy will be assessed annually as part of the annual compliance self-assessment process under the ACFID Code of Conduct requirements.

Criteria for assessment will include:

- verification of appropriate systems and procedures across AVI to ensure policy compliance



- review of any relevant compliments or complaints.

Any risks of non-compliance with this policy are primarily in terms of AVI's reputation and brand; other disciplinary actions may follow relating to AVI's signatory status under the ACFID Code of Conduct and financial penalties associated with breaches of certain laws.